

An Informal History of Muhlenberg College:

Alumni, Faculty and Staff Tell Their Stories 1931-2006

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Introduction

An Informal History of Muhlenberg College: Alumni, Faculty and Staff Tell Their Stories, 1931-2006 is a collaborative project involving current students, alumni, trustees, faculty, and staff of the college. It is intended as a supplement to existing histories, which have focused primarily on the institutional history of the college. See Reverend S.E. Ochsenford, editor, *Muhlenberg College* (Muhlenberg College, 1892); Robert Chisolm Horn, *Muhlenberg College, 1904-1929* (Muhlenberg College, 1929); and James E. Swain, *A History of Muhlenberg College, 1848-1967* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1967); History Colloquium, *Student Papers on the History of Muhlenberg College, 1963-64* (Muhlenberg College, 1964). The college archive also includes copies of the annual Fact Book, various reports on the history of the curriculum, strategic initiatives, memorials and other administrative initiatives. An electronic archive includes, *The John S. Davidson Oral History Project*, which consists of 30 sound tapes recorded between 1973-1986, and *A Select Few*, a video, made by Margo Trott in 1990, which tells the story of the first women to attend Muhlenberg College. The oral history project has not been transcribed, although Alison Picard produced an annotated index to it in 1994.

The current effort tells the personal stories of people who have been closely associated with the college over a long period of time in a series of feature stories written by students who conducted interviews with their subjects in April and May 2006. The stories provide selective, interpretive records of those interviews. That is, the student authors are filtering the stories they are telling through the lens of their own knowledge and experiences. In some of the narratives, they do so visibly by including themselves in the story. In others, the interpretive moves are less evident but no less present. Most of the interviews were, however, tape-recorded. Those tapes will be available in the Trexler Library college archives. Factual or interpretive discrepancies between electronic interviews and the feature stories are unavoidable artifacts of the reportorial method.

John Heyl's story is a singular exception. A student was initially assigned to interview him, but circumstances prevented her from doing so. However, Mr. Heyl (Class

of 1928) was present at the May 2006 college commencement where he was awarded an honorary degree. Professor Curtis Dretsch prepared some brief remarks about Mr. Heyl's long and illustrious life, which he kindly agreed to include in this volume.

Michael Bruckner, Vice President for Public Relations, originally proposed the idea for this informal history of people who have had lengthy associations with the college. He also provided an initial list of possible interviewees, suggested some topics that might be probed in the interviews, and wrote an introductory letter to all of the people on his initial list explaining the project. Additional faculty and staff members were later included in the project.

The initial list was composed of people with long and close associations with the college as alumni, trustees, donors, and faculty who have been associated with the college for decades. Some of the people interviewed were also children or parents of alumni. In sum, it was a purposive sample made up of people who presumably have had intense, meaningful, and positive experiences with the college. Moreover, the association with the Public Relations Office, by definition, communicated affirmative intention to employees of the college.

The purpose of the project, then, was not to solicit a cross-section of alumni opinion of the college, but rather to record the memories of alumni, faculty and staff who experienced the college over long spans of time: the great depression, World War II, the immediate post-war period, and beyond. A special effort was made to include alumni who are known for sharing colorful stories of bygone days in various informal social contexts. The addition of more recent alumni (through the late 1980s) as well as faculty and staff not only offers additional perspectives and contrasts, it also provides accounts of some of the periods of major transition beginning with admission of women to the college in 1957; the physical expansion of the college; the broadening and diversifying of the curriculum; the increasing prominence of the arts; the loosening of the once strong Lutheran affiliation of the college; the broadening of the demographic profiles of students and faculty; and the challenges the college continues to face in its efforts to increase its racial and ethnic diversity.

It should go without saying that not all Muhlenberg alumni have golden memories of their college days; and not all faculty or staff are as sanguine as those interviewed for

this project. Even within this positively biased sample, not all of the memories recorded in these pages are salutary. There are honest accounts of the difficult experiences that the first women to enroll in the college endured; of the perceived marginalization of African-American athletes by the college in the early 1950's; of religion-based exclusionary clauses in fraternity membership charters during the same period; and of a free speech controversy in the 1960s.

The interviews were conducted by students in two Media and Communication classes, which I taught in the spring semester of 2006, Writing for the Media and the Communication Honors Seminar. The pedagogical rationale for undertaking the project in the writing class is simple and straightforward: it allows students to apply what they have learned in a quasi-real world setting. In the past, I have had students interview and write feature stories about faculty members, who had recently published a book or completed a major research project. So, this project was only a slight variation from a standard class assignment: a variation that gave some of my over-interviewed colleagues a respite. The inclusion of the six honors students in the project, five seniors and one junior, was an ad hoc decision that resulted from the discovery that five of the six had journalistic ambitions and the sixth had a possible interest in public relations. So, their involvement in the project made sense as a culminating class project.

A fortuitous by-product of the project was the cross-generational bonding between students and the people they interviewed. Although transitory, in most cases, the bond seemed to be quite meaningful to students as they were eager to talk about their interview experiences; and, I think, that almost without exception they found participation in the project to be a positive experience.

Students who interviewed alumni found that shared community trumped generational location. Some were shocked to discover people the age of their parents, grandparents, and perhaps even great grandparents also pledged, partied, pranked, and played sports. There were discontinuities as well: communication gaps that seemed unbridgeable to students. For example, the bygone tradition of hazing first-year students: those who experienced it seemed to take it in their stride, some even regarded it as a fond memory or at least benign, "silly," practice. By contrast, it completely mystified current students who perceive it as institutionally sanctioned abuse. Enforced gender inequality

was another practice that today's students found incomprehensible. Finally, mandatory chapel was a recurrent theme in interviews with older alumni: the very idea that such a requirement could be imposed or enforced by the college perplexed student interviewers.

All stories have been subjected to an initial editing, fact-checking and reformatting for continuity. In some cases, titles of the stories have been changed to more accurately reflect story content. The integrity of the interviews and students' representations of the experience has, however, been carefully preserved in this editorial effort. Fact-checking posed some special challenges. Time does, of course, erode and revise memories. Moreover, my own knowledge base regarding the college's history is finite and fallible. Therefore I only corrected obvious errors in dates, chronology, and spelling of names. I have no doubt those, who possess greater knowledge of the college than I do, will find additional factual errors of this kind. I invite them to send their corrections to me at jansen@muhlenberg.edu.

On behalf of the students, I want to thank all of the people who participated in the project by allowing themselves to be interviewed and by trusting students to tell their stories. The Public Relations Office and the Media and Communication Department provided material support for this project through the purchase of audio recorders. Bound copies of this project will go into the permanent collection of Trexler Library along with the audio-tapes of the interviews.

Sue Curry Jansen
Professor of Media and Communication
Muhlenberg College
May 30, 2006

John Heyl, Class of 1928

Former Trustee, Recipient of Honorary Degree, Commencement 2006

Remarks by Professor Curtis Dretsch

May 2006

The College's Oldest Living Alumnus

Preface

A student was originally assigned to interview John Heyl at his home in Maine, but due to circumstances beyond the student's control, this was not possible. However, Mr. Heyl was present at the 2006 commencement where he received an honorary degree; Professor Curtis Dretsch introduced Mr. Heyl at a luncheon following the ceremony with the following remarks. Mr. Heyl then gave a short talk in which he described some of the highlights of his long life. Professor Dretsch kindly agreed to inclusion of his remarks in this volume.

John Heyl is the college's oldest living alumnus born April 26, 1906. He is a native of Allentown and a graduate of Muhlenberg College, Class of 1928. He was recognized by the Carnegie Foundation at the time of his graduation for the extraordinary breadth of his knowledge. His life has been characterized by a passionate curiosity that makes him a most successful student of life and an example for us all.


After his graduation at the top of his class from Harvard University in 1933 with an MA in Architecture, he began a career as designer, illustrator, and architect. He became a registered architect in 1938 and founded his own firm a year later at which time he also became a member of the American Institute of Architects—Palladian Society, a membership he maintains to the present day. His specialization in historic preservation and restoration resulted in work for the Pennsylvania Historic and Museum Commission, the Lehigh County Historical Society, and Pennsylvania German Folklore Society. A few of his many projects include work on Cornwall Furnace, Ephrata Cloisters, Trout Hall, Alburdis Furnace Buildings, and numerous 18th century residences. He has also done extensive original work for the Allentown School District, Cedar Crest College, Good Shepherd Home, ABE Airport, Phoebe Home, the Allentown Art Museum, and countless other municipal projects, churches, schools and private residences in Pennsylvania,

western New Jersey, and Maine. At Muhlenberg, he was involved with Memorial Hall and Martin Luther Hall and Walz Hall.

His record of community service and board associations illustrates his extraordinary generosity of spirit and commitment to improving the society in which we live. Just a few among them are the American Red Cross, Allentown Chamber of Commerce, Allentown Art Museum, the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, Lehigh Historical Society, and State Commission for Maine State Museums. He also served three terms as a member of the Muhlenberg College Board of Trustees.

His life and career evidence the highest regard for context, history and the environment as he worked to make the world a visually richer and more nurturing place. He has helped us all understand that our manmade environment has a profound impact on how we experience and respond to the world and to those with whom we share it. He has spent his long and productive life creating a beautiful, exciting, lasting world in which we live and play and love and learn.

John Heyl is something special. He is a family man, a public servant, a world traveler, a successful and productive professional. His family's association with Muhlenberg covers nearly its entire history. His grandfather and father both attended Muhlenberg when it was still in downtown Allentown at Trout Hall. Two of his brothers and a son also attended the college after it moved to its current location. As a student he created botanical drawings that Dr. John Shankweiler used in his lectures for years afterward. At that time single women were not allowed on campus except, as he puts it, "of course they managed to get into the dorms anyway." Few among us can contribute to our understanding of the world by sharing a seven year old boy's excitement at seeing the ocean liner S.S. Carpathia the year after it served as the rescue vessel for the survivors of the Titanic disaster or the wonder of seeing Halley's Comet not once but twice in a lifetime as he can.

John is a renaissance man in the old sense and a real gentleman. He is a warm, generous, and dignified ambassador from Muhlenberg College. He is a builder, a maker, a creator who has helped to make for us a lovely and gracious world. 

Hub Bury, Class of 1935

Interviewed by Shana Tuttle, Class of 2006

April 2006

Giving Back to Muhlenberg for Seventy-One Years

Summary

At 93, Hub Bury is one of only eight surviving members of the Class of 1935. He describes his boyhood meeting with General Trexler; the cramped facilities of the college during the Great Depression; his favorite professor, Dr. Shankweiler; students' nicknames for their professors; the influence of fraternities on campus; fellow students, Forest Moyer, Al Breinig, John Dietrich and Bernie Frank. In his lifetime, he has seen a lot of changes in the campus, the presence of women, the growth of the campus, and the modern façade. He has remained involved with the college as a benefactor and enjoys events like President Helm's annual Kentucky Derby Party.

As only one of eight surviving members from the graduating class of 1935, 93-year-old Hub Bury recalls his experience at Muhlenberg College as being much different than that of the classes that would follow. There were only 123 students in his graduating class, and although Mr. Bury was a year older than most, he still knew most of the boys in the class of '35 very well. After he graduated from high school he worked in Philadelphia for a year. When the business where he worked went bankrupt in 1930, Mr. Bury came home to Allentown where his family had lived since 1927. There were eight people living in his house; although his father made a decent living, he could not afford to pay for Mr. Bury's college along with that of his two sisters who were attending Cedar Crest College.

Harry Benfer was both the football coach and the college Registrar at the time Mr. Bury wanted to attend Muhlenberg. Mr. Bury approached Benfer and said, "I want to come to Muhlenberg and I need a hundred dollar scholarship." Although Mr. Bury did not play football and his only athletic experience had been as a varsity diver in high school, Benfer granted him the scholarship and welcomed him to the college. It was Mr. Bury's ability to pay the other two hundred dollars of the annual tuition that got him the

scholarship. It was during the Depression and most students could not pay any of the three hundred dollar tuition.

Mr. Bury lived at home because he could not afford to pay room and board. For three years from five to nine o'clock every night and two to nine o'clock on Saturdays he worked at the old *Chronicle & News* newspaper at Seventh and Hamilton streets, making twelve dollars a week, which went directly to the college for tuition. "Because I worked every night and on Saturdays, I didn't really go to college. I went to class," said Mr. Bury. "I went to class and the minute my class was over I'd walk down to Seventh and Hamilton. And that's the way it was." Everyday for three years he walked from his home at Sixteenth and Turner streets to the Muhlenberg campus, then to Seventh and Hamilton and back home.

In 1928 Mr. Bury was the third Eagle Scout in Lehigh County, which is how he met General Trexler. He went to Trexler's office in the PPL building to meet and discuss the land Trexler had purchased in the Pocono Mountains for a Boy Scout camp. Trexler asked him, what he wanted to be when he grew up; and Mr. Bury told him he aspired to become a doctor someday. Trexler told him he would finance medical school for him when he was ready. So Mr. Bury began his studies at Muhlenberg in the pre-med program. In his sophomore year, Trexler was killed in an automobile accident; and without Trexler's backing, Mr. Bury could not continue on to medical school. "When he was killed, I knew I couldn't go to medical school, so I switched to business," said Mr. Bury.

During Mr. Bury's college years, the campus only had three buildings: the administration building, which is now Ettinger; Haas, which was then the library; and the science building, which is now Trumbower. A few houses for college faculty were across the street where the arts buildings now stand.

There was only one dormitory; Mr. Bury called it the old dormitory. What is now Benfer Hall used to be the Allentown Propriety School until 1932 when the college purchased the building. It later became a dormitory.

The student union was one small room made up of only a ping-pong table. At noon Mr. Bury and all his friends would go there and play ping-pong. That was what Muhlenberg students in the Class of '35 knew as their student union. Similarly, the

gymnasium was a small room with a basketball hoop at each end. The room was so tight that the students couldn't stop themselves from running into the walls when they played basketball. "It was a miserable situation," said Mr. Bury, "you would get run into the walls." It was located in the basement of what is now Ettinger.

Mr. Bury remembers "Doc" Shankweiler as his favorite professor, and as a great tennis player. He said that anyone recommended by Dr. Shankweiler for medical school automatically got in. As for other professors at Muhlenberg, "We had nicknames for all our professors," Mr. Bury said laughing. One of the religion professors was a small man who reminded them very much of pictures of Jesus, so they referred to him as "Little Jesus." They called one of their chemistry professors "King Kong Kellar" because while lecturing to his classes, he would hang his arm around one of the pipes that went straight through the floor to the ceiling. The gymnasium teacher was named Bill Ritter, and he was called "Bull" Ritter for many reasons. For every gym class you missed, you owed a mile run; and unless all of the miles were completed, you wouldn't pass the course. You couldn't graduate without passing, so it was common to see students running around the track all day long during the week before graduation, trying to get ten or fifteen miles completed, Mr. Bury laughingly recalls.

His freshman year was the only time Mr. Bury got to experience a little bit of college life. He was the president of his freshman class and had the opportunity to participate in the college's theatre program. Unfortunately, in his four years at Muhlenberg he never even attended a sporting event.


The theatre program at the time was made up of only one English professor who ran student productions. In Mr. Bury's freshman year they performed Eugene O'Neill's *The Moon of the Caribbees*. It was performed at the Civic Theater in competition with other schools. Muhlenberg won the competition for the third year in a row, and retired the winning cup, as that was the last year the competition took place. After his freshman year, Mr. Bury's time was dominated by class and work at the newspaper, so he didn't have time for extracurricular activities.

Although fraternity members were the minority, the fraternities had most of the power on campus because they were organized. According to Mr. Bury, the reason he was made president of the freshman class was because the President of ATO, Kenneth

Koch, supported him. When it was time for re-election, however, he was replaced by a member of ATO. Mr. Bury never had the money to join a fraternity, although ATO recruited him for four years. The money he earned from his newspaper job all went toward his tuition. “They were kind enough to invite me and my girlfriend to all their dances and everything else, but I never joined,” said Mr. Bury.

One of Mr. Bury’s fond memories is of Forrest Moyer. Moyer came to Muhlenberg at the age of fifteen; he was probably the youngest person to ever enroll. “He turned out to be one of the most outstanding pediatricians that the Lehigh Valley had ever had,” said Mr. Bury. Other memorable peers and close friends include Al Breinig, John Dietrich and Bernie Frank. Dietrich donated the money for the original sports center and Frank became a prominent lawyer in the area. They all worked together on the *Ciarla* during Mr. Bury’s junior year.

Mr. Bury notes the biggest changes on campus as growth, a more modern façade, and females on campus. He disapproves of the modern arts building, as compared to the rest of the campus architecture. Along with many more buildings on campus, Mr. Bury sees great changes in the student population. “Co-eds outnumber the men now, that’s a big change from the days when I was there,” he said.

One of Mr. Bury’s passions has been his involvement as a benefactor for the past ten years. His name is on three doors in Moyer Hall. Mr. Bury also arranged for his grandson to be married in the chapel, and remains friends with the current and past president of the college, Peyton Randolph Helm and Arthur Taylor. He looks forward to President Helm’s annual Kentucky Derby Party and the other events held for the donors to the college each year. Hub Bury hopes to continue his involvement in the Muhlenberg community and contribute more to the college in years to come. 

John Reumann, Class of 1947

Trustee

Interviewed by Meredith Williams, Class of 2006

April 2006

On the Home Front: Muhlenberg During World War II

Summary

Muhlenberg was a very different place during World War II. Along with academic work, the student body as well as the surrounding community contributed substantially to war efforts on the home front. Reverend John Reumann's college experience was not filled with the fraternity parties, hazing and Muhlenberg beanies that characterized student life before and after the war. He remembers war posters and daily drills on campus for Marine trainees. A highlight of his college years was attending out of town sporting events. Reverend Reumann's close association with the college has continued throughout his life; he has served two long terms on the Board of Trustees.

Football, suntans and war training – the quad in front of Brown Hall was a different place during World War II. The academic year ran from June to June, broken into three semesters. Navy and Marine trainees comprised the majority of the all-male student body and students focused on both their studies and war efforts. Dr. Reverend John ('Jack') Reumann, Class of 1947, was one of approximately fifty civilians attending Muhlenberg College at the time. Muhlenberg in the 1940's was nothing like today's booming campus, expansive academic buildings and student population from across the country. Instead, Reverend Reumann remembers drill areas for the Navy and Marine trainees attending Muhlenberg located in West Hall (presently Brown Hall) and Berks Hall (presently East Hall).

I met the alumnus in the late afternoon in Seegers Union: the modern student union, which was buzzing with students, trustees and professors that day. Tucked away in a quiet corner, with a tape recorder, I listened as Reverend Reumann explored memories of his three years at Muhlenberg so long ago.

"I played records," he says of his on-campus job. "Classical records," in the Carnegie Music Room in the library. At that time the library was located in the present

Haas Administration building where books were filed in open stacks. The south side of campus (where Trexler library currently stands) was open fields. Reverend Reumann worked in the music room a few hours a week, more to enjoy the sounds than to earn the money.

His undergraduate experience was unique due to the war. He lived his first two years at Muhlenberg in the ATO house. The college had taken over the fraternity houses for civilians, while the dorms were for trainees. Reverend Reumann had escaped the draft by conveniently turning 18 on the day that the draft was suspended. He describes a “more serious atmosphere, all of the fraternity houses were taken over by the college for civilian housing.” It was a very serious and somber time of international relations and domestic duties. “There was no question about it,” says Reverend Reumann of social or political activism on campus. “Everyone was helping out [with the war].”

He remembers eating at The Commons (now Walson Hall). As he filled his plate with “not that great food,” his eyes would dart from poster to poster reminding him not to take more than you can eat. “Don’t Waste Food During the War,” one warned, while another said, “If they don’t want it, don’t give it. If you don’t want it, don’t take it.”

The Lansdale, Pennsylvania native chose Muhlenberg because it was close to home and for the then strong ties to the Lutheran Church. “It was the logical place to come.” He graduated as a pre-theological major. Most of his course work revolved around classes in Greek, German and history. After Muhlenberg, Reverend and Doctor Reumann continued to the Lutheran seminary in Philadelphia, and then earned his Ph.D. at the University of Pennsylvania.

His best memories from his three years at the college were of the various sporting events that he attended. He remembers traveling with friends, the lucky ones who had cars, to games at rival schools such as Bucknell. The craziest thing he says he did as a Muhlenberg student was to attend a Muhlenberg basketball game in Madison Square Garden. At the time Muhlenberg teams, especially basketball, were Division One and very strong within the conference. Because of this, Reverend Reumann says he only participated in intramural basketball, but enjoyed it all the same.

Reverend Reumann was not big on partying; he said that there was not much room for it during the war. The Castle Garden, an old venue in Bethlehem, hosted three

graduation balls a year to honor the students. The entire school could attend and he said they were usually a good time, but because Muhlenberg was all male at the time, many found their dates from the all-female Cedar Crest College.


Reverend Reumann's dedication to Muhlenberg continued on past his 1947 graduation. He sat on the Muhlenberg Board of Trustees from 1965 to 1985 and then returned to the board in 1995 to the present. He describes the transformation of the school over the past fifty years as conflicted, yet creative. It was a time of "growing and maturity, by the College," he says.

In the late 1960's, he remembers a very controversial issue during his first period of service on the Board. The "big debate was freedom of speech on campus." The Board was deciding whether to allow "dirty poetry" to be brought to the campus, "Whether you could have [provocative] speakers on campus." Reumann fought hard to allow the beat poet Le Roi Jones to come and speak, and was successful in his fight. By solving that issue successfully, he believes, it saved Muhlenberg from upheavals like at Kent State and elsewhere," he says. "We went through it earlier with that issue, the board handled it well and we saved ourselves some other troubles."

Another large issue during his 1965-1985 term on the board was the decision to build the Center for the Arts. "That was a real adventure, a gamble financially, but it worked out quite well." By 1985 he realized, "you can't do everything in life," and decided to take time away from board responsibilities. In 1995 he was re-instated.

"We've gone through a lot in the last ten years or so," says the trustee. "Concerns about money, can we do this, can we do that." He has watched the school make many major decisions; building contracts, division and conference changes in athletics, and the student body expansion.

Money matters are at the forefront of the Board of Trustee issues. By balancing funds and vision, the Board has a lot of decisions to make. "Fundraising in the 1990's was easy," says Reverend Reumann. The economy was in booming, but since the turn of the new century, the College has had some extra fundraising challenges. Although he admits that in the 1950's tuition was, "nothing compared to what it is today." But, he says, "there was a lot less money to be had back then."

Reverend Reumann is not the only one in his family who is attached to Muhlenberg. His daughter Amy graduated from the College in 1984. She found Muhlenberg after transferring from Drew University to study International Relations. Reverend Reumann was concerned that his daughter would not take to the small atmosphere of Muhlenberg. Fortunately, Amy enjoyed her time at Muhlenberg and now the two can share college memories. Reverend Reumann continues to dedicate his time and efforts to helping Muhlenberg progress towards the future. “I’ve always been interested in the college,” says the Class of 1947 alumnus, and that interest continues into the 21st century. 

William Miers, Class of 1949

Trustee

Interviewed by Christopher Poehls, Class of 2006

April 2006

From 29th Street to the ‘Berg; From Contempt to Affection

Summary

Mr. Miers grew up in Allentown. He spent two years in the Air Force training to be a pilot before entering Muhlenberg. Initially he did not want to enroll in the college down the street, but he is happy he did. Mr. Miers discovered a lot about himself during his college years, including an ability to write and an interest in history, which served him well in his future as a businessman. He enjoyed the social scene, and served as “datemaster” for his ATO fraternity. He got married during his junior year at Muhlenberg. A sports fan, Mr. Miers attended ‘Berg football and basketball games. He recounted the story of an eventful road trip he and his friends took to a 1946 football game in Delaware. Looking back on his college experience, he appreciates how much it has contributed to his life; he believes the college has much to offer to students today if they take advantage of its many resources.

William Miers walked into the Red Door looking nothing like I would expect of a man who graduated from college in 1949. Based on a short phone conversation, I expected to meet a very lively and interesting man. But Mr. Miers exceeded those expectations and left me eager to hear more stories from his college days.

Mr. Miers grew up on North 29th Street in Allentown. After graduating from Allen High School, he spent two years in the Air Force for pilot training. This was common for young men during World War II. While in the service, he took classes at Peabody College in Nashville, Tennessee. Muhlenberg's Dean of Admissions at the time, Haps Benfer, was kind enough to make sure that some of those credits transferred. Mr. Miers was able to enter Muhlenberg as a second semester freshman, so he had a jumpstart on college life. Moreover, as a veteran, he was not subjected to minor hazing that most freshmen had to endure.

For as long as Mr. Miers has been associated with the college, it is interesting to note that he initially had no interest in attending Muhlenberg. "Familiarity breeds contempt," he said, so he decided early on that he wanted to go to the main campus at Penn State instead of the school just around the corner. However, Penn State was not allowing freshmen on the main campus at that time; and he knew he didn't want to go to one of the "teachers' schools" (as they were known at the time) such as East Stroudsburg. So, he made the sensible choice of going around the corner to Muhlenberg College, a decision he seems to be very happy with. As a bonus, his tuition was essentially taken care of by the GI Bill; and he saved money by living at home.

Mr. Miers said that he discovered a lot about himself during his time at the college. For one, he discovered that he could write. He credits an English teacher, Professor Fluck, for motivating him. At the time, Mr. Miers remembers that there were only a few business classes at the college, such as Financial Accounting and Corporation Finance. He decided to study history and was able to apply his training as a history major to life in the business world. As a history major, he wrote a lot of research papers. In addition to becoming a good writer, he cites learning how to do research as being very helpful for his future as a businessman.

College is not just about sitting in classrooms, listening to lectures, and doing research papers. It is the full college experience that shapes you into the person that you

are in the future. Mr. Miers enjoyed the social scene that Muhlenberg had to offer. He was invited to join the ATO fraternity and developed many great friendships. As a local guy, he knew a lot of the hot spots around town, and perhaps more importantly, knew a lot of the local girls. This made him the “datemaster” at the ATO house. He recalls that back then, social life was very much dominated by the Greek system, so being the datemaster for ATO was a pretty important job. At the time, he noted, it was not uncommon for people to get married while in college. After the war, the general feeling was that two years of social life was lost to the service; and this, he feels, sped up marital interest. Young men, looking to make up for lost time, were trying to find that special girl who they would marry. Mr. Miers married during his junior year at Muhlenberg, and moved into an apartment with his wife soon thereafter.

College life was much different in the late 1940s than it is now. One of the big issues for college kids across the country at that time was a marijuana and “mind-enhancing” drugs. Alcohol, however, was simply not as big an issue as it tends to be today. Interestingly enough, the ATO house was dry. The brothers who lived there enforced this rule sternly. They would have great drinking parties, but they would occur off campus, often in a rented barn. In the afternoons, a strong contingent of students would adjourn to Hemmerly’s Bar and Grill for some socializing and the occasional “chug-a-lug” contest. So, they had their fun, but alcohol policies were not the big deal that they are now. One of the reasons, Mr. Miers points out, is the issue of liability. The country has changed to the point where nothing can happen without someone else being liable for it somehow.

Another relevant issue was that more colleges were starting to go co-ed. For the most part, the feeling was that if it was going to happen, it was going to happen. Sure, there may have been people against it, and there may have been people for it; but from William Miers’ perspective, it seemed like the young men at Muhlenberg were able to go with the flow and just let the issue resolve itself.


As a sports fan at the time, there were a lot of good Muhlenberg teams to follow. A swimmer in high school, Mr. Miers would have participated on a swim team if the college had one. Unfortunately, efforts to start one were futile. He did, however, enjoy following the Mules sports teams, especially the football and basketball teams. In

particular, he remembers the Donovan brothers on the basketball team as being a tremendous family of athletes. The basketball team used to play games at Central Catholic High School since this was before Memorial Hall was built. They were also invited to play a handful of games at Madison Square Garden. Mr. Miers would attend, along with some friends; and they would often find themselves joining fellow collegians from NYU at some of the city bars.

The Mules football team was awarded an extra game back in 1946 against the Blue Hens of Delaware. This was a road trip that Mr. Miers did not want to miss; and as it turned out, it would be one he would never forget. A friend of his named Bobby Ranken picked up a crew of guys for the trip down to Delaware in his beautiful 1941 Ford convertible. Among this crew was an alumnus of the college and of ATO who was working as a reporter for the Norristown newspaper. He made mention of a reception that was to be hosted by Philadelphia Athletics owner Bob Carpenter at the Hotel Dupont in Wilmington, Delaware. They arrived at the Hotel Dupont; and with the press card, they were granted access to this reception. Lo and behold, no one was around. They were surrounded, however, by pitchers of manhattans and martinis and tons of finger foods. Naturally, they helped themselves. They enjoyed this lovely reception for a while, but no one else arrived. Soon they grew nervous, and decided it was best to sneak away before their luck ran out. As one unnamed man from their party tried to sneak away – with a martini pitcher under his jacket – they discovered that the house detective had been watching them the whole time. The would-be martini thief was cuffed and taken away in a cruiser car. The gang followed behind in Bobby's car, trying to figure out if they had enough money between them to bail their friend out of jail.

As it turned out, the manager of the hotel was friendly with the police chief, and probably didn't want to be bothered with pressing any charges. They were given the freedom to go home on the condition that they would never return. So, the gang was back on the road; this time the destination was a Norristown country club where they would continue their party. The reporter had plenty to drink, and he became emotional about his time at the 'Berg. Next thing they knew, he was standing up on a table, crying and proudly singing Muhlenberg songs over his tears.

Experiences like this make college what it is, and make life what it is. Exams come and go. A good or bad grade in one class or another probably isn't going to make or break anyone's life. But a road trip like that one, where someone ends up getting emotional and singing songs about their alma mater after a brush with the law, is the kind of thing that people remember. The fact that this fellow got so emotional about Muhlenberg, at a time like that is a testament to his time at the school. I could hear the excitement and nostalgia in Mr. Miers' voice as he told this story.

Looking back, Mr. Miers says he appreciates college and the things he learned in school much more now than when he was a student. He believes that Muhlenberg prepared him well for success in the business world. The biggest difference he sees between Muhlenberg now and then is that people are generally more casual, but that is true in everything, including business. Really, formally dressed or not, people are the same. He sees many good things in Muhlenberg and the people who work and attend classes here as well as in such resources as the Life Sports Center, the great food choices courtesy of Sodexo, and the many other improvements made to the campus and the academic buildings. He believes that Muhlenberg students have fine potential to succeed if they take advantage of what the college has to offer. As a trustee and his class chairman, he hopes that people will give back to the college if they can because Muhlenberg can give so much to them. In a letter addressed to the members of his class, he wrote about Bobby Ranken, one of the main players in the infamous Hotel Dupont reception story. He had found out that Bobby died several years ago and left half a million dollars to the school. "Remember Bobby Ranken," he wrote, "because he remembered Muhlenberg." Education is one thing, but college is more than that. It is about experience, and as evidenced by some of the stories Mr. Miers was generous enough to share, it is an experience worth remembering. 

Arthur Altman, Class of 1953

Trustee

Interviewed by Rosalind Newsholme, Class of 2007

April 2006

Hard Work and Its Rewards

Summary

Dr. Altman attended Muhlenberg on a full scholarship, but he still worked at many different jobs to support himself during his college years. He knew from the beginning that he wanted to be a doctor so he enrolled in the pre-med program, but he especially enjoyed his English and history courses. He recalls some of his favorite teachers including Professors Shankweiler, Ring, Marshall and Schmoyer. Although he excelled academically, Dr. Altman was also active socially on campus. He found time for some good-natured mischief as well. He values his liberal arts education and continues to be closely associated with the college today as a trustee.

Attending Muhlenberg College was “probably among my wiser decisions,” says Dr. Arthur Altman, who came to the college from the mining town of Hazleton, Pennsylvania. He followed a winding path to Muhlenberg that his cousin had paved before him. In 1950 at the start of his second year, Dr. Altman moved onto campus after having lived nearby with his aunt the year before as a first-year student. He recalls that “Coming from a small town, I wanted a small school.” So with a small town to call home and a small college to call his own, he drew knowledge from the personal, the accessible and the warm.

Dr. Altman loves his work and intellectual stimulation; as a young person, he attended the college on a full academic scholarship. He took many jobs to support himself, and as he puts it, “to pay for some of the bills beyond tuition.” He attended Muhlenberg when the value of a dollar was much higher, and tuition was much lower than it is today in 2006. Many other students worked as well to support themselves as they do now, hoping to earn some extra income.

Dr. Altman sees the college today through the dual perspectives of an alumnus and a trustee. He continues to be involved with Muhlenberg which he considers to be a

fine example of a true liberal arts college. It exposes students to many fields of knowledge which will in turn give them a well-balanced, well-rounded, strong foundation to approach the world. He says that the function of the college “is to expose you to enough of the world to be able to think and act for yourself.”

Muhlenberg gave Dr. Altman a strong foundation. He says, “I worked hard and I had a very good time. I had many jobs during the academic year and each summer including teaching Sunday school, working in the Allentown hospital laboratory, working in the college library, and during the summer digging ditches on the highway and being part of a track gang at a freight railroad yard.” He also toiled away with his course work, especially enjoying courses in history and English. He was glad that he could take many liberal arts courses even though science was his major course of study through the pre-medical track. He finds that these liberal arts subjects continue to enhance his life now.

Dr. Altman knew when he was at Muhlenberg that he wanted to attend medical school and become a physician after graduation. He graduated with his pre-med major and attended the School of Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania: the nation’s first and oldest medical school. He found that studying sciences in medical school was different from studying sciences at Muhlenberg as they were taught in a way that allowed for intellectual freedom and flexibility. Students were finally working with real people. Eventually, after four years of intensive and exhilarating effort, Dr. Altman and his proud classmates earned their M.D. degrees.

Dr. Altman was fond of many of his professors at Muhlenberg and says that “It’s a little different today, I think. We were more awed by the faculty than students are today. We’re a different generation. We had favorites too.” He then says, “Dr. Shankweiler’s course in histology was so thorough and complete that the three ‘Berg alumni in our class at Penn never even had to open a book or attend class to do extremely well in the histology course.” He also recalls two of the ministers who were on the faculty when he was a student. Dr. Rodney Ring and Dr. Robert Marshall taught the Bible as history to students. Dr. Marshall specifically taught the study of the Bible as ethics and philosophy. He is still a life member of the board of trustees and his name is engraved in the front of the chapel today. Dr. Ring taught the study of the Bible to

students as history and literature. During Dr. Altman's time at Muhlenberg it was a requirement for students to have two semesters of courses with each of these ministers.

Dr. Altman remembers one professor of English at Muhlenberg from his freshman year that he particularly liked. His name was Professor Frank Schmoyer, who graduated from Yale University in 1902 and "spoke a classical English. His grammar was impeccable as was his enunciation. His voice enveloped a sense of grammatical pride that was beginning to fade in the 1950's. Professor Schmoyer passed on his English skills and we learned pronunciation. We learned grammar," Dr. Altman recalls.

Dr. Altman also learned how to be descriptive in his writing. Professor Schmoyer identified two to three themes each week which students were asked to describe in writing. One theme each week was always a surprise and involved a practical, common action which students had to describe. One week the theme was "how to make a bed." Another week it was "how to change a tire." Dr. Altman says that he now realizes the value in being able to adequately describe simple actions. People often don't realize the difficulty of describing in writing things that are familiar and habitual. He says that there is great value in having skills of description. In his specialty of pathology, description is often critical.

While students had to take courses in the study of the Bible, it was also mandatory for them to attend two 20-minute chapel services each week. Even though Dr. Altman worked constantly under pressure with his pre-medical studies, he found relaxation in these biweekly visits to the chapel. At the services students sang hymns, participated in prayers and listened to messages delivered by campus ministers. Dr. Altman used these visits in the chapel to relax and reflect which he was often unable to do during the rest of the week. It was just as well that he enjoyed the visits, because he and all of the other students had to fill these chapel requirements in order to graduate.

Dr. Altman also found time to relax through social activities on campus. He joined the Phi Sigma Kappa fraternity and made strong friendships with other young men, many of whom were also working their way through college. The chapter of the fraternity at Muhlenberg was terminated a few years after Dr. Altman graduated, but while he was part of it, his experiences were enriching. He had a fine four years in his fraternity and became president of it in his senior year. He also recognizes that this isn't

always the case for everyone. He says that “College can be narrowing if you’re in a fraternity or a sorority. It’s one of the disadvantages.” He says that this narrowing effect levels out when students become alumni, because “when you start coming back to reunions you find you have a lot in common with many other students in your class.” So reunions give alumni an opportunity to broaden their friendships with other alumni that they may never have known as students!


Dr. Altman lets flickers of humor show when he admits to getting into mischief with his fraternity brothers. Remembering one incident when he and another brother created their own ‘snow’ storm in the fraternity house, he beams with nostalgia. He recalls that on one Saturday afternoon three of his fraternity brothers left the house to play in the Muhlenberg marching band at a sports game. They said that when the game was over they would come back to the house and play their instruments, regardless of the hour. After hearing this, Dr. Altman and another brother filled a vacuum cleaner bag with two pounds of flour and planned to reverse the suction on the vacuum so that the flour would blow out of its attachment when the vacuum was turned on. As the three brothers walked through the front door playing their instruments, the vacuum was turned on and they immediately became three snowmen. Dr. Altman says that “It was worth having to clean up the foyer of the fraternity at 3 in the morning.”

Thinking more about the social scene at the college, Dr. Altman remembers that he stayed on the campus on weekends more than other students who weren’t involved with fraternities. “It was at that time more of a suitcase college, primarily because there were no young ladies here. The students would go home to meet their friends from high school, or they’d go home because there wasn’t a whole lot to do here.” As a brother of Phi Sigma Kappa, Dr. Altman had reason to stay at Muhlenberg on weekends to be with his friends and to study in the library. There was a different kind of social scene than there is on campus today, as it was a ‘dry’ campus when he was a student. They were not allowed to drink alcohol; and they took the rule seriously, particularly the ex-GI’s who had come to Muhlenberg after World War II. They were very serious about rules, and “the school rule was no drinking, so that meant no drinking, at least in our fraternity house.”

While he had many enjoyable social experiences during his years at Muhlenberg, Dr. Altman continued to focus on his studies. When he was at the college, students had to have a grade average of 95 in order to be on the Dean's List, which is a much higher average than students have to have today, at a grade point average of 3.5. This was incentive for Dr. Altman to focus most of his energy on academics. He also had the influence of many serious, academically-driven ex-GI's in Phi Sigma Kappa.

While the college stressed academic excellence as it does today, an activities council still brought entertainment to students including some of the big bands playing at the time. "The college spent an unheard of amount of money to bring in the big bands of the '30's, '40's, and '50's. These were the top bands in the country. So it was really "a big deal." It was also a big deal because the activity fee was included with tuition.

Dr. Altman also recalls being involved with student activities through the Cardinal Key Society, which is still active on the Muhlenberg campus today in 2006. He says that "I joined Cardinal Key in 1949 or 1950. But our job was different. At dances we were sort of like chaperones." Today students in the society are involved with alumni, organizing the homecoming weekend and helping with reunions and the commencement ceremony each spring.

A member of the Cardinal Key Society, President of Phi Sigma Kappa, and an accomplished scholar: Dr. Altman shone at Muhlenberg in the 1950's. Today he works to see that the College remains in the true liberal arts tradition for the benefit of current and future students. He has proudly served as a trustee for twelve years, working today to ensure that Muhlenberg will be excellent tomorrow. 

Richard Cowen, Class of 1953

Interviewed by Ryan Kipp, Class of 2006

April 2006

Reflections of a Proud Muhlenberg Student Activist

Summary

Richard (Dick) Cowen recounts memories of Muhlenberg that date back to 1945 when his father (Class of 1928) took him to the Muhlenberg-Syracuse game in the National Invitational Tournament at Madison Square Garden. He enrolled in the college during the time when World War II veterans were attending college under the GI Bill. He recalls college pranks, the lack of ethnic diversity on campus, religious intolerance in fraternity membership requirements, friendships, and the first woman faculty member. He also describes his more recent participation in the 1988 transfer of books from the old Haas Library to the new Trexler Library. Mr. Cowen continues to follow events at the college, and is pleased to see a renewal of the college's commitment to expanding ethnic diversity on campus: a cause he began fighting for almost six decades ago as a student.

Most current Muhlenberg College students have little knowledge of the students who came before them. The building cornerstones that grace Academic Row are the most tangible reminders that we are a part of something much larger than ourselves, that others once walked the halls, wore deep impressions in the slated stairways, wandered over the open grass, and buried themselves in quiet corners while attempting to grasp philosophies and numbers.

It is with this history in mind that I share the following interview with one of Muhlenberg College's alumni from the Class of 1953. Admittedly, for me, it was an extraordinary opportunity to actually touch Muhlenberg's past by meeting Richard (Dick) Cowen, alumni and prominent Allentown *Morning Call* newspaper reporter. Here before me was a person who experienced college life years before the first class of women ever ventured into Muhlenberg's classrooms. This man's memories include returning troops from World War II, who with the benefit of the G.I. Bill, and sought their rightful share of educational opportunities.

Some of the physical differences in the campus during Mr. Cowen's days as an undergraduate include the old Haas College Library where books were stacked on tall cases throughout the first and second floors, a librarians' checkout desk occupied the rotunda, and the windows that now overlook the beautiful campus barely let the sun's rays into the building. Brown Hall, which is currently the site of the antics of freshmen men as they "check out" all their female classmates in the freshman residence hall, was in Mr. Cowen's time, an all-male dormitory. And, finally, the Egner Memorial Chapel was a significant presence in all Muhlenberg students' lives because they were required to attend chapel at least thirty times each year. Muhlenberg College certainly was a different environment in the 1950's and Mr. Cowen brought those memories to life for me.

Mr. Cowen spent his childhood in Queens, New York; but because his father was a Lutheran pastor, the Cowen's family moved frequently, never staying in one place for more than seven years. Mr. Cowen says, "I do remember attending a special basketball game in New York's Madison Square Garden with my father on March 16, 1945, when Muhlenberg College competed with Syracuse University in the National Invitational Tournament. The Mules actually won that competition with a score of 47 to 41." He was impressed to see such a small school as Muhlenberg playing in Madison Square Garden, and is proud to see that photos of the winning basketball team and other memories from that Madison Square Garden game still have a place of honor in Muhlenberg's new Life Sports Center's Memorial Hall. Of course, Mr. Cowen is also thrilled that the College selected a photo from this historic game to be enlarged as one of the large murals that appear in the Life Sports Center's solar corridor. The Madison Square Garden scoreboard stands out behind the image of a Muhlenberg player. It was this basketball tournament that made Mr. Cowen realize that his father had a deeper connection to this small Pennsylvania college as a graduate of the Class of 1928.

Muhlenberg would become a larger part of his own life in the years to come. When it came time for Mr. Cowen to go to college, Muhlenberg was a given. "Not many high school graduates went on to college," remarks Cowen, "but my father was a Muhlenberg graduate, so I became a Muhlenberg legacy." As Mr. Cowen looks back at his high school class, he notes that many of his classmates either dropped out before graduation or did not immediately continue their academic studies. "Students went off to

the war in place of going to school,” he explains. This contributed to our college class size being small. In fact, if you look at the college yearbooks during this time span, you will see that several graduating class years are collected in one book. “Our class ranks and athletic teams were thinned due to the war,” reflects Mr. Cowen. Things changed after the war. “The G.I. Bill after World War II offered returning veterans an all expense paid education. For this reason, many elected to go back to school after the war. Every college accommodated the veterans, even though not every college liked doing it.” Mr. Cowen remembers living with the veterans in a room that he describes as kind of like a barracks, set up next to where the current Trexler Library stands today.

One of the best aspects of this interview, from my perspective, was Mr. Cowen’s graphic description of student life almost sixty years ago. As a freshman in 1949, he was proud to wear a beanie cap and a large pin. In contrast to today, when students would undoubtedly protest at being singled out as the entering class – indeed it might be considered hazing – Mr. Cowen indicated that he wore these symbols of a “college freshman” with pride, boldly proclaiming his ties to Muhlenberg.

Mr. Cowen was involved on campus. “I was the chief editor for the *Muhlenberg Weekly*. I particularly remember the April Fools’ edition that provided a spoof on every aspect of campus life. We all took it in great fun.” He was also an elected member of student council his first year. In his sophomore year, Mr. Cowen ran for president of his class and decided on a unique method of getting the votes he needed. “I had students write personal letters to the advisor of Student Council, telling the advisor of my qualifications.” This had never been done before. Mr. Cowen hoped that, through this approach, he could mobilize students’ awareness of the importance of student governance. “I think this writing campaign brought the general student body into the heart of the race. It was difficult to be apathetic once you signed an endorsement letter.”

Mr. Cowen was a free thinker and rebelled against the college authority when he thought it was necessary to make a point. Though he would not provide specifics, he confided that he was responsible for political stunts that dismayed many administrators. “When I was at school, there was a lot of activism on campus.” One example that Mr. Cowen explained was that someone lowered the American flag on Muhlenberg’s campus to half-staff on the day when the dictator of the former USSR, Joseph Stalin, died. This

was during the height of the Cold War and the Allentown neighbors were upset and accused Muhlenberg of supporting Stalin. “The local police closed the case by saying that someone who lived in Allentown pulled a prank on campus. No one ever questioned the police report; and no one knew who was responsible for this, but I do.”

One of the issues that Muhlenberg College recently identified in its new strategic plan --a renewed focus in increasing diversity-- is something that Mr. Cowen also values and worked to advance when he was a student. According to Mr. Cowen, there is an obvious difference between his years on campus and today. Black males were not too common in any college then, let alone Muhlenberg. What diversity there was on campus consisted of a handful of black students, who were recruited to play sports. Mr. Cowen recalls. “These students did not have the friends or the support like their white student counterparts. I petitioned to have the names of the first black graduates of Muhlenberg College appear on a wall in honor and remembrance of their accomplishments, but the college staff at that time pushed this aside.”


Mr. Cowen also has unfortunate memories of religious intolerance on campus. He recalled pledging a fraternity along with another friend. The friend was Jewish and because of this, he was not accepted. Mr. Cowen, in turn, dropped out of the fraternity. “This move on my part was a rather courageous act at the time, particularly since there was little student or administrative support for civil rights on campus. I could have easily lost my own friendships or status within my peer group by this display.” Mr. Cowen said that his responsibility to himself, to his own sense of ethics, led him to these types of “rebellious” acts. Even if he was only one person, he needed to show that he disagreed with the fraternity’s exclusion of Jews.

Concerning his social life, Mr. Cowen acknowledged that he did have a local girlfriend. He introduced her to his best friend at a point when their relationship was coming to an end. She is now married to this best friend. Mr. Cowen comments, “It is a small world.”

Mr. Cowen has fond memories of one particular faculty member, the first woman professor employed by Muhlenberg. Cowen was not enrolled in any of her classes but became friends with her through another classmate. Mr. Cowen recalls that the male professors informed her that she could not teach at Muhlenberg until she obtained her

master's degree. The professor ended up earning that degree and then returned to Muhlenberg to teach. Unfortunately, Mr. Cowen does not remember her name and there is no other documentation of this story.

Perhaps his fondest recent memory of the college occurred during the summer of 1988 when Muhlenberg College dedicated the Trexler Library. Students formed a human chain lining the sidewalk from Haas (the original library) all the way down to the new library. Book-by-book, they passed the library collection along this human chain until all of the books reached their new home. The first book was an old *Bible* dating back to 1748 and the very last book to pass over to Trexler Library was one written by Mr. Cowen, a biography of Dr. Conrad Raker, the founder of the Good Shepherd Home. The title of the book is *Pappa Raker's Dream: A Loving History of the Good Shepherd Home*. Mr. Cowen received this special distinction because it was one of the newest library holdings at that time and because the head librarian knew just how much time, love, and effort, Mr. Cowen had put into the research and writing of that book.

Mr. Cowen has continued to be a part of the Muhlenberg community since his graduation in 1953, quietly observing the dramatic changes and continuities of his alma mater. "While the College has made substantial progress in the area of religious diversity, I do not see much improvement in the way of ethnic or racial diversity on campus," says Mr. Cowen. "I am anxiously awaiting the new Dean of Students, a new multicultural center, and finally an increase in minority students." Mr. Cowen stays informed through the College's website. He was definitely ahead of this time in the 1950's as a student who campaigned for social equality. Perhaps in the coming years, he will enjoy seeing the progress he helped spawn decades ago. 

Edward Davis, Class of 1960

Trustee

Interviewed by Courtney Williams, Class of 2007

April 2006

A Different Experience

Summary

Edward ('Ed') Davis, Class of 1960, experienced Muhlenberg when it was a very different place than it is in 2006. Mr. Davis, as a freshman, participated in hazing rituals that were part of the campus' tradition at the time. He describes these rituals in detail. He was also a student when women were first admitted to the college in 1957. He remembers the campus as generally accepting of women although he admits that the men sometimes gave the women a hard time in the dining hall. Even though his college days are far behind him, Mr. Davis is still an active participant in the life of the college as a member of the Board of Trustees.

Muhlenberg College: a different time, a different place. Walking down Academic Row in 2006, it is hard to imagine that this warm, friendly, caring place wasn't always the way it is now or that the college has such an interesting history. Ed Davis, Class of 1960, who is originally from Pottsville, Pennsylvania, remembers a very different Muhlenberg College. He says that his memories of his life as a college student are clear as day.

Hazing, denounced by speakers here on campus in 2006, was quite a different issue back in 1956 when Mr. Davis began his college career. Mr. Davis justifies his hazing experience by relating it to the influence of the army veterans of the world wars who had once taken part in intense basic training programs where they were whipped into shape. Returning to college as veterans, they brought this disciplinary ethos with them; and around 1920, they created a ritual of hazing. Mr. Davis, unfortunately, was one of the individuals who were required to participate in this tradition.

Freshmen at Muhlenberg College were required to wear beanies at all times. They also had to carry a variety of items with them, such as pipe cleaners, just in case an upperclassman asked for one of the required supplies. At any given time, an upperclassman could yell "air raid" in West Hall, currently Brown, where the freshmen

lived. If this happened, all the first year students had to carry trashcans into the hallways, put them over their heads and blow whistles. This act may seem absurd in 2006, but things like this happened on college campuses around the country years ago. Even though professors at the colleges were obviously aware of these traditions, no attempts were made to stop them or even to reprimand those who took part in them. Several times the freshman class was even lined up on Academic Row and questioned extensively about the Muhlenberg's history. Students, who were not learning the required material as quickly as the upperclassmen would have liked, were sent to Tribunal. This was where certain "bad" freshmen were subjected to extra hazing until they worked harder to learn the facts. Freshmen were also required to attend the first football game of the season in their pajamas. Hazing could be ended early if the freshman could beat the sophomores in a series of physical activities. These events were held down at Cedar Creek and attracted a huge crowd. The battle between the two classes involved three events, the tug-o-war, a push game and touch football. If the underclassmen won two of the three events, the hazing ended about a month or two before the regularly scheduled time, which was normally before winter break.

Although the hazing rituals were aimed at freshmen, not all freshmen were treated equally. If a student was favored by upperclassmen, he was hazed less. First year students, who were returning to college at the age of twenty-one or twenty-two, after serving in the military, were not required to be involved in these activities. The sophomores, fueled by their power trip, hazed the most and promoted hazing rituals.

Hazing was just one issue; much else has changed in fifty-years. When Mr. Davis started at Muhlenberg, the campus was all male. It was not until his sophomore year, the Fall of 1957, that women were first admitted to Muhlenberg College. This transition created a small uproar, but overall it was widely accepted. The co-ed transition changed West Hall, now known as Brown, into an all female dormitory. When women moved into the Hall, members of the *Muhlenberg Weekly* took pictures of the urinals with flowers in them, mocking the women. Other than these small events, Mr. Davis does not recall that there was significant hostility toward the women.

Mr. Davis should be extremely thankful for the addition of women to the Muhlenberg campus. Soon after the women were admitted, he met his sweetheart and


future wife. They dated in college and got married not long after graduation. It would not be surprising if there were a large number of other students from this first class of women who met their husbands and were married on campus in the chapel like Mr. Davis and his wife. Even though women were now part of the campus, there would not be any sororities until many years later.

Mr. Davis found his calling in Greek life. Back in 1960 Greek life was a significant part of the Muhlenberg college campus culture. The majority of male students were affiliated with one of the six fraternities at the time. Although these fraternities have not all remained at Muhlenberg over the years, Mr. Davis' fraternity, Phi Kappa Tau, is still on campus to this day. Students were allowed to pledge fraternities during the second semester of their freshmen year, which is different than the current rule, which restricts pledging to the first semester of the sophomore year. Mr. Davis' pledging period lasted about six to eight weeks, but he will remain a brother for life. PKT, as it is referred to, was originally located on the corner of Liberty and Leh Street. During Mr. Davis' junior year, the fraternity built its current house next to Sigma Phi Epsilon, near the current library. The benefit of having fraternities on campus was that the students involved in Greek life had their own kitchens in each house. As a result, the college dining facility was not as large as it is today because many students did not regularly eat there.

In 1960 Seegers Union did not exist; however, there was a small dining area and union called the "Commons" (currently Walson Hall). When women were admitted to the college, they were assigned specific seating in the dining hall. Surprisingly, however, they were not required to sit by themselves. Instead two women were assigned to each table of men. Mr. Davis believes this was in order to keep the men in line. Both men and women were required to get dressed up for dinner. The men wore sports coats and the women wore dresses and even gloves. Mr. Davis remembers that although the goal was to keep the men in line, it was not successful. He remembers the men trying to make the women think they were fat by commenting on the amounts of food they ate. Men did this so they could have an extra helping of mashed potatoes. These actions seem absurd today, but they were common at the time and accepted by the students. It is obvious that Muhlenberg had different values and morals at that time.

Students were even required to be present at Chapel during the years Mr. Davis attended Muhlenberg. Although there were a variety of religions at the college as there is today, religion was an integral part of the campus. It was mandatory that in order to graduate all students must go to Chapel twenty-eight times a semester, but services only lasted twenty minutes. These services were not necessarily religious, but they did often have a choir singing or prayer services. Speakers were often brought to campus during chapel time. This ensured that students were attending speakers' presentations. In order to get credit for chapel time, students were given a slip when they entered the service. They had to fill it out and return it to the professor who collected it as they left the chapel. A practice like this would never happen in 2006.

In 1960 when Mr. Davis graduated, college did not cost students an arm and a leg as it does today. Attending Muhlenberg College in his freshman year, 1956, cost Mr. Davis a mere \$350 a semester. Students at the college today spend that much on books for one semester or even a single trip to the mall.

Although things have changed over the years since his graduation, Mr. Davis remains an active member of the college community. He is a trustee of the college and on the board of his fraternity. Mr. Davis' contributions to the college are visible in Trexler Library; he has donated a study in honor of his wedding anniversary. Mr. Davis' wife even helps out in the Admissions Office here on campus. The couple's dedication to the campus shows how much it means to them and other alumni. It is through the contributions of alumni that Muhlenberg has been able to thrive and continue to develop over the years. 

Lona Farr, Class of 1962

Trustee

Interviewed by Robin DeCicco, Class of 2006

April 2006

Breakfast with the Board of Trustees

Summary

Lona Farr was interviewed while having breakfast with other members of the Board of Trustees who expressed interest in hearing about her college days. She described the factors that led her to enter the second class of women to matriculate at the college; freshmen hazing as well as the dress code, curfews, and the many rules restricting the lives of students, especially women students. She expressed a special sense of achievement in taking the initiative in organizing a girls' field hockey team. She described the party scene of her day, the courses she took, and the advisor who discouraged her from applying to law school.

It's 7:30 in the morning. Muhlenberg College's Board of Trustees' breakfast is being served in the back room of Seegers Union where a decadent buffet bears no resemblance to what is served in the cafeteria. Everyone crowds around our table hoping to get a seat next to the lady in the yellow suit. The Dean of the Night School introduces himself and says he has been anxiously awaiting an opportunity to discuss the upcoming summer session; other board members engage in chit-chat by asking her how she's been; and one of her long-time friends places his coffee mug right next to her while asserting that they need to catch up. In socializing with board members, Lona Farr, a 1962 graduate of Muhlenberg College with a Doctorate in Education from Temple University, is simply fulfilling her duty as Chair of the Educational Policies and Faculty Affairs Committee of the Board. She has been on the Board since 1982. She is well known around the College and especially among all of the board members who are delighted to see her. As soon as she grabs her oatmeal, sausages, and coffee, she announces that I will be interviewing her during breakfast to collect information about her experience at Muhlenberg as a student. Other board members immediately express interest in hearing Dr. Farr's personal narrative of her college days.

Predictable jokes are made, “Lona, are you sure you remember when you went to college? That sure was awhile ago.” She shrugs it off with a smile. It seems that the board members are close enough to joke around with each other. After Dr. Farr finished telling the table that I was conducting this interview not them, she took us back to 1958, her senior year of high school. She first visited the College as a favor to her mother because one of her mother’s cousins was affiliated with Muhlenberg, but she admits that, “It didn’t even cross my mind to apply here.” When she returned home from her mini-Muhlenberg trip, she didn’t give the school a second thought and instead focused on the schools she really wanted to attend: Ursinus, Chestnut Hill, University of Pennsylvania, and Bucknell. She was convinced that her next four years would be spent at one of these Pennsylvania schools --that is, until she heard a knock on the front door.

Her neighbor from across the street knew that she was in the process of searching for the perfect school, so he showed her the five-page spread that *Life Magazine* devoted to Muhlenberg. The College was trying to publicize the fact that it recently went co-ed in 1957 and was encouraging young women to apply. *Life’s* article persuaded her to take another trip to Allentown, but this time with a different mind set. She says, “The second time’s a charm” because she fell in love with the campus and felt that she could really contribute to the academics and politics of the Muhlenberg community by being in only the second class of women to graduate.

Haps Benfer, the Head of Admission at the time, (the residence hall Benfer is named after him) interviewed Dr. Farr and told her, “Muhlenberg could be a good fit for you, but you need to get your verbal SAT’s up.” Dr. Farr stopped smiling for the first time. She put down her spoon covered in brown oats, and began to tell me how her Muhlenberg fate was almost jeopardized.

Apparently, after she had accepted Muhlenberg’s invitation to join the class of 1961, her mother sent the college the consent form, and what she thought was her daughter’s deposit. One day her mother received a letter in the mail stating that her daughter would no longer be allowed to enroll at Muhlenberg because the deadline for the deposit had passed. Dr. Farr’s dark eyes and the lines on her forehead signaled that this was a very serious matter; and that if it wasn’t for her mother calling over and over

again apologizing for forgetting to send in the deposit, she would have never been a Muhlenberg student.

The story ends and a big smile re-appears on her face as she continues to talk about one of the greatest loves of her life- - this small, grassy campus that made her feel at home. As a freshman, she lived in Brown Hall, which is still the all girls dorm today. The fact that the dorm exists and has the same name in 2006 as it did in 1958 is almost the only thing that remains unchanged today. Unlike today's freshmen, Dr. Farr's freshman year was defined by rules. "Housemothers" roamed around the dorm, checking girls' rooms to make sure their beds were made by 9 a.m. and that they were in their rooms by 9 p.m. on week-nights and midnight during weekends. "They were so strict that if we wanted to leave for weekends, or even if we wanted to leave campus to go to the supermarket, we had to sign out and the administration alerted our parents so that they always knew where we were," said Dr. Farr.

"Didn't this bother you," I asked. "I could never imagine going to college and having my parents know my every move." "We didn't know any different," Dr. Farr simply replied. She then told me that if I had a problem with my parents finding out everything that I did, I was sure to have a problem with the dress code. My jean capris and flip-flops would not have been accepted on campus in the fifties. Women were prohibited from wearing slacks in public while the men were able to wear anything they wanted. Even when she and her friends wanted to play tennis, they were forced to wear skirts over their shorts until they reached the tennis courts.

In addition to the dress code, women had to follow, they were also subjected to hazing rules. Freshmen women had to adhere to rules that the men made up. When Dr. Farr explained the rules that she and the other girls had to obey, she wasn't upset or annoyed by the way the boys treated her. This surprised me because she is such a believer of freedom and independence. "The boys made us wear beanie hats and buttons with our names and hometowns written on them. We were required to carry matches and pipe cleaners at all times and were expected to light cigarettes," she said. "Oh," she continued, "How could I forget that we had to tip our hats whenever we walked in front of the Statue of General Pete."

“I followed all of these rules,” she admits, “There was only one I broke.” Every year the housemothers made it mandatory for the girls to decorate their doors during the holiday season. During Dr. Farr’s sophomore year, she and her roommate wanted to protest; they thought that decorating their door was pointless since they were busy enough studying for finals. While everyone else made festive looking Christmas trees, stockings, and elves, they covered their door with newspaper and sticks. Dr. Farr admitted that the housemothers condemned them, but she said it was well worth it.

When she was not breaking rules, she was busy acting as the “initiator” on campus. The only women’s sports team at Muhlenberg was basketball, which disappointed her since she played field hockey in high school and wanted to continue playing. She was so determined to play that she walked around all of the women’s dorms in search of fourteen athletic girls to help organize a field hockey team. Fortunately she was able to find enough players so that a team could be organized to compete against other schools. They were undefeated for four years. “Organizing this team was so special to me and the rest of the girls --it made us feel really good that we were able to accomplish what we wanted to during a time when that was not always possible.”

After field hockey practice, Dr. Farr spent her nights in her room studying. When we compared our course-load during freshman and sophomore year, they were similar since the college obliged students to take required classes from the very beginning. She remembered enrolling in philosophy, history, English, and science courses, which she admits were all demanding. Even in 1958, Muhlenberg’s academic reputation was rock solid. During her junior year, she decided that she wanted to attend law school after graduation; however, her academic advisor did not agree with her decision and talked her out of law and into teaching. At the time, Dr. Farr could not comprehend why her advisor felt so strongly about her not becoming a lawyer; but now looking back on the situation, she is almost positive that her advisor did not want her to enter (what was then) a strictly male profession. “I went from wanting to be a lawyer to becoming a teacher in a matter of minutes. I was unhappy, but accepted it, which was true of many things about women at the time.” Although she wasn’t thrilled about becoming a teacher, she managed to teach elementary school for seven years part time and four years full time.

My hand accidentally grazed the coffee mug sitting in front of me, making the waitress think I was signaling her for a caffeine re-fill. “No thanks,” I say quietly while nodding to her, not wanting to miss any of Dr. Farr’s words. “Okay, let’s get to the good stuff,” I say and pause for a second to see if she’s thinking what I’m thinking. “You mean, my social life, don’t you?” I knew we were on the same page. “Well,” she begins, “Our strict curfews did not keep us from having fun.” It turns out that the women of Muhlenberg kept the men of the Lehigh Valley entertained. No girls attended Lafayette College or Lehigh University, so like clockwork, every Thursday night, the boys from these schools called the Muhlenberg dorms asking for six girls to join them at a party.

“They even sent cars for us!” she exclaimed. When she didn’t party with the Lehigh and Lafayette boys, she and her friends traveled to country hotels on weekends to have a good time. The one she remembers having the most fun at was called “The Willows.” Even though Dr. Farr had plenty of fun during her Muhlenberg years, she admits that there was not a great deal of social activity on campus and that the college restricted alcohol use, so most parties were off campus.

Dr. Farr sits back in her chair and engages in conversation with the board members at our table about how different their academic life was compared to their social life. The entire table seemed to agree that in terms of academics, they were treated like “adults;” no one was there to advise them the way advisors help students today. If they took the wrong classes, forgot about important registration dates, or were not keeping up in a certain subject, it was all their responsibility; while, by contrast, everyone was on top of them regarding their social life. They were treated like “babies,” with curfews, housemothers checking on them, and their parents being called if they un-tucked their shirts.

The members of the Board, who had been listening to Dr. Farr’s reminiscences, concluded that the way Muhlenberg went about preparing its students back in the day was “interesting,” to say the least; then, each got up from his and her seat and started to shuffle out the door ready to take on the next event of the day. Dr. Farr advised me that she too had to be on her way to join the Board members in the newly renovated Seegers Union conference room --a day off from running her own business that provides consulting services to Not-for-Profit organizations in the areas of strategic planning,

management consulting, fundraising, and public relations. We shake hands, and I tell her that I will be going to back to bed --after all, I'm the one in college now. ☞

Barbara Crossette, Class of 1963

Interviewed by LiliAna Andreano, Class of 2006

April 2006

A Complex and Difficult Transition

Summary

Barbara Crossette, Class of 1963, who studied history and political science at Muhlenberg, went on to write for *The New York Times*. Ms. Crossette was a member of the first coeducational class. Although her experience with sexism was complex and difficult during that transitional period, she ultimately developed a deep fondness for the college, which, she says, prepared her to be a journalist.

Barbara Crossette entered Muhlenberg College at a time when America was changing as rapidly as its young minds. It was an era of civil rights activism and intense foreign-policy disputes. More personally for Ms. Crossette, it was the birth of coeducation at Muhlenberg. As a member of the class of 1961, she was a part of the first group of young women to attend the college. Deep hostility among upper class men who did not support coeducation, made the first year very difficult for the women. Despite the best efforts of the college, freshman hazing did occur—"with some of the intimidating, misogynistic behavior --bad enough to be illegal under today's laws." In fact, when the women first arrived at the school, General Pete's statue was draped in women's clothing in an effort to humiliate the new students. Ms. Crossette says that there was pressure to act ladylike, and that women were seen as "girls."

In an interview for a documentary film on the first class, "A Select Few" by Margo Trott (Class of 1990), one of Ms. Crossett's classmates admitted that some faculty members were also hostile, recounting how her biology teacher asked her quite bluntly, "what's a pretty girl like you doing here? You should be married."

Ms. Crossette lived in Brown Dormitory—then called West Hall—with the rest of the women; while she became quite close to many of the young women, she describes the experience as somewhat of a blur of curfews, dress codes and anxiety. “I managed to get through okay, but there were young women crying in their rooms, or vomiting from the distress and fearful of going out even for meals. It was not always fun.” So that while Ms. Crossette managed to stay strong and focused, the first years were not without tension.

Ms. Crossette entered the college at a time when America was at an historical fork-in-the-road, a time when social and political sensibilities were vacillating between the staunch conservatism of the McCarthy era and a newly emerging countercultural consciousness. On the one hand, Dean Anne Nugent would discourage the young women from wearing what she considered provocative attire. Ms. Crossette quips, “there are sweaters, and then there are *sweaters!*” In contrast, Beat poetry readings in the Old Science Auditorium and James Monaco’s intellectual coffee group were wildly popular. Likewise, the college held a foreign speaker series, which included the Indian writer Santa Rama Rao.

As each year progressed, Barbara Crossette and her female classmates became increasingly assimilated into the class, finding their place both socially and intellectually. She recalls English professor Dr. Harold Stegner’s famous Shakespeare class as both “illuminating and inspiring.” It was Dr. Victor Johnson in the History Department, though, that Ms. Crossette cites as most influential in shaping her young mind and challenging her to write better. Inspired by Dr. Johnson, she signed up for a double major in history and political science to better understand foreign affairs. Beyond writing for classes, Ms. Crossette was a pivotal force at the *Muhlenberg Weekly*, in its unabashed glory days. She considers it to have been great training for the journalistic career path she set upon after graduating.

Barbara Crossette remembers the campus as both peaceful and beautiful—“with lots of lawns and a coherent architecture.” She enjoyed spending time outdoors, and joined both the tennis and field hockey teams because of their supportive environments. Despite the political tensions in the world at the time, students at Muhlenberg experienced the college environment as a separate place, a world apart. There was much

discussion about civil rights issues in classes, but “campus issues were largely parochial ones,” with students arguing about the quality of food or dormitory curfews.”

Graduating in 1963 after taking a two year hiatus to travel to Asia, Ms. Crossette went on to a phenomenal career in journalism. She served on the staff of the *New York Times* as a Southeast Asia correspondent from 1973 well into the 1990s. Similarly, she was the *Times* Bureau Chief at the United Nations from 1994 to 2001. Barbara Crossette currently writes for the independent online news service UN Wire. She has not forgotten her roots, however, and proudly recalls that the “college faculty were enormously stimulating intellectually.” ☞

Sam Beidleman, Class of 1963

Director of Athletics and Interim Dean of Students

Interviewed by Alexandra Raymond, Class of 2007

April 2006

From Freshman to Interim Dean of Students

Summary

Interim Dean of Students Beidleman describes the much smaller college that he enrolled in during the late 1950s. It consisted of a few buildings north of Chew Street, and a very limited curriculum. He was active in athletics and in Greek life as student. He returned to the college as a coach two years after graduating in 1963, and has had a long and happy association with the college. He remembers seven presidents. He believes that the many changes that he has witnessed have brought benefits to everyone associated with the college today.

In the impressive office he currently occupies as interim Dean of Students, Sam Beidleman was more than happy to share his memories and experiences as both a student and staff member at Muhlenberg College. He leans back in his leather chair and reminisces about his days as a student. From his first semester on campus as a freshman in the Class of 1963, Dean Beidleman was deeply involved in the college through sports and Greek life. He graduated as mathematics major, and returned to the college just two years later to begin coaching baseball and football.

For over forty years, he has had the privilege of witnessing the countless changes that the school has undergone both physically and socially. He seems almost at a loss for words as he slowly describes just how amazed he is at how academically diverse the curriculum has become during that time. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, there was no Theatre Department, the Center for the Arts did not exist, and there was no Media and Communications Department; students studied education, pre-med, liberal arts, and pre-theological studies.

The campus used to consist only of Memorial Hall, Haas, which was the old library, Trumbower, the Chapel, and what is now the Wescoe school building. There were only three residences: Martin Luther, East Hall, and Brown Hall. The current Walson Hall was the dining hall, then known as the Commons. Prosser, Benfer, and Walz Halls were in the process of being built. “Physically the campus is like a different place,” Dean Beidleman said. The building that is now Plant Operations used to be a two-story student union building. There was literally nothing south of Chew Street: no academic buildings or student residencies. Dean Beidleman said that he had no problems finding a parking spot on any given day in the Martin Luther parking lot; he remembers being able to park his car there and walk almost in a straight line to the student union. That is not possible today because of the extensive construction that has taken place over the last several years.

Because of his long history with Muhlenberg, Dean Beidleman has, “personally known seven presidents.” He recalls each having wonderful individual qualities. They brought their strengths and weaknesses to the job, and made outstanding contributions from which we have all reaped benefits today. “Anywhere along the line that could have broken down, but it didn’t. And that is testimony to the strength of the institution and also to the quality of the people,” he said.

Discussing his favorite professors, Dean Beidleman laughed heartily, and commented on his sense of privilege in building close relationships with professors that he would soon interact with as a colleague. Dean Beidleman admitted that at first being a colleague to former professors was awkward, but as he got older it became easier. When he was a student, most of his favorite professors were in the Mathematics Department; and he says that each of them represented what Muhlenberg was and hopefully will

always remain. They were a group of people who were truly interested in educating students, and helping the student body grow and mature beyond the intellectual boundaries. They were people who cared about what a student accomplished; and they constantly thought about ways of becoming better educators.

Dean Beidleman was a center and tackle on the football team, and ran track. He became a member of a fraternity during his senior year. The living situations were very different from what they are today; there were no mile houses and no off-campus living. Students either lived in the dorms or fraternities, or they commuted. As a local resident, living seven miles away, it made sense for Dean Beidleman to live at home and commute

“When we discuss the issue today with leaders of Greek life, we have to remind them that the two things that drove Greek life back then was the fact that housing opportunities and meal arrangements in the frats were better than what you got on campus, so there was a practical reason why frats were popular. The concept of scholarships for leadership was also effective, but what really drove the enrollment was the fact that living in the fraternities meant no meal plan and a nicer room.” The fraternities on campus at the time, as Dean Beidleman remembers them, were SigEp, PKT, TEK, APO, and Lambda Chi Alpha. He belonged to Lambda Chi Alpha, which was one of the first fraternities to be dissolved. There were only about 30 men in each fraternity, but given the size of Muhlenberg at the time, the total number of men in Greek life was substantial compared to the number of students in general. Dean Beidleman still values his experience as a fraternity brother and keeps in touch with many of his brothers.

When discussing political activism on campus, Dean Beidleman said, “We were in between the Korean and Vietnam wars; and there wasn’t a whole lot of obvious activism. There were strongly held opinions, but I can’t recall any marching and protesting. One of the most controversial issues that arose during my undergraduate days was a reading by the poet LeRoi Jones [Amiri Baraka]. His work used some words that in that era were considered rather vulgar. The problem stretched all the way to the Board of Trustees and the President defending the right of free speech. Today Jones’ reading would go by almost unnoticed.”

The college has changed, but the vigor remains. He believes that at Muhlenberg education extends beyond the classroom. Naturally, students have changed, but they have

always been independent. In his years as an employee, he has witnessed very few protests, but the voices of the college remain strong. *The Muhlenberg Weekly*, *Ciarla*, and Student Council have continued to influence the community.

After his graduation in 1963, Dean Beidleman coached football for 13 years and baseball for 25 years. He now encounters the sons and daughters of his former team members. He retired in August 2000 for three years, and then was asked back to Muhlenberg to serve as acting Director of Athletics for three to four months. He was encouraged by the Athletic Department to apply for the job, and ultimately got the job on March 13, 2006. He then went on to become the interim Dean of Students following Dean Rudy H. Ehrenberg's retirement. Dean Beidleman cherishes his years at Muhlenberg both as a student and staff member; he continues to love the community that Muhlenberg offers and to value his experiences as a college employee. ☞

Albert Kipa

Professor of Languages, Literature and Cultures

Interviewed by Kristen Ziegler, Class of 2006

May 2006

Culture, Controversy and a Dead Cat

Summary

Dr. Kipa, who has been at the college since 1966, looks back on this long history at Muhlenberg remembering Dr. Shankweiler's protest against the administration's encroachment on faculty professionalism; faculty chaperones at student parties; a student celebration of the sesquicentennial of Goethe's death in 1982; faculty-student summer sessions in the old Soviet Union; the controversial visit of Le Roi Jones and its aftermath; the faculty quota system of the 1970s; and serving under six college presidents. He notes changes in students over the years, recalling that students of earlier generations placed the highest priority on academics while students today seem to regard participation in campus organizations as having the same value as their academic experience. He especially welcomes the greater emphasis that the college now places on diversity. Dr. Kipa views his long tenure at Muhlenberg as "a lucky opportunity."

When Dr. Albert Kipa came to Muhlenberg College in 1966, the college only enrolled 1500 students in its small campus north of Chew Street. “I didn’t really know how long I would stay here,” said Kipa. Out of the 25 faculty members who were hired that year, he is the only one left.

The faculty at that time was far more homogenous, with most professors being male, Lutheran scholar-teachers. Though the professors shared similar backgrounds and interests, Dr. Kipa noted that one of the professors of biology, Dr. Shankweiler, gained notoriety when he disagreed with the Dean of Academics. At one point, the Dean required that all professors submit copies of their exams before administering them. Dr. Shankweiler felt that this practice “smacked a little bit of sort of high-schoolish supervision.” When Dr. Shankweiler gave a test on the anatomy of a cat, he knew of only one way to submit it: “He apparently put this dead cat in a plastic bag and carried it over to the Dean’s office and plopped it on the Dean’s desk and said ‘you wanted my exam, here it is.’”

While Dr. Shankweiler had conflicts with the administration, Dr. Kipa said that he, like many other professors, related well to their students. “They were experts in their field and experts in their interactions with students.” College policy dictated that the professors and students had to be adept at socializing as well: organizations on campus could not hold parties if they did not have a faculty chaperone. Fraternities and other clubs invited faculty members and their spouses to events, but then the students tried to divert the attention of the chaperones. “Students took turns entertaining us so that our attention was riveted in one corner of the room so that the party could go on,” said Dr. Kipa. This strategy, however, allowed the faculty to get to know individual students better in social situations. Dr. Kipa believes that their interaction still retained a formality that does not always appear in students today.

Dr. Kipa characterizes the students of earlier years at the college as serious and eager individuals. In 1982, on the sesquicentennial anniversary of the death of Goethe, Russian and German students produced scenes from his most well known work, *Faust*. “It was a small group of students, but they were enthusiastic students and hard-working students.” These people, and others at the college, impressed Dr. Kipa because of their dedication to their work. While current students participate in many different

organizations on campus and value them as much as their academics, Dr. Kipa said that is not how it was thirty or forty years ago. “If you think about the columns of the Greek temple, and have each column represent a discipline... [the academic life] tended to be the bar that would be supported by the columns and it used to be the most important part in that respect.” The way current students do not always keep up with class assignments reflects that difference,” said Dr. Kipa. “Reading is not very much in vogue now.” Dr. Kipa does, however, see positive changes in the student body as a result of the increased value the college now places on diversity of students through race, color, religion and even geography. “Though the College sometimes says that we need a greater variety still... I think we’ve broadened the base of our student body.”

Another way that the college has expanded the horizons of students is through exposure to a broader range of cultural experiences. The college now offers a study abroad program, internships and semesters in Washington D.C., but in his early days, Dr. Kipa said, “Study abroad used to be a personal manner.” Students who were interested in another country normally visited over the summer or tried to arrange to take classes through another institution. Through a summer course, “Contemporary Soviet Culture,” Dr. Kipa and another colleague in the Foreign Language Department (as it was called then) began an international study program at the college. In this course, students traveled to the Soviet Union for six weeks to learn first hand about the people and culture. Dr. Kipa and his colleague accompanied the students on a rotating basis, so Dr. Kipa spent every other summer in the Soviet Union for many years. “It was a marvelous experience for students.” Unfortunately, travel became more difficult and the course was discontinued.

This course was not the only curriculum change over the years. “In most instances, it was a matter of liberalizing the curriculum, giving the students a greater number of choices, or at least, providing students with a greater variety of courses of study,” said Dr. Kipa. In addition to the tremendous growth of Theatre and Dance Departments, Dr. Kipa notes dramatic changes in the sciences. “The progress that mankind has made during the last 150 years in understanding itself and in understanding nature and the universe around us is tremendous, and so obviously the curriculum had to change in order to just simply keep up.” He attributes the growth of many majors from

nine classes to up to fifteen classes to this explosion of knowledge. Perhaps the most important changes would be the decision to allow students to double-major and to allow a student to earn a dual degree. “If you want to get a true old-fashioned liberal arts perspective on life, you not only focus on either a humanities discipline or social sciences discipline or science, but you focus on two of those three areas...it still gives you a much broader picture in that respect.”

Over the years, Muhlenberg has tried to combine the classroom experience with the world beyond the 'Berg bubble. In his program, Dr. Kipa took students from his classes to New York City to see the theatre and the opera so they would be able to relate it back to their coursework. He remembers that on September 11th, 2001, he planned to take the German program to New York City to see the opera. “ I was shaving around nine o'clock that morning when I heard that an airplane had hit one of the World Trade Center towers. I turned on the television and saw an airplane actually crash into the tower... at that point I realized that we were not going to go on our New York trip that evening.”


While this moment is emblazoned in the mind of Dr. Kipa, he also remembers when a Lutheran Bishop visited from Soviet Latvia in the early 70s. “At that time, this was a very controversial figure... because usually those who were allowed to become bishops in the Soviet Republic were those who had connections to the secret police.” When the local Latvian community heard that the college planned to have this man visit the campus, they organized and protested.

Another controversial speaker, Le Roi Jones (Amiri Baraka), visited during Dr. Kipa's second year at the college. Jones's poetry used “unusual vocabulary” including swear words and erotic language that some community members considered offensive. The uproar caused then president, Erling Jensen, to call an All College Assembly where he announced that he would stick by his original decision to allow Jones to appear because of the college's support of freedom of speech. “He said ‘By allowing him to speak here, we did not endorse his writings but we did allow our students and the community to have an opportunity to learn.’” While Jones did speak, Dr. Kipa thinks Jones's presentation may have had more far-reaching and unexpected consequences: “Well, a year later, the president retired, so that was a controversy... that actually affected the leadership of this institution.”

Including this president, and interim president James Steffy, Dr. Kipa served under six different presidents. Each man, he feels, left an imprint on the campus, though some have met with more success than others. Dr. Kipa cites positive changes in the physical and academic appearances of the college and in the lower acceptance rate in student admissions, but he says that the college still needs to work on increasing the endowment. “In that respect, the administrations share, or have much in common.” While each president has worked to increase those funds so that the college has more financial freedom, Dr. Kipa feels that the faculty have compensated for this lack. Through their dedication and willingness to go to the extreme of what they are expected to do, the faculty have contributed significantly to the institution.

This contribution has not gone unrecognized and, at one of the most recent meetings, the Board of Trustees increased the number of tenure-track faculty positions by ten. However, there was a time when the college tried to limit the number of tenured professors. “In the early 70s, one of the controversial issues was the question of tenure quotas—whether a certain percentage of faculty earn tenure and certain do not. College policy for awhile had a policy of no more than two-thirds tenured.” Not only did this save the institution money, but people also argued that this gave the college the opportunity to introduce fresh blood. Younger professors would be able to come to the college for a short period of time, offer some variety to the curriculum and bring in the newest developments from graduate school. It was, however, made clear to these new professors that they would not be coming up for tenure. While this policy has since been formally rescinded, Dr. Kipa said that it is still in practice.

During that time (1970s), the economy of the United States was troubled: inflation caused unsteady prices and attempts to stabilize them didn’t help. The faculty attended many meeting where they were told that their salaries might not keep up with the cost of living and, if they did, their merit pay would be greatly reduced or non-existent.

Despite all of this, Dr. Kipa continued teaching at the college. The forty years he has spent teaching at Muhlenberg is the longest period he has ever spent in one place. “I suppose I could have been elsewhere, but for me, Muhlenberg was a very lucky opportunity.” 

Ludwig Schlecht

Professor of Philosophy

Interviewed by Julie Eisen, Class of 2007

April 2006

A Sense of Community

Summary

Dr. Ludwig Schlecht describes Muhlenberg, past and present, including world events, curriculum, and the student body. An underlying theme of his interview is the importance of community: a community that Muhlenberg has been lost to some degree with the passage of time. Through the recollection of facts and anecdotes, Dr. Schlecht paints his own living history of Muhlenberg. He recalls student-faculty happy hours in fraternity houses, memorable comedy groups, hippies, intellectuals, and individuals. Dr. Schlecht calls his Muhlenberg experience “wonderful.” His story explains why.

After five years of teaching elsewhere, Dr. Schlecht came to Muhlenberg in 1969. His primary responsibility now is teaching philosophy; however, he was Head of the Philosophy Department for a number of years. But as students know, there is more to college than work.

The red doors that Dr. Schlecht walked through thirty-six years ago had just gone through something of an academic renaissance. Just a year before, the College qualified for a Phi Beta Kappa chapter, the longstanding national honor society that contributes academic integrity to an institution. The reputation-building reward came after a decade of reshaping Muhlenberg to meet the criteria that a Phi Beta Kappa school requires—things like an enhanced library collection and a fresh crop of stimulating professors. “So I came right after that, and there was a sense of accomplishment. A sense of, you know, the place is now a very reputable academic institution. And *it was*.”

In terms of academics, “the sciences were particularly strong, but the History and English Departments also had just stellar faculty.” True to the College’s historical and current reputation, pre-med was by the far the most popular draw. Though unlike today’s more balanced range of academic majors, Dr. Schlecht’s early experiences with the school were during a time when Muhlenberg was primarily attracting students for pre-

professional positions. Many majors that the school offers today—business, media & communication, theatre & dance—didn't exist. The leaner major selection resulted in many students taking more traditional paths, like medicine and law.

Throughout the 1970s, Dr. Schlecht says, at least half of an incoming class had the thought of entering some future career in medicine. Of course, after going through the standard weed-out freshman courses that are still in place today, many of them no longer had that plan, but the school still graduated about fifty students going on to medical, dental, or veterinary programs each year. “It was probably the most important factor in terms of students coming to Muhlenberg.”

The enrollment was less than it is now, hovering at 1500, as compared to today's enrollment of about 2100. The student body was also less geographically diverse, many students hailing from local Pennsylvania towns—New Jersey had yet to discover the school that it would ultimately overtake. In terms of academic prerequisites such as SAT scores and class rank, Dr. Schlecht believes that the minds were as sharp as they are today. “We had very good students,” he recalls for the second time.

Very good students with different outlooks on education than is the case today: although Dr. Schlecht makes it clear that students are first and foremost individuals, he notes that the accepted educational philosophy of his earlier Muhlenberg years seemed to attribute greater value to the importance of encouraging a reasonable assessment of issues, rather than just teaching the bare necessities. As time went on it seems that “more students are eager to please and do what's expected of them in order to qualify for positions in society.”

With the amount of stress placed on test preparation, resume-building, and the college application process as a whole these days, it's easy to see why students may be more likely to run through the motions of education while missing the scholarly values of a liberal arts education. “In those days students [were] not so much concerned about getting a job as they are today. Parents [were] not so much concerned about making sure their tuition investment is going to pay off as is true today.”

The academic open-mindedness that Dr. Schlecht talks about does not mean that students were not career-oriented in the past. After the infamous Kent State Massacre—the May 4, 1970 shootings of four Kent State students picketing America's invasion of

Cambodia that led many fearful universities to cancel the rest of their semesters—Muhlenberg only cancelled class for one day. There was discussion on campus where students expressed their concerns on what was going on in the world, but after that day of meditation, class resumed.

In Dr. Schlecht's view, the school's Kent State reaction was a testament to the students' personal ambitions. "[Students] didn't want to do something that was going to jeopardize their prospects for getting into med school or law school" (like not fully finishing off the semester), so the Kent State campus response was balanced between staying dedicated to everyday commitments and expressing individual concerns that were very much a part of the time.

As products of their time, Dr. Schlecht says there were many students who may have looked the part of hippies and may have had nonconformist attitudes with respect to social expectations, but in terms of the "social unrest," an expression Dr. Schlecht uses to classify the period's cultural atmosphere—national and local—"it was never a major upheaval on campus."

The college was looser then. It was, as Dr. Schlecht reflected more than once, "a different time." A more relaxed attitude toward alcohol policy and liability issues helped lubricate more intimate faculty-student interactions outside of the classroom. On random Fridays, fraternity houses would host happy hours, and lots of the faculty would go, have a beer and chat. "These kind of informal things simply don't exist anymore."

Dr. Schlecht also recalls a group of parody-performing students that comically called themselves the "beer barrel players." The group would imitate professors in a lively entertainment that drew crowds from students and faculty alike. "We'd go down to Brown Hall and watch ourselves be made fun of over a beer with students. It was great fun!"

Dr. Schlecht feels that this sense of deep-seeded community has been lost to some degree. From evening happy hours to collective 10 a.m. coffee breaks, "you just could feel the spirit and sense of connection and participation." Dr. Schlecht attributes some of the loss of community to sheer size; more students by definition means less intimacy. In addition to the growth of the population, as the campus itself constructs and expands, the faculty become more isolated in terms of their academic domains.

Academic fields now demand more research. The ongoing shift from more teaching to more scholarship may contribute to the lost sense of community. Symptomatic of the demise: a very lively lunchroom for faculty has now disappeared altogether.

One very positive bit of growth has been the curriculum development. As mentioned before, some majors—and buildings to house such majors—did not exist when Dr. Schlecht began. Probably one of the most drastic and significant additions has been the theatre major. *The Princeton Review* college guidebook now lists Muhlenberg as having the 18th “Best College Theatre” in the country (source: www.review.com). Pretty good for a program that only began in the 1970s.


Dr. Schlecht believes dramatic changes such as this make a difference in terms of campus culture, and help diversify the kinds of students we have. “I mean the kinds of students interested in theatre, dance, etc... are generally different in their outlooks and in their general characteristics than say students interested in a pre-med program.”

Campus expansion, in addition to curriculum and student body, is inextricably linked to technology. The massive availability of computers, public and personal, has changed education dramatically. Dr. Schlecht still remembers the spirit duplicator and mimeograph machines: printing methods that predate the Xerox machines. Just the simple act of duplicating handouts is much easier. “It’s hard to imagine a world without word processing...and without Internet for recourse though.” It sets a very different experience, he says, in terms of being a student as well as being a teacher from what it was thirty years ago.

Students thirty years ago and students today, though very different in some aspects, remain unchanged in other ways. There are always the individuals. “I hate to generalize about students” says Dr. Schlecht. “Individual students are still individual students. I had wonderful students early on, and I have wonderful students now.” Dr. Schlecht says that there are always students who just go through the motions of getting a degree, because it’s what society and their parents expect, but on the other side of the spectrum he says there *are* always others that can be challenged and can be very stimulating and stimulated along the way. People’s views on and approaches to education

are timeless. Valuing learning for the sake of personal enrichment is an idea that never goes out of style.

Overall, Dr. Schlecht says that his experience at the college has been very positive. “Of course there are things that happened that you would have liked otherwise...but on the whole this has been a place that has been wonderful from my perspective.”

Muhlenberg must feel the same way about Professor Schlecht. Thirty-six years and counting. 

Christopher Hooker-Haring, Class of 1972

Dean of Admission and Financial Aid

Interviewed by Kristin Lillian Johannessen, Class of '07

May 2006

An Activist's Perspective: Past and Future

Summary

Dean Christopher Hooker-Haring recounts his experience as a student at Muhlenberg, specifically his experience in working with other members of Student Council to change college policy regarding mandatory attendance at chapel and guest lectures. He also discusses changes in the college, which have resulted in a student body that is strongly committed to achieving academic success.

As a former student and current Dean of Admission and Financial Aid, Christopher (Chris) Hooker-Haring is deeply embedded in the fabric of Muhlenberg. A smile crosses his face, as he nostalgically recalls his experience as a student. Muhlenberg provided supportive and engaging professors as well as the opportunity to discover a passion for theatre and music. Muhlenberg was, and still is, an environment that promotes self-discovery through possibility. This possibility permitted Chris Hooker-Haring to be involved in student council, Phi Kappa Tau, cross-country, music and theatre. Over the

past twenty years, this environment has been transformed far beyond the dramatic physical changes in the buildings.

Chris Hooker-Haring has witnessed the student body shift from students with varying levels of academic seriousness to a student body that is serious about academics. The student political voice now has an increased presence and has grown louder. In addition, the student and professor relationship has changed from a fairly removed discipline-based relationship to one of understanding and encouragement.

Dean Hooker-Haring enthusiastically regales me with the story of his student council experience in boycotting chapel and lecture requirements. When he was a student, every student was expected to meet nine lecture and/or chapel requirements. He viewed these requirements as far too stringent as well as unfair to students of various religious faiths. He also believed that it was the school's responsibility to foster a learning environment that would attract students to lectures, rather than requiring their presence. Along with several fellow student council members, Chris Hooker-Haring voiced opposition. With this call for change, they were successful in and gaining the support of over six hundred students and faculty who signed a petition. Unable to suspend and or punish the majority of the student body, Muhlenberg was forced to change. This change has created a more positive attitude towards attending guest lectures and other co-curricular college events.

Dean Hooker-Haring experience as a student activist had a deep impact on Muhlenberg; and his role on campus today continues to inspire further positive changes. Each year, he is responsible for attracting applications and helping to build strong incoming classes for the college. In that way, he shapes the future of the of Muhlenberg.



Arlene Gisolfi

Administrative Assistant, Music Department

Interviewed by Tanya Carpenter, Class of 2007

April 2006

Unexpected Performances

Summary

Mrs. Arlene Gisolfi has worked at Muhlenberg College for over 30 years; she has witnessed many of the changes that have molded Muhlenberg into the community that it is today. Curious activities on campus never fail to mystify Mrs. Gisolfi. Sculptures pop up in front of various buildings on campus. Students develop obsessions with illegally acquiring piano benches and mirrors to add to the décor of their dormitory rooms. Television commercials promoting soup are filmed in front of the library on campus, instead of the dining hall where one might expect to find soup. Campus scenery has changed over the years; construction is a constant theme at the college. At least nine new or renovated buildings opened since Mrs. Gisolfi started working at Muhlenberg in 1974. In the past, Mrs. Gisolfi would recognize most of the faculty when she walked across campus. She said that if she walked across the college grounds today, she would hardly know anyone. Mrs. Gisolfi has enjoyed working at Muhlenberg College; and her stories provide proof that she has paid close attention to detail over the years. When her name is mentioned, people express their gratitude toward her generosity. When I initially asked to interview her, she said humbly, "I lead a dull life." The tales she told me proved otherwise.

Beyond odd monuments and peaked buildings lies a college campus that holds many untold tales. Founded in 1848, many generations of students, faculty, and staff have passed through its doors. Some have developed unique insights into what it means to be part of the Muhlenberg College community. One of these individuals can be found in the Music Department located in the Center for the Arts building (the CA). Working at Muhlenberg College since May 1, 1974, Mrs. Arlene Gisolfi has dedicated a significant part of her life to holding the Music Department together.

When Mrs. Gisolfi first arrived on the Muhlenberg campus, it was considerably smaller than it is today. The CA did not exist. Neither did Trexler Library, Moyer Hall, or any of the buildings on the south side of campus, except a few fraternity houses. Instead,

large fields and farmlands completed the scenery. “I like it better the way it is now,” she said, referring to the buildings that make up the campus in the year 2006.

Mrs. Gisolfi began working for the college in the Annual Giving Office. After six-and-a-half years she moved over to the Public Relations Office where she remained for 10 years. During that period, Mrs. Gisolfi did not interact with the faculty; she was exposed primarily to members of the staff working in her office. “Back then, there was one boss to every 10 or 15 staff associates. Now there are 20 bosses for every two staff associates. I’m exaggerating, but that’s what it is like; everybody’s a specialist now, and we do not have any staff,” she explained. Since 1991, Mrs. Gisolfi has worked in the CA where she has more contact with faculty and students: an environment that she prefers.

Working at Muhlenberg for over 30 years, Mrs. Gisolfi has witnessed countless occurrences that are anything but ordinary. “I remember when they brought Victor’s Lament to the college, that huge red sculpture on the front lawn” she said. The transportation of this sculpture cost the college 80,000 dollars since it was carted all the way from a junkyard in California to Pennsylvania. Recalling the eccentric artist and his outlandish piece of work, Mrs. Gisolfi remembered asking herself at the time, “Why would you move that thing here for so much money?”

Muhlenberg College has always had a fascination with odd objects that splash color upon random places around the campus. A couple of years ago there was another huge figure sitting outside of the CA. Before the object was moved to a local park, it left a lasting impression on Mrs. Gisolfi. “It was bad,” she stated, “it was just this big, canary yellow, blob of something right in front of this building.”

Along with the sculptures vanishing and appearing on the campus, the students have changed over the years as well. In the 1970s, students were the sons and daughters of doctors, lawyers, and ministers. The goal of the education process was to receive a degree in science. “Everyone went on from college here to be a doctor, a lawyer, or a minister,” she said, “and the majority of the students on campus were Lutherans, who are the minority at the college today.” A few years later, Mrs. Gisolfi remembers an abrupt transformation in the education goals expressed by the students. “Then there was a change and they all became plumbers, carpenters, and electricians,” she said. The majors of interest switched to ones that would provide financially successful jobs out of college.

Since she started working in the CA, Mrs. Gisolfi also noticed a great increase in the number of music students enrolled at the college. When she first arrived there were only three majors. “Now there are 60 music majors and over 20 minors. It is a wonderful advancement, but there is no space for instruction,” she stated.

Memorable events occurred on campus since Mrs. Gisolfi became associated with the Music Department. When 9-11 shocked the world, the CA projected the latest news and images onto the large screen located in the Recital Hall. The foyer was kept open, allowing anyone to enter and reflect upon the sobering information. It is by far one of the arts building’s most powerful productions. During Aids Awareness week, she also remembered the dismal appearance of the CA, “some guy, I’m not sure who, just draped a huge black cloth over the entire building.”


Outside productions have also appeared on the campus. Mrs. Gisolfi described the time that a soup commercial was filmed at the college. “That was fun,” she said, “it was for *Campbell’s Tomato Soup*. They put all these fake flowers out in front of the library so that it would look good in the commercial. They kept dancing all over campus. That was nice.” When Mrs. Gisolfi was still working at the Public Relations Office, a movie was filmed in the old gymnasium. Although she was unable to remember the title of the film, she recalls that it was a captivating experience that excited the entire campus. Also, for the kick-off of a *United Way* event, “they held a sit-down dinner for 800 people in the Life Sports Center,” she said in a baffled tone.

Other small, yet unforgettable episodes, involve the odd activities of certain students on campus. When Mrs. Gisolfi arrived at the Music Department, she had an additional job added to her normal daily routine, “when I first came here, people would steal piano benches. Everyday, I would have to go down and check the piano benches. Then one day, they stopped stealing the piano benches,” she said. Unable to understand why the thefts came to an abrupt halt, she asked someone else’s opinion about the robberies. “He told me, ‘well, there are only so many coffee tables that you need,’” she said, laughing in agreement. “Now they steal the mirrors that are hanging on the walls in the practice rooms. I buy these mirrors at garage sales because the college refuses to buy any more mirrors for the Music Department. And the students take them,” she said. Frequently puzzled by this peculiar behavior, Mrs. Gisolfi explores possible explanations

for this, concluding, “They do not figure that it is stealing. They probably say, ‘well, it is still on campus.’”

Different presidents have overseen campus activity since Mrs. Gisolfi started working at the college, and she became acquainted with some better than others. “I don’t know this one,” she said about the current president, Dr. Peyton R. Helm, “because he doesn’t come into this building.” In the past, most of the presidents knew her by name, “they would always say hello, and you saw them a lot more,” she said. However, Mrs. Gisolfi added that, “for three of the presidents, I worked over in the administration building where they were every day, so that’s a big difference.”

The faculty and students at the college remain relatively passive when rallies and protests are concerned. Rumors of a protest occasionally float around campus, but a specific issue is never mentioned. Mrs. Gisolfi recalls a time when some individuals worried that students were going to protest. “But no one protested, no one even cared,” she said, “if the students or faculty protest, they do it silently.”

Mrs. Gisolfi adores working at Muhlenberg College. She never misses a choir concert, and thoroughly enjoys her employment in the Music Department. Comments from faculty members and students about Mrs. Gisolfi have a unanimous appreciative tone; the Music Department would not be able to function as smoothly without her. “She takes such good care of us,” one woman said. This is the consensus of people involved with the college. She is a popular figure on campus except with bandits who like to borrow piano benches and mirrors to furnish their rooms. 

Joan Marx, Class of 1977

Professor of Languages, Literatures and Cultures

Interviewed by Rachael Danahy, Class of 2007

April 2006

A World of Opportunity

Summary

“When I first stepped foot on Muhlenberg’s campus, I remember thinking my world was going to be opened up,” Dr. Joan Marx recalls as she reflects back on her memories as a student at Muhlenberg College. A graduate of the class of 1977, Dr. Marx successfully completed her bachelor’s degree at Muhlenberg and returned with her doctorate in 1984 as a faculty member. Now the Head of the Languages, Literatures and Cultures Department, she has not only witnessed the dramatic changes Muhlenberg has undergone over the past three decades, but she has also experienced them. As a commuter student, she had little time to become actively involved on campus, but she remembers the people and events that have shaped her life. Dr. Kenneth Webb helped to guide her studies in the Spanish language, and encouraged her to pursue a double major in political science. She attended a Frank Zappa concert on campus. One event that stands out in her mind is her graduation day, held under a beautiful grove of trees on a sunny day.

“When I first stepped foot on Muhlenberg’s campus, I remember thinking my world was going to be opened up,” Dr. Joan Marx recalls as she reflects back on her cherished memories as a student at Muhlenberg College. A graduate of the class of 1977, Dr. Marx successfully completed her bachelor’s degree at Muhlenberg and returned with her doctorate in 1984 as a faculty member. Now the Head of the Languages, Literatures and Cultures Department, she has not only witnessed the dramatic changes Muhlenberg has undergone over the past three decades, but she has also experienced them.

Dr. Marx grew up in the Allentown area and lived approximately two miles from the campus, which made her life easy as a commuter student. According to Dr. Marx, becoming a student at Muhlenberg College meant she had entered a whole new world full of exciting academic opportunities. As a student during the Seventies, she was still expected to fulfill a series of required courses, “The goals of the curriculum are

embedded in the perspective course list and students are successfully trained on how to think and to address themselves critically.” Unsure of her major, she explored the many engaging courses offered in the curriculum and discovered a deep interest in the Spanish language. She also wanted to get inside the world of politics and decided to take on a double major in political science.

She recalls that many of her favorite professors taught in the History Department, but the professor she held the greatest admiration for and the man she credits with her love for Spanish was Dr. Kenneth Webb. He helped to guide her in her study of Spanish and encouraged her to continue with her education. Since the Spanish Department was rather small during the 1970’s, she sat as a student in many of Dr. Webb’s classes. Under a double major, Spanish and Political Science, she excelled academically at Muhlenberg. She credits her “extraordinary” professors for her achievements.

As a commuter student, Dr. Marx regrets that she was not able to participate in more of the social activities that occurred during her time at the college. Once she was finished with classes, she worked long hours to support her education and found the social scene at Muhlenberg very difficult to become actively involved in. She also found little amusement in the Greek life party scene on campus. As she paid her own way through college, she was focused on academics and felt little need to jeopardize her work with weekend partying.

Outside of her rigorous course load, Dr. Marx did find time to enjoy some of the student-sponsored events at Muhlenberg during the 1970’s. The plays that were performed on stage in the Garden Room cafeteria were entertaining and enjoyable. The students also organized concerts, which were a great way to spend an evening. One concert in particular that sticks out in her mind is Frank Zappa. Dr. Marx and her friends did not attend the concert to hear the controversial band, but rather to listen to the opening act, The Turtles. It was a night she would never forget and one of her most memorable experiences from her undergraduate years at Muhlenberg.

As a liberal arts college, Muhlenberg has always been an open place for political activism. The Vietnam War had come to an end by the time Dr. Marx arrived at


Muhlenberg, but she remembers the school welcoming a number of controversial activists to speak as guests during her time as a student.

When her four years as an undergraduate student came to a close in the spring of 1977, her graduation ceremony became one of her most beautiful Muhlenberg memories. The ceremony was held under a scenic grove of trees, the area where the Moyer building stands today. There was plenty of shade from the trees for everyone to sit comfortably and listen to the guest speaker who happened to be a member of the National Education Association. She spoke on the important issue of freedom of expression for artists and protecting federal funding from political agendas. At the time, Dr. Marx felt that the topic was irrelevant to her interests; however, today she realizes the importance of the issue and the significance of the speaker's words.

Dr. Marx went on to achieve her master's degree in Spanish at Ohio State University and then received her doctorate at Rutgers's University before returning to Muhlenberg as a full-time faculty member. Now she is able to reflect, with some perspective, on the administration changes the college has undergone. As a student she was uninformed on the issues of the presidency and felt a great deal of separation between the administration and the student body. Today, students are much more involved with President Randy Helm's activities and help to influence important decisions through a close connection with the Board of Trustees. "As presidents came and went I felt as though each one had left a stamp on the institution whether it was a positive or negative. This has always been the case and always will be the case with college or university presidents."

The architecture of Muhlenberg's campus changed drastically over the many years Dr. Marx has been associated with the college. In 1977, The Center for the Arts began construction, and it wasn't until Dr. Marx returned as a faculty member that she saw the completed structure. She is also amazed at the technological advancements the college has undergone. Ettinger was once a very difficult building to hold a class in, "there was no air-conditioning so the windows had to be wide open, then of course the bees would fly in and then the lawn mowers would start." The building was also the home of all the administration offices; and as a student, she had no classes in the

building. Today, Dr. Marx teaches several classes in Ettinger as well as in the new Moyer building that now sits directly beside it.

Muhlenberg College has always been a place of great importance in the life of Dr. Joan Marx. She reflects on her time at Muhlenberg with great enthusiasm and pride. Some of the best memories of her youth were acquired at Muhlenberg; today, as a teacher and mentor, she shares the opportunities that the college has to offer with a new generation of students. 

Curtis Dretsch

Professor of Theatre

Interviewed by Alexis Mercado, Class of 2007

April 2006

Embracing Change

Summary

Professor Curtis Dretsch (former Dean of both Faculty and Academic Life) focused primarily on his contributions to building the Theatre Department and to improving both the quality of academic life and the physical facilities of the campus. He also describes the changes in his own style of teaching over the twenty-eight years at the college.

Construction of the Center for the Arts along with hiring of Curtis Dretsch and Charles Richter in 1978 were the building blocks of the Theatre Department, which helped the program achieve its current size, impact, and national recognition. Professor Dretsch was hired as an English professor as part of President John Morey's plan to establish a theatre program. This plan was seen as a departure from Muhlenberg's history, according to Professor Dretsch; the plan to construct the Center for the Arts was considered a "risk" because the campus was very conservative in the late 1970s. The establishment of a theatre program pushed Muhlenberg to become a more liberal institution, and also spurred the many changes to the Muhlenberg's façade that would follow.

Professor Dretsch's influence on the campus increased further in 1993 when he became the Dean of Faculty. His goal was to maintain a "consistent level of everything" because the campus was growing rapidly with new facilities and more students. The campus was also becoming more liberal, opening its doors to a more diverse student body. Because of the positions he held and with the impact that he and Professor Richter were having locally and nationally, Professor Dretsch was having a lot of fun at Muhlenberg. And he continues to do so today.

In the early 1980s, there were only five to ten students in the theatre major. Because Professor Dretsch was not that much older than his students, he found a kindred spirit with the students, and felt that he learned as much from them as they learned from him. From the beginning, the students were required to invest both dedication and energy in the program: something that has stayed consistent with all theatre majors throughout Professor Dretsch's association with the department.

When Professors Dretsch and Richter began the major, Allentown was still a big manufacturing town with Bethlehem Steel as the primary industry. It was difficult to attract the blue-collar community to theatrical productions. The local community got involved initially by doing what the students were doing: acting. Muhlenberg didn't have the number of student actors it has now, so it promoted auditions in the community; and most of the early casts were made up of members of the local community. These community members helped decide what the future of the Muhlenberg Theater Department would be like. For example, Professor Dretsch says, *HMS Pinafore*, "set the standard" for the Theatre Department. We built an entire ship for the set and we had real cannons. And we had the moon move across a starlit sky...The ovation from that show was phenomenal. The audience, made up of students and the community, was stunned to see such high quality work done for a theatre production in the local community." *My Fair Lady* had a similar impact. Professor Dretsch says that the show "shocked the local community" because no one had ever seen a college production done at that level of professionalism and quality. The casts and the crews showed the Lehigh Valley how good theatre was going to be at Muhlenberg.

Despite these successes, the theatre program grew slowly. By 1995, however, there were 65 students in the program, which Professors Dretsch and Richter regarded as

too many. “When we had 65 students in the program, Richter and I no longer had enough space to do everything. We needed to expand our space.” At this point, Professor Dretsch requested that the college construct what would become the Baker Theatre to support the program. When the request was approved, and word went out that Muhlenberg College was constructing a new theatrical center, the program really took off. “The announcement of a new theatre building was all it took for the numbers to increase so rapidly in the late 1990s.”

The Baker Theatre was not the only construction project that would bring changes to Muhlenberg. Many of structures on campus today were either not around in the late 1970s and 1980s or were in bad shape. In 1986-1987, the library moved from its old location in Haas to the newly constructed Trexler Library building; and the Field House and Ettinger were renovated. As Professor Dretsch was the only member of the Muhlenberg faculty with design training and experience, he was involved in the construction and renovation of many buildings. Professor Dretsch’s projects include the Garden Room, the dining room of the President’s house, Hoffman House, and the commencement stage. He also designed the old banners on Academic Row, and the Muhlenberg signs on each end of campus.


All has not gone smoothly for Professor Dretsch, however, “It was very difficult to attract students from different locations. It was difficult to attract students from different ethnic standards because other schools that had scholarships for minority students would ‘buy’ the students away from Muhlenberg. This was occurring when I first came here, when I was the Dean of Faculty, and it still goes on today.”

During Professor (and Dean) Dretsch’s time at Muhlenberg, he notes, four Presidents have come through; and each of those Presidents, starting with John Morey in the 1970s, did something that departed from Muhlenberg’s tradition. But Professor Dretsch explained each president had to find his own way to communicate effectively with faculty members so that they would follow his lead. “When it comes to college faculty,” Professor Dretsch says, “they like to be the ones leading the way; and they like to think that they are the institution. Presidents think the exact opposite; and feel that they should lead the faculty. It was the President’s job to find a way to convince the faculty to follow his lead, whether it is with coercive thinking or consensus. But each president took

the college miles in the right direction; the school is run more effectively; and the school is producing more impressive results.”

Just as different presidents tried to transform the college and build support of the faculty, the faculty has changed as well, including Professor Dretsch. He observed that the faculty is more diverse when it comes to their attitudes and their training, something he tried to encourage when he was Dean of Faculty. One thing Professor Dretsch has emphasized, both as a faculty member and dean, is bridging the gap between students and faculty. “It is one of the aspects of this college that makes it so special; and both the students and the faculty have benefited from that interaction.” As for the older faculty members such as Professor Dretsch, he says that they have been able to embrace the changes because they believed that the changes that were being made to the campus, the curriculum, and the student body were good for the school.

Professor Dretsch has tried to improve his own interactions with students by changing his style of teaching during his 28 years at Muhlenberg. He has shifted from a strict focus on content to finding ways to provide encouragement and inspiration to each individual student in his classes. “Back when I was teaching the content, there was nothing that had to be changed and I was just teaching the material. Now I change the way I teach every semester to try and reach each individual student and inspire them to do well. This is something that has occurred in all of the departments with all faculty members. The content is now being used as a means to an end, instead of just an end. It is all part of the school’s passionate obligation to push students so they can go as far as they can get in everything that they do.”

Professor Dretsch took nothing and turned it into one of the nation’s strongest theatre programs. He set a standard of excellence for the Theatre Department; and he will be remembered for his contributions. Muhlenberg College has expanded and improved its reputation by adding theatre to its list of strong departments, thanks to Professor Curtis Dretsch. 

Dr. Daniel Klem Jr.

Professor of Biology

Interviewed by Stephanie Longworth, Class of 2007

April 2006

“Successfully Unfunny” for Twenty-Six Years”

Summary

Dr. Klem has worked at Muhlenberg College for twenty-six years. He has nothing but positive memories of that experience. He characterizes his reputation among students by musing, “If I have one personal reputation with my students, it’s being unsuccessfully funny.” He devoted a significant portion of the interview to sharing his respect for and fond memories of Dr. James Vaughan, former Head of the Biology Department, who passed away in 1998. He described student protests or pranks, which occurred in the 1980s and involved periodically painting Victor’s Lament, although he doesn’t remember what motivated these student actions. Finally, he described the strength’s of the biology curriculum at Muhlenberg and the college’s bird collection.

When asked what his first impression of Muhlenberg College was, Dr. Daniel Klem of the Biology Department, responded, “Like everyone else, I felt this welcoming environment, largely because of the people I met in the Department of Biology.” He added, “There’s something about the grounds that is beautiful.” Dr. Klem is a twenty six year veteran of the college; and in all of his years here, he says, he cannot recall a single bad memory. From the students he taught to the faculty members he’s worked with, Dr. Klem truly loves everything about Muhlenberg.

He can recall only one time when he wanted to “bark at a student,” but now, with a smile on his face, he laughs and says “it was less of a colorful memory for me, but I’ve now turned it into a colorful memory.” He loves working with the students at Muhlenberg, and is always striving to make sure they succeed. It is easy to see, after speaking with him only for a short time that he’s truly concerned with his students’

progress and is willing to help them in any way he can. He laments with a smile, “If I have one personal reputation with my students, it’s being unsuccessfully funny.”

When asked if he can remember any student protests or student activism, he can only remember one occasion. Although he cannot remember why the students were so dissatisfied, he does remember that some time in the 1980s, a group of students would protest by painting Victor’s Lament. He laughs and says, “I’m sure it brought consternation to those who had to re-paint it so many times.”

When asked how the students have changed over the years, Dr. Klem says, “The only thing I see is what change always brings, advancement in sophistication and greater knowledge, especially in the discipline of biology.” By the look on his face, it is clear to see that Dr. Klem has nothing but admiration for the students he has taught in the last 26 years.

Dr. Klem’s favorite fellow faculty member was Dr. James Vaughan, who was the head of the Biology Department when Dr. Klem started working at Muhlenberg. As a matter of fact, it was Dr. Vaughan who picked Dr. Klem up from the airport for his first interview at Muhlenberg. Dr. Klem remembers being both nervous and anxious, but the calming words of Dr. Vaughan quickly washed away those fears. Sadly, Dr. Vaughan passed away in 1998, but Dr. Klem’s memory of him is still alive today. Dr. Klem only spoke briefly of Dr. Vaughn during the interview, but every word he spoke was filled with respect and awe.


In his eulogy at Dr. Vaughan’s memorial service Dr. Klem said, “He was a great teacher, scholar, leader, patriot, family man, friend to all who knew him, and a truly distinguished individual in possession of the very best that we call human.” He added, “Without exception, he was civil and dignified, and he approached every situation with the most optimistic attitude and consistently found and added some humor at the most challenging of times.” Dr. Vaughan played the trumpet; he was an Eagle Scout; and he was throttle man on the US Navy Cruiser Topeka during World War II in the Pacific. “To my eyes, no life was any more worthy of celebrating.” Dr. Klem said.

Thinking back on the past presidents he has worked with at Muhlenberg, Dr. Klem grins and says, “John Morey, the first president I worked with, will always have a soft spot in my heart because he hired me.” He adds however, “Across all the presidents,

and all their individual personalities, and how I or others might interpret them or criticize them or give them accolades, I have never seen where their behavior or leadership style or their interests has hurt the students.”

Dr. Klem loves working at a liberal arts college. He believes that the beauty of a liberal arts college is the fact that the students get to learn and experience a wide variety of subjects. He loves the idea that pre-med majors will also get to learn about subjects such as ecology and botany. He believes this better prepares the students for when they become doctors because if they know the origins of the disease, they will have a better chance at diagnosing them. He says, “In our department, we are blessed with a number of different subjects. Most liberal arts colleges rarely have the variety of subjects within the discipline of biology that we do. This department has fulfilled all my biases regarding how biology should be taught.” He also loves the fact that biology majors may also have to take a class on Renaissance Art or the Governments of Africa. He says that one of the major attractions of working at Muhlenberg is the bird collection. Muhlenberg has one of the largest bird collections in all of the United States.

Before working at Muhlenberg, Dr. Klem had the opportunity to work at the Smithsonian Institute as a full-time researcher where he would have made twice as much money as working at Muhlenberg, but he chose to work here because of his love for teaching, which was evident throughout his interview.

During the entire interview, Dr. Klem’s loyalty and love for Muhlenberg was clear. Everything he spoke about was filled with reverence and respect. He loves that he has spent the twenty-six years of his life working at Muhlenberg, and looks forward to many more wonderful years. 

Linda Andrews

Associate Professor of Physical Education

Interviewed by Jessica Salese, Class of 2007

April, 2006

A Great Community of Scholars

Summary

A highlight of my interview with Professor Linda Andrew is her description of her appointment as Aquatics Director and the responsibilities the position entailed. She has fond memories of her encounters with some outstanding tennis players from the past, including Elisa Zafrani and Michelle Miranji, who helped her build a successful women's tennis program at the college. She also remembers colleagues Edward Baldrige and James Vaughan who were helpful to her when she became the Head of the Physical Education Department. She describes a memorable men's soccer game against Messiah College; and she recounts the many campus improvements that have taken place during her time at the college. She does think that students in the past had more fun, laughed more, and tries to figure out what accounts for that change. She feels blessed to be part of a great community of scholars and considers her time at the college to have been one wonderful experience after another.

Linda Andrews first called Muhlenberg College home in September of 1982 as an Assistant Professor of Physical Education. She was also appointed Aquatics Director, which may sound like a fun, laidback position; however, Professor Andrews will be the first to say it was tough work. She had to direct the activities in the pool and also make sure the chlorine and Ph levels were in check; so she had to know her way around the pool basement and its various water pumps. She recalls spending half of her time in the basement supervising the custodian as he poured acid into the bins. One particular time, Professor Andrews woke up in the middle of the night with a sinking feeling that she had forgotten to do something important before leaving work that day. She jumped out of bed, hurried to the college, and let herself into the pool area. She was very relieved to find everything running smoothly and the pool still intact. This incident is a testament to her character and dedication to her work.

Professor Andrews has many special memories of students and faculty colleagues during her early years at Muhlenberg. She vividly recalls sitting in her office by the pool

during one of her first few weeks at the college when a tennis player by the name of Elisa Zafrani came up to introduce herself. Zafrani had heard that Professor Andrews was appointed as the new women's tennis coach and was eager to find out when practice was going to start. Professor Andrews was amazed to hear that Elisa was ready to start practicing for the upcoming season, which wasn't going to begin until spring semester. Professor Andrews was confused, and informed her that the tennis program wouldn't begin until the next semester. Elisa wanted to start practices in the fall. She credits Elisa for her hard work and dedication; she helped set the tone for the Muhlenberg tennis program, which grew to be extremely successful.

In 1988, Michelle Miranji arrived at Muhlenberg College as a transfer student from Mary Washington College. Professor Andrews recalls being very surprised when she first saw Michelle play because she had not recruited her and didn't even know she was here. She walked on the court with a certain aura about her; Professor Andrews knew immediately that Michelle was going to become a very special player. Michelle went on to become the first Mid-Atlantic conference champion and is now in the Muhlenberg Hall of Fame.

Professor Andrews credits two special professors who were very generous in helping her settle in at the new school and made each day fun. They were also very encouraging and helpful to her when she was appointed the new Head of the Physical Education Department. The Heads of the History and Biology Departments, Edward Baldrige and James Vaughn, shared a special bond with Professor Andrews, one that she still remembers today.

Her most memorable moment so far was when the Men's Soccer team became regional champions after a close win at Messiah College. It was a cold November day, but many Muhlenberg students made the trip to support their team. The team was praying for the game not to go into overtime, but they found themselves battling through double overtimes. The team was hoping not to let such an important game come down to one final shot. Professor Andrews said that she can still see the winning play in her mind. At the last moment of the game, Todd Irving scored the winning goal with a headshot.

Looking back on her past experiences at Muhlenberg, Professor Andrews thinks that the students have changed over the years. She believes that the students in the past

were more carefree and that there was more laughter. She thinks stress may be the reason why current students don't act in the same way. She realizes that it is much harder to get into Muhlenberg College now, so perhaps the students are more worried about their workload. Yet, she has second thoughts about this as she reflects on the fact that in the 1980s students were required to take five courses each semester, but now they only have to take two semesters of five courses. In the past Muhlenberg had used the credit system instead of counting course units as it does today. Professor Andrews has noticed that every time a new president comes to Muhlenberg the curriculum undergoes some changes.

She believes that the most noticeable changes have been the new buildings. During her time at Muhlenberg, the campus has significantly grown with the addition of six new buildings, which include: the Baker Pavilion, the Trexler Library, Moyer Hall, Taylor, Robertson, and South. The most recent has been the addition to the Life Sports Center. Professor Andrews has seen changes in the students, curriculum, and the campus during her years at Muhlenberg. Not only has she been able to embrace all of these changes, but she also knows that they have improved the college. Professor Andrews is credited with turning the women's tennis team into the strong, successful team that is today. She feels blessed to have been a part of such a great community of scholars, and notes that her time spent at Muhlenberg has been one wonderful experience after another.



Paul Hurd, Class of 1986

Interviewed by Michael Joseph, class of 2007

April 2006

An Unforgettable Experience

Summary

Paul (“Chip”) Hurd spent his childhood playing on the lawn of the Muhlenberg campus because his mother worked in the Admissions Office. When he enrolled in the college, he took full advantage of the athletic and social opportunities that it offered. He was very active in Greek life, and regrets that the Greeks no longer contributes as much to the college as they did in the past. He especially enjoyed being a tour guide during his college years. He returned to the college a decade after graduation as Director of the Alumni Office from 1996-2000.

The dedication of Chip Hurd to his alma mater goes beyond school spirit; it is a desire to give back to a school that he feels gave so much to him. Growing up just seven miles outside of Allentown, and attending local Parkland High School, Mr. Hurd spent much of his childhood at Muhlenberg sporting events and playing on the campus lawn. In 1982, he transferred to Muhlenberg where his mother worked in the Admissions Office. His mother allowed him independence while at Muhlenberg and did not make her presence intrusive. Mr. Hurd credits the strong relationship he had with both his parents, which let him feel like the independent college student he wanted to be while also letting him know they were always there to help him out whenever it was needed.

When he enrolled in the college, he immediately took advantage of all Muhlenberg had to offer. He joined the basketball team, became a brother of the fraternity Tau Kappa Epsilon (TKE) and got a job as a campus tour guide. During his sophomore season, his basketball career ended abruptly due to a knee injury during a game, which required surgery. Not letting this discourage him, he decided to become more active in his fraternity by organizing various fundraisers as well as to continue his job as a tour guide.

When asked about significant changes at Muhlenberg over the years, Mr. Hurd recalled things such as the extraordinary Life Sports Center, which had not yet been built when he was a student; he also remembers that the library was still located in the administration building. Theatre was just getting started. One thing that stands out is a distinct difference was the college's social scene.

"Students just don't look out for one another anymore like they did when I was there," he says. Mr. Hurd recalled that when he was a student if freshmen came to fraternity's parties and drank too much, someone would always take care of them. They would always make sure that students got home safely. Nowadays with underage drinking being such a problem, students are being left to fend for themselves because no one else wants to get in trouble. In the 1980's, when the legal drinking age was eighteen, Muhlenberg was fairly lenient about penalizing those who drank too much; so no one was ever afraid to step up and help out someone who appeared to be intoxicated.

Mr. Hurd expressed amusement when talking about his fraternity's "happy hour" which would be held most weekends and consisted of faculty coming down to his fraternity to drink and socialize. "I remember sometimes, professors had to be carried out of the house," he laughs. Mr. Hurd was surprised to see how strict the recently implemented alcohol policy is. "I remember when I was here, there was one campus safety car," He laughs. "Now, they're everywhere you turn." He is also quick to express his disappointment with the rivalry he has noticed among the fraternities. Mr. Hurd remembers when he was a student, fraternities such as ATO, ZBT and TKE managed to get along together within the Greek system; and that the general attitude was to provide support for each other which made the Muhlenberg social scene so much more enjoyable. Mr. Hurd said the fraternities were involved in various fundraisers and community activities during the eighties, but now they aren't as active in either the social scene or the campus as they once were. Along with thriving fraternities, he witnessed a new addition to the Muhlenberg social scene. Mr. Hurd saw the emergence of three sororities Alpha Chi Omega, Delta Zeta and Phi Mu. "During my junior year, with these three new sororities starting, it was interesting to be there from their foundation and then to return and see how they have evolved since they began."

Mr. Hurd makes it clear that his dedication to Muhlenberg is not like most others. In 1996, when he was working at Air Products in Trexlertown, former President Arthur Taylor called him to personally ask if he would be interested in the Alumni Director Position. During his time as Alumni Director from 1996 to 2000, Mr. Hurd became active in numerous fundraisers including raising money to help build the Moyer building. His fondest memory at Muhlenberg, he says, without a doubt, was being a tour guide. “Since I had been coming here for so long, I loved sharing such a great school like Muhlenberg with parents and kids from all over and showing them everything Muhlenberg had to offer.” He enjoyed passing on his deep knowledge of the school to others. It is this knowledge that made him such an effective leader in his role as Alumni Director.

As a student, Mr. Hurd was able to take full advantage of everything Muhlenberg had to offer and emerge as a proud graduate of the class of 1986 with not only a broadened horizon on knowledge, but also an unforgettable college experience. ✎

Linda Luckenbill

Faculty Secretary, Mathematical Sciences Department

Interviewed by Anne-Marie Leiser Class of 2006

May 2006

An Office with a View

Summary:

Mrs. Linda Luckenbill worked in various secretarial positions for Muhlenberg College since she started in September 1987. Starting in the Student Activities office, she then worked part-time for the Academic Support Director; she became a full-time secretary in 1989 for the Student Activities Office; and in 1991, she worked for the Career Development Office. In 1994, Mrs. Luckenbill moved to the Mathematical Sciences Department where she plans on staying until retirement. During the

interview with Mrs. Luckenbill, she reminisced about numerous events, memories, and changes on the Muhlenberg campus. Fond memories of students and faculty remind her of all of the wonderful people she has become connected to through the college. Mrs. Luckenbill recalls student activism, protests, as well as physical transformations of the campus. She even shares an embarrassing experience when she mistook a student for a faculty member. Mrs. Luckenbill's interview displays a deep commitment to her work at Muhlenberg College.

Her hair is a perfect shade of beach blonde: neatly combed, curled and touching just below her shoulders. She does not need a lot of makeup, just a few sweeps of black mascara to illuminate her piercing, almond-shaped, blue eyes. I can tell she is eager as well as nervous as she begins to tell me her story.

It is a beautiful spring day. There is light dew on the college green, and pollen from the blooming trees on Academic Row blankets Muhlenberg College. As we begin to talk about her almost twenty-year career working for Muhlenberg, Mrs. Linda Luckenbill and I are sniffing and reaching for tissues as we both suffer from spring allergies.

She started her job at the college on September 30, 1987, working in departments such as the Career Development Office and Student Activities; she is currently the faculty secretary of the Mathematical Sciences and Physics Departments. Mrs. Luckenbill's husband introduced her to Muhlenberg College when he was the defensive line coordinator for the Mules football team. That is when Mrs. Luckenbill says, "She fell in love with the place." She is truly an icon of the Muhlenberg family. Not only was her husband a football coach in the 1980's, but her daughter, Traci Falco, is a Muhlenberg alumnae as well as the Director of Alumni Relations. Mrs. Luckenbill sums up her relationship with Muhlenberg well by saying, "There is something about this college that just grabs hold of you." Most Muhlenberg faculty, staff, students, and alum can agree.

Although Mrs. Luckenbill works as the faculty secretary of the Mathematical Sciences and Physics Departments, she admits that it is "ironic to be working in this area since I was not the best in these subjects in high school. When I first started, I kept asking the professors what the symbols were. I did not know the difference between an omega

and an epsilon. But everyone was patient with me and now I'm doing okay." As Mrs. Luckenbill laughs at herself, I glance at the palm tree background on her computer screen; it seems to resonate with her modesty and love for her job. She jokes that she is mainly here for comic relief. However, she also says that she loves what she does and the people she works for: "I am here to support the faculty and run the office. If they need copying, I make copies. If they need something written, I write it. I love who I work for and what I do."

Some colleagues stick out more in her memory than others. Mrs. Luckenbill recalls three "older gentleman," Professors Bob Stump, Bob Wagner and Roland Dedekind. They were the "three musketeers" and a lot of fun. Although all three professors are now retired, Mrs. Luckenbill can still remember the impression they made on her. "Every morning they would bring in sweets," Mrs. Luckenbill says. "Coffee cake, doughnuts, shoe-fly pie. And they would sit there, all three of them at the table, read the newspaper and eat their sweets before class. Every morning."

Professor Stump, in particular was "a scream," Mrs. Luckenbill remembers as she tilts her head back and releases a soft laugh. I can tell she is enjoying these memories. She swivels a little in her chair as hand gestures animate her story about Professor Stump. "I used to joke that I have earned my degree in math because no matter what classroom Professor Stump was teaching in, I could hear the entire lecture from my desk. Not only did he have a booming voice," says Mrs. Luckenbill as she throws her arms up in the air, "but he never finished a conversation." She swivels around in the chair to point out how "he would walk in the door, stand in front of my desk, and talk with me," she turns and looks at me. "And just like that he would leave, without even saying goodbye." Her eyes widen, she smiles, waves a goodbye in my direction and says "and that's how he ended a conversation, in person and on the phone. He never said goodbye." She shrugs her shoulders and her baby blue sweater crinkles as she crosses her arms and laughs.

How about memorable students? Mrs. Luckenbill recalls one young boy in particular, "Jackson Mayo came at the ripe young age of 14. He was a physics major. Jackson was just super smart, but the best way to describe him is as a fawn caught in headlights. His legs were still wiggly." Mrs. Luckenbill still keeps in contact with many students who have passed through and survived the Math and Physics Departments.

Besides the pictures of her own grandchildren, she also has photos tacked to her bulletin board of the children of students that she was close to, “I call them my Muhlenberg grandkids.”

When Mrs. Luckenbill worked for Student Activities, she remembers one young man in particular who really taught her not to judge a book by its cover. His name was George Schneider, “he was very German looking, with blonde crew cut hair. He always walked around in fatigues and camouflage. People called him GI George.” Mrs. Luckenbill learned that he was going to be the new editor for the *Weekly* and would be working in close quarters with her in the Student Activities office. “I was just petrified of him!” Mrs. Luckenbill swivels again in her chair and delicately moves her hands to her knees and her eyes enlarge. But after GI George spent a lot of time in the office, Mrs. Luckenbill discovered how wonderful he was and “we quickly became the best of friends.” She still receives letters and the occasional phone call from George, who is now a minister.

Not only has Mrs. Luckenbill seen students grow and change over the past twenty years, she has also witnessed many changes on the Muhlenberg Campus. One of the sad but also exciting changes, in Mrs. Luckenbill’s view, was the removal of the bowling alleys from what is now the Red Door in Seeger’s Union. She recalls that when her husband worked here, there would be a “coaches’ outing one night a week to bowl. That was when it was only twenty-five cents a game and shoes only cost ten cents.” She lets out a soft sigh, and takes a deep breathe as if coming to terms with the changes and memories.

Getting rid of the bowling alley allowed Muhlenberg to expand its creativity in other areas. The Red Door was converted into a student café, which was run by four paid student managers and Ernie Toma, the director who oversaw the students and all activities. “It was a new concept for the college,” Mrs. Luckenbill recalls, with a look in her eye that lets me know she is eager to see the college grow. “But it was exciting to see the bowling alleys change to a café.” The Red Door was “jammed” with students, bands, and other venues. Even now, every Valentine’s Day Muhlenberg brings in Dave Binder who pays tribute to James Taylor.

As the Muhlenberg campus continues its expansion and renovations, Mrs. Luckenbill also has had the privilege of participating in many grounds-breaking ceremonies, including the Shankweiler expansion, Trexler Pavilion, Moyer Hall, and the Life Sports Center. One exciting memory was Mrs. Luckenbill's involvement in the "book-pass" between the old library, which is now Haas, and the new one across the street. "There was a line of people and we passed one book after another, down the row, to the new library. It was an amazing sight."

Not only has the campus taken shape through buildings and remodeling, but also events and issues on and off the campus have changed Muhlenberg over the years. Mrs. Luckenbill recalls when Rudy Ehrenberg was hired; students came out and protested his appointment and his position on a stricter alcohol policy. Gay and lesbian activism was also a large issue on campus; and Mrs. Luckenbill recalls members of the group placing fake doors in Parents' Plaza and walking through them to symbolize their "coming out." "This concept is still a little vague to me and my generation," Mrs. Luckenbill looks off behind my shoulder, shielding her innocence. Global issues of years past also included environmental activism and protection. One Muhlenberg student, Radihika Atit, was very adamant about environmental protection and her advocacy eventually led to the Muhlenberg recycling program. Other issues the campus and Mrs. Luckenbill faced in the past twenty years have included what she remembers as a "teach-in" during the declaration of the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Mrs. Luckenbill looks at me and her blue eyes become a little watery, "I remember when 9/11 occurred. They had just installed the tech wall in room 125. We watched the towers fall on that screen. We were all glued to the television sets." These issues and events helped educate, change, and bring together the Muhlenberg community.

Among the many roles, events, and memories Mrs. Luckenbill has enjoyed over the years, there are also a few embarrassing moments. When working in the Student Activities office, Mrs. Luckenbill did not meet many professors. As result, she tended to mix up young faculty and students. Dave Simmons was the student council president, "He was a very mature, professional student. He always wore a suit, so I thought he was a faculty member, and for the longest time I called him Mr. Simmons." Eventually when Mrs. Luckenbill found out he was a student, she was so embarrassed and can still

remember how silly she felt calling him Mr. Simmons. As I try to jog her memory of embarrassing or fond moments in her twenty-year career at Muhlenberg, I can tell Mrs. Luckenbill is enjoying reliving the years, memories, and thoughts about the people she has met, and I am afraid to interrupt. Her hand moves up to her forehead and brushes aside her neatly trimmed bangs as if to open up more space for memories to fill in. She has a dreamy look and is no longer focusing on my questions. We both sit silently as I watch her stare at the flowers on her desk, quietly reflecting on her Muhlenberg experience.

Bringing her back to the present moment in Math Sciences Department where we are sitting at her neat desk with the tropical palm tree computer screen, “Do you wish you had a corner office?” She quickly turns to me, throws her blonde hair back over her shoulders and lets out a sweet laugh, “Yes!” Mrs. Luckenbill exclaims, “How long do I have to work here to get a window? I will be long retired before I get a window office.” We laugh together about this. “But that won’t be for many more years.” Mrs. Luckenbill plans to remain the Mathematical Sciences and Physics Departments’ secretary for as long as possible. ☞

Lauren Shanahan, Class of 1987

Development and Alumni Relations

Interviewed by Ashley Beaudoin, Class of 2007

April 2006

Greeks Were Where It Was At

Summary

Lauren Shanahan sees the college through the dual lens of a 1987 graduate and a current employee, so that her interview is framed as a contrast between then and now. She recalls how central Greek life was to campus social life when she was a student, how much more relaxed the atmosphere was then, and how the campus was a self-contained community in which students seldom felt the need to leave campus because there was always something to do whether toga or beach parties at

the fraternities, happy hour with faculty, concerts, field hockey games, or hanging out in the two or three little communities that formed around the dorms. She recalls the inauguration of President Messerli, the dedication of Trexler Library when a mule was brought to campus, and donkey basketball. She describes the, at the time, famous letters of complaint to the *Weekly*, signed by JOF. She remembers a much more limited range of majors, and pays tribute to her two favorite professors.

Lauren Shanahan is a member of Muhlenberg College's graduating class of 1987. Ms. Shanahan's first experiences with Muhlenberg were during the 1970s. Her older sister attended the college then, and Ms. Shanahan would visit often. She says that she grew up on Muhlenberg's campus. One of her most cherished memories of visiting her sister was going to the Billy Joel concert. Ms. Shanahan said that, at the time, they "kind of knew who he was, but looking back on it, seeing him at Muhlenberg was very cool. She liked the college so much that when the time came to choose which college to attend, Muhlenberg was her clear choice.

Ms. Shanahan looks back on her days at Muhlenberg fondly. She believes that her friends and sorority are what made it so memorable, "my friends used to call me the meeting girl. There was always a meeting every single night. Ms. Shanahan was very involved in student life. By her own admission, she was more caught up in extracurricular activities than in the classroom. Ms. Shanahan was the treasurer of her class for her first two years, and then moved up to be the president for the last two years. Ms. Shanahan was also a resident advisor as well as a member of the first pledge class in her sorority, Alpha Chi Omega. As a member Alpha Chi Omega, she took on the roles of vice president and pledge mom.

Muhlenberg has changed a lot since Ms. Shanahan graduated in 1987, "the whole side yard next to the chapel...was just a big open lawn. She recalls that the current library was not yet built. In its place, there was an open grassy area for field hockey practice. The hill next to the library extended all the way to the Center for the Arts and that was a place where everyone would go to hang out and watch the field hockey games. There was also no focus on the arts program. The Baker Theatre was not yet built and being a theatre major was not a common route for a student to take. Most of the students at Muhlenberg, at this time, were either science or political science majors. Ms. Shanahan

was excited to become one of the early communication majors, “it was a very young program and I think I liked that because it hadn’t really defined itself so much.” She thinks that there is a strong balance of majors on campus today, more so than when she was a student.

Ms. Shanahan described the whole feel of the campus twenty years ago as more relaxed than it is now, “when I think about the campus there were definitely two, well three, distinct areas of campus. There was East and Martin Luther and that whole quad area. They were really tight and they celebrated together all the time. There just seemed like there were always activities over there.” They were their own little communities, a sub section of Muhlenberg. If you didn’t live there, then you probably were not participating in the dorms activities. “There was the west side of campus...Brown and Walz were all women at the time and Martin Luther was all men. Prosser and East were the only co-ed dorms where there were hallways...and Macgregor was the place where everybody really wanted to live senior year.” Living on campus was a big deal when Ms. Shanahan was at school, unlike today when many upperclassmen want off-campus housing. When some of Ms. Shanahan’s friends got a house one year, she was shocked because no one moved off campus. In fact, no one really left campus for anything back then. “Life was just so different. We didn’t have locks on the doors. Nobody ever locked their door. We didn’t have computers...you had a word processor if you were lucky. The sense of community was just different. I would say, because I was the president of my class, and I probably know, really know, 300 kids in my class out of 350.” Ms. Shanahan is shocked to see how quiet dorm life has become since she was a student. On a recent trip to South she couldn’t believe that no one doors were open. She remembers living in Macgregor her senior year and thinking that was quiet, but when relating it to today’s dorm experience she realizes that it wasn’t quiet at all. Ms. Shanahan said that she and her friends lived across from guys and they all kept their doors open all the time, “it always just felt like family to me with everyone.

Greek life was also very influential when she was a student. There were five fraternities; and during her freshman year, the three sororities joined the campus Greek life. Around 70% of the men on campus at that time were involved in fraternity life, “a really big reason, I think, why so many guys wanted to participate in a fraternity is

because they actually had their own kitchens. They didn't have to eat in the union." The Greek system was a very dominant part of the college experience, "we'd go down on Friday afternoons and have happy hour. The fraternities alternated in alphabetical order. They started right after classes were over. Faculty members would all come down and they'd be there, and we'd all just be hanging out. They would be there from about 4 p.m. till about 6 p.m. At 6 p.m. "we would be like 'Oh my gosh we better get up to the union for dinner'. So out we'd go, with a beer in our hand, walk across campus, past the field hockey game, and we'd come up and campus police would be sitting out front [of Seegers] and they'd know you by name. And I'd say could you please hold this for me while I go get something to eat. I mean you couldn't do that now. And they'd say 'Oh don't be silly Lauren, just take it with you.'" Everyone knew what everyone else was doing. There were never any incidents. They would go to parties at 10 p.m. and dance until 1 a.m. and then go home. Phi Kappa Tau was actually very memorable for Ms. Shanahan, "their house song was American Pie. And every single weekend when they would have their parties they would end every single fraternity party with American Pie. The dance floor would be packed; you couldn't move. They would just take their president and lift him up and pass him around everybody. And it wouldn't matter, somebody could have taken their hands off him; he never would have fallen because it was so crowded."

On days when there was nice weather, Ms. Shanahan and her friends would sit on the hill, where the current library is, and watch the sports games. It was just such a different time because there was never any need to leave campus –ever! This was mostly because the social life on campus centered around the Greeks. "We had dance parties all the time. There was a huge Greek Week celebration that everybody went out for. They had a big eating contest, which was always the big thing. Every fraternity either had a toga party or a beach bash. ATO was famous for their toga party and the others were all mostly for beach parties.

Sororities made a huge difference for women. Ms. Shanahan was very skeptical of the sororities her freshman year when they first came on campus. They used to do their pledging the second semester of freshman year; but when Ms. Shanahan came back to school for her sophomore year, they did a second round of pledging to get their numbers

up. There were only ten people in her pledge class, “pledging itself was a no-brainer. It was very easy, very fun. We didn’t have a house the first two years and what we would do was try to get together for dinner in the union. I would say that the girls in the sorority are some of my best friends still today.

Homecoming was also very big on campus back then. There was a parade and the students would decorate the campus. There was also a sheet-decorating contest. The students would line the tennis court fences with the sheets for homecoming. The college also contributed to student social life by bringing concerts to campus. Ms. Shanahan said that Billy Idol was the best one. There was also George Carlin and the Stray Cats. All the concerts took place in Memorial Hall, where concerts are still held today.

As for politics on Muhlenberg’s campus, “we were all politically dense. Honestly, no one was particularly aware of anything that was going on anywhere else besides here.” The only significant things that happened in the country that Ms. Shanahan remembers were the Challenger exploding and Villanova winning the NCAA March Madness Tournament.

There was also a new president, President Messerli, while Ms. Shanahan was attending Muhlenberg. Like the current president, Randy Helm, he also wore bowties. She was actually involved in planning his inauguration. “When they broke ground for the library, he brought in a real mule. I don’t know why but that was his little shtick, he would bring a mule in whenever possible. He was funny. We used to do donkey basketball too. President Messerli used to bring all the mules in; you would actually ride around on them in the gym. You would ride around on them, and have to play basketball sitting on a donkey.”

The most memorable person on campus was Harold Shinman. He ended up graduating with Ms. Shanahan’s class, but was actually three years older than her. She remembers that he would write a letter to the editor of the *Muhlenberg Weekly* every week complaining about something and would sign his name as ‘JOF.’ Even now, the Alumni Office will get a letter from Harold every now and then discussing an issue on campus or just contemplating life, and he still signs all his letters ‘JOF.’

Ms. Shanahan also had some memorable professors as well. Danny Tate, a Communication professor, was a very charismatic man. “He made learning fun. The

Communications Department was very...new. They were still trying to figure out their direction. So he had a lot of freedom to do what he wanted. He made classes really, really fun.” Linnea Johnson, an English professor, was Ms. Shanahan’s other favorite professor. The second semester of her senior year, Ms. Shanahan took a creative writing course with Professor Johnson. “I wish I had taken a class with her sooner because she made such an impact with me in taking risks with writing. I still have all of my papers from her class...20 years later I still have them all.” 