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Times they were a changin’

Denison students’ world turned upside-down from 1964 to ’68

By TOM MARTIN

As members of the first Baby Boomers year to enter college, we in the Great Class of 1968 arrived at a Denison University confident in the American Way, but actually at the end of an era, and found both college and country to be significantly different a few revolutions after we graduated. We were born the year Dr. Benjamin Spock published his first childcare book.

Anyone who goes through the transitions that occur between ages eighteen and twenty-two and beyond feels that lots of aspects of their life changed in that period; and anyone who had entered Denison at the beginning of the Depression or of World War II — or when fraternities were on the eve of becoming non-residential — can rightly claim to have spanned a transformation of Old to New. I would argue that ours was a special case. We were the last of an Old Denison that was connected to a continuous past. Change for us was perhaps waiting a bit longer than for students on other campuses. More importantly, we were the last of a similarly fleeting society.

The Denison faculty had about half a dozen female members, as well as one African American. We were oblivious to the nitty gritty of faculty employment, but in fact while we were students the Math Department hired the best of a pool of four applicants for an opening, and when another member of the department inquired about his tenure prospects, President Knapp looked into a file



Clothing was the central focus for freshmen when they packed for arrival at Denison College. This freshman brought no other possessions.

and said, “You got it last year.”

While we churned through hourly exams, socializers, chapel and convocation for credit, three-minute phone calls to home on Sunday night, catching rides with juniors or seniors who had cars, leaving by regulation as well as custom slacks to the male half of the student body (as half of us had dormitory hours and an honor system while the other half didn’t), and while our class lacked but a single person who was not Caucasian and we were oblivious to any sexual identity besides our own, the country was steaming along in the rich aftermath of World War II and the GI Bill.

“Amateur” defined tennis and the Olympics. In



C. Sunbathing

1. Sunbathing is permitted **only** on the hill between Gregory Swimming Pool and the women's residence halls. Shoes and coat or similar covering must be worn to and from the area.
2. No blankets, pillows, or such articles are permitted in the area of the women's quad.

- From *Denison University Bulletin*, 1964

Sunbathing among women was permitted on campus, with strict guidelines. Oddly, this wasn't one of the approved sites.

Popular music was moving from early rock'n'roll to the Beatles on the bright side and the Rolling Stones on the dark side, and then quickly on to Jefferson Airplane, while folk music became the last kind of music widely sung around campfires and at parties — while its guitars and banjos were still acoustic. You had to audition to get into most good choirs, but young society was about to stop the kind of group singing that soldiers and slaves, as well as more fortunate people, had been doing forever. We brought radios and record players, some of them stereos, to our freshman dorms, but brought nothing else electrical because anything beyond a heating coil might blow the whole dormitory's circuits. Vinyl records scratched easily

professional sports players were bound by contract to the team for life. The only timeouts during football games on TV occurred when a team called them, and football was an afternoon game. Denison had a football team that used the single wing offense. Men's Lacrosse was new to most of us and the schedule included the largest universities in the Midwest. Ditto soccer and swimming.

News came from three TV channels and multiple local and national newspapers that prospered on advertising revenue alone. AM radio was difficult to hear at night, and Columbus' only popular music station, WCOL, cut its power at night per federal regulations. If you parked your car in the right place, you could hear popular music from "clear channel (meaning a monopoly on frequency)" WLS in Chicago, WOWO in Fort Wayne, and sometimes WABC in New York. Baseball games were challenging in hearing the voice of the announcer through almost total static.

and many of us were reluctant to loan our precious 33 and 45 rpm records, which had succeeded the clunky 78 rpm discs of our childhood.

The Pill was just coming into wide usage and perhaps it, or Hugh Hefner, moved sexual mores from pretty Puritan to a different level. The Hollywood Hayes Production Code still dominated speech, clothing to an extent, and subject matter in movies (and by extension on television) when we started in college, even if the censors had allowed the use of the word "pregnant" in "The Moon is Blue" in 1953. "The Index" was part of Roman Catholic life, and "Banned in Boston" was a phrase everyone knew better than the Comstock Act, which banned the distribution of obscenity in the mail.

Dating was the norm in organizing one to one male-female relationships, with the possibility that each first date just might lead to eventual marriage. A popular convention for dating involved dancing, in our case either at socializers or fraternity/ sorority

parties. Close friendship between members of the opposite sex without romance was a stretch, and romance as part of male-to-male or female-to-female close friendships was beyond the pale.

Vacations meant going home for the most part, and family vacations followed predominately the same pattern. Traffic was light in national parks in the summer because travel outside of commuting and business mostly meant going home or two weeks with grandma and grandpa, or maybe to the beach.

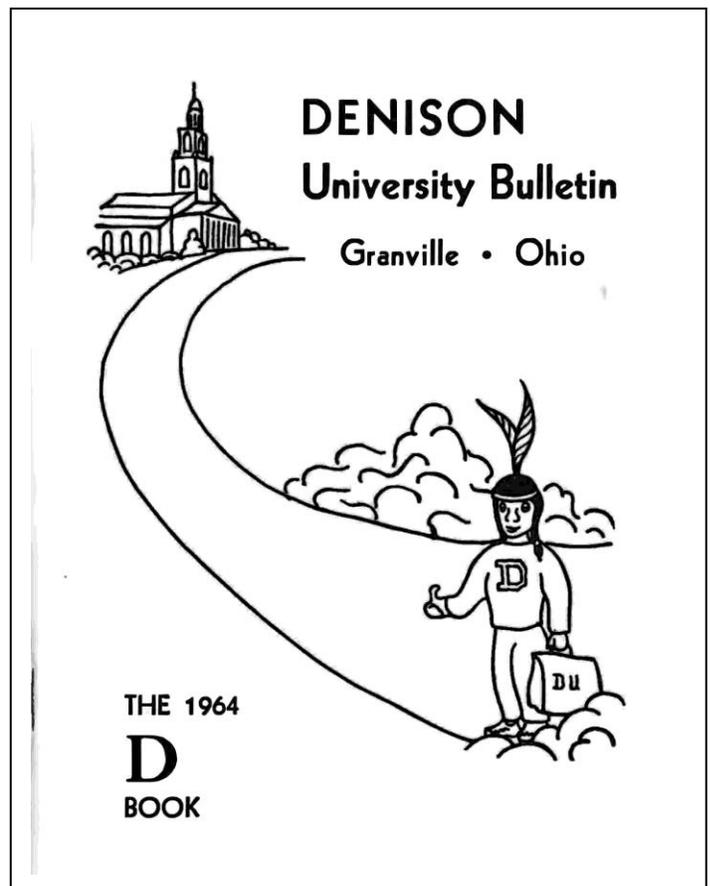
Transportation progress was still measured by the increase of speed, as highway speed limits went up to 70 mph, cars were more powerful and faster and faster, and the sound barrier was the only obstacle to supersonic civilian passenger flight. Flying became a genuine alternative with standby fares making it affordable. The passenger train network was still extensive, but there was no interest in an increase of speed or service. Eight passenger trains stopped per day in Newark. Most people considered foreign-made cars to be tiny, unreliable, and so fragile that they would be death traps in an accident. At less than thirty cents a gallon (pumped by a gas station employee while he washed your windshield and checked your oil), no one minded gas mileage measured in the teens, or even aughts.

Almost all of us reported to campus in 1964 with our suitcase or at most, a trunk, having driven on state or U.S. highways even though the Interstate highway system had begun in 1958. Parts of Interstate 70 were open then and Interstate 71 was open between Columbus and Cincinnati by Thanksgiving of that year, although there were no gas stations or food places along the way at that point in time.

Some freshmen brought their own slide rule and many a portable manual typewriter.

Drugs in 1964 were restricted to nicotine, caffeine, and alcohol, which was new to many in our freshman class. The wise fathers of the Ohio political establishment permitted 3.2 beer for eighteen-year-olds even if we couldn't drink hard liquor or "high" beer or, for that matter, vote until we were 21. Wine was either Ripple, Boone's Farm or, if a date was to be impressed, Mateus; but wine was seldom even considered. It was suspiciously effete — or the province of winos.

Food was plentiful — and basic. Teriyaki was



The "D" Book, the college's regulations, was given to each freshman and read as thoroughly we read Apple terms and conditions agreements today.

CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS

The Denison Tradition actually cannot be specifically defined, for it consists of a certain spirit or mental attitude held by Denisonians. This spirit is found in the friendliness of Denison, exemplified by the sincere "Hello" with which Denisonians invariably greet each other, the townspeople, and campus visitors.

The Denison Spirit is also one of respect, for all Denisonians stand with heads uncovered whenever "To Denison" is played or sung.

Denison students refrain from smoking on the Chapel Walk.

Some of the more tangible traditions concern:

The **Senior Bench** near Talbot Hall. Underclassmen are expected to sit there only on the invitation of a senior.

Members of Mortar Board and ODK sit in the first pews in Swasey Chapel for convocations.

The **serenades** are the best known and most delightful of all traditions. During the usual serenade all residence hall lights are dimmed and complete silence is maintained by the residents.

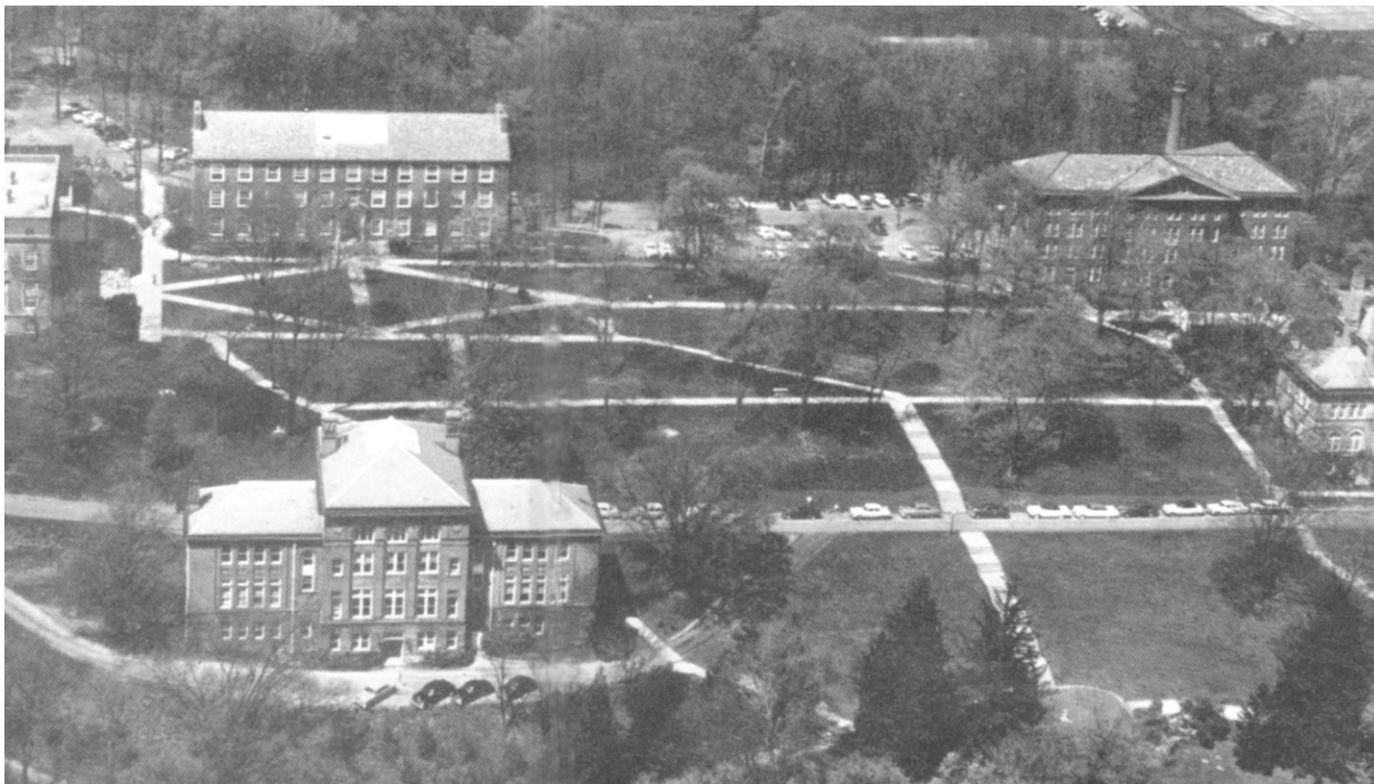
Homecoming is held on a week end set aside in autumn, during which alumni revisit the campus and renew old memories. It was first observed in 1915.

Dads are honored on a special week end during the football season. Mothers are honored with planned events on the joint celebration of **May Day** (since 1929) and **Mother's Day**.

In the event that an instructor fails to arrive within five minutes of the time for a scheduled class to begin, students may leave. For department heads, a ten-minute wait is customary.

'D' Day and Senior Day

From time to time the whole student body or a class may take, as a break in the daily routine, a day of absence from classes authorized in advance. The Executive Committee of DCGA and the three Deans will authorize 'D' Day and the Executive Committee of the Faculty will set Senior Day. (Any absence from classes by a concerted action of



Denison's main quad in 1960 was minus Slayter Hall (empty space top, center), the student union built in 1964 in time for the Class of '68, and Fellows Hall, now located between the two buildings on the left. Talbot Hall is at upper right. Its replacement, Knapp Hall, is less beloved.

Japanese food; chow mein and chop suey were Chinese; spaghetti and increasingly pizza were Italian; Oooh La La with a fancy sauce was French; sauerkraut and wurst with an American name was German; and so on. Twelve-cent hamburgers were coming on the scene as McDonalds joined the world of White Castle Sliders.

Authority — legal, parental, and institutional — was firmly and unquestionably in control in 1964. When we read the D Book — the student handbook of regulations with pages fourteen and fifteen illustrated — we snicker now as we did then, but we obeyed its strictures. In a few cases, someone did not render a good Denison hello (and of course there were debates about how sincere “How are you?” really was), but no one smoked on chapel walk and residents of the women’s quad on their way to studying in bathing suits in the sun all wore their raincoats to Skin Hill, the now almost vanished hillside that descends from the east residential quadrangle to the Mitchell Center.

Society’s expectation was that women would aim for careers in homemaking if not as teachers, nurses, or secretaries. The widely shared goal was to get married within a few years, if not months, of college graduation and to have children in time to attend

their college graduations before mom and dad turned fifty.

Religion was a part of most institutions, and Denison and our general society continued the forms and practices of Protestant America, although Roman Catholic presence had been more mainstream since the election of a Catholic President four years before we enrolled at Denison. Even if we didn’t always practice the mainstream ethic of behavior and belief, we knew what it was and didn’t fundamentally disagree with its patterns and practices. Chapel credit helped motivate us to attend a Christian worship service each week, while sharpening the knitting skills of some of our classmates.

There was a military draft, in place since just before World War II that figured in short term career plans for most men. The draft existed under the shadow of the Cold War, then only half way through its forty-five year existence, and the thought of a nuclear Armageddon could not be completely dismissed. Nor could the real possibility of going to Vietnam in a very different frame of mind than the one that accompanied the fathers who had fought and helped win World War II.

The edifice began to crumble by the time our

senior year arrived. “Hours” for women had become “self-limiting,” a clever marketing phrase used by proponents of completely ending hours women must be locked into their dormitories (10 p.m. for freshman, midnight for the more mature). American society, especially the college age portion, was heading for a sea change in values, expectations, and behavior, running a bit behind the places in the vanguard. We joked that earlier in the 1960s it had taken the men’s white socks fashion three years to get from its origin at the University of North Carolina to Denison.

Our outstanding men's basketball team basically lost its monumental playoff game before it started when Bill Musselman's virtually all-black Ashland team started its warm-ups accompanied by loud Motown music.

The class of 1971 refused to show us the awe and respect that we had shown the class of 1965 when we were freshmen, and didn’t even pretend to listen to our sage advice.

Our innocence had taken a hit in November 1963, when something unimaginable happened. For white, middle and upper class Americans, especially Protestants, life had gotten better and better in the only major economy in the world that was strengthened rather than damaged or destroyed by World War II, and with the GI bill, big union contracts, virtually no inflation, the reality of owning a house and car, and decreasing material shortages raised the quality of life for many in the white



Rapt attention during Chapel – attendance for credit. Just off to the right is the knitting section.

population.

Those bullets in Dallas, along with ugly scenes of riots and burning cities in the north, peace officers brutalizing demonstrating Black Americans in the south, and our seeming inability to keep the war in Vietnam from growing, were more than images the entire country watched on TV. Even though our attention was mostly elsewhere, as seems to be the pattern for most college students over time, somehow those remote black and white images started to come into our consciousness in color. The Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy assassinations, the Tet Offensive (which made it clear that we were not likely to win the Vietnam War), and Lyndon Johnson’s announcement that he would not run for reelection, all of which happened in the spring of our Senior year, made it hard to feel that we were living in a time of business as usual.

Tom Martin, co-editor of The Historical Times, is a member of DU’s Class of ’68 and a past-president of the Granville Historical Society Board of Managers, as well as being a current board member.

NOTE: Photos accompanying this piece are from the *Adytum*, the Denison University yearbook, editions 1965 to 1968.



“Brillo” Hoffman is pitched into Ebaugh’s Pond in a ceremony that followed him giving his girlfriend his fraternity pin. Pinning led to ponding.



“Freedom of thought, freedom of expression” was the yearbook’s caption for a page of Vietnam era photos, which included this shot of an early protest on campus during the 1965-66 school year.



Doane Library still had its original front during the sixties. Later, specifications of the Seeley Mudd Foundation gift to expand the library included relocating the entrance.



Farther down the quad, two would-be marines watched the protest.



Floats were imaginative when there was still a Homecoming parade, in 1966, when pledges could still be compelled to build them. Note the old Gregory Hardware building still standing in the background at the corner of East Broadway and North Prospect Street.

Cool Old Stuff



There was a time when nearly the entire Village of Granville could be viewed from a treeless Mt. Parnassus. The pre-1880 photo above looks westward toward downtown. Note the First Baptist Church building in the upper left-hand corner before it was moved across the street to become the Opera House. Also note that the present-day Centenary Methodist Church had not yet been built (completed in 1884). Another amusing feature of this photo is the “outhouse” in the foreground behind the Buxton Inn. The bottom photo – circa 1890, looked northward across the Granger Street neighborhood, with the Union schoolhouse, which housed all grades until the 1930s, in the upper right-hand corner. The Arbor Movement of 1889 resulted in the addition of trees as visual enhancements to the once denuded hills of Granville, including Mt. Parnassus and Sugarloaf. Settlers had found nothing but trees, but cleared them for farming, firewood, building lots and lumber.



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The Granville Historical Society is an all-volunteer, non-governmental not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization with membership open to all. Joining the Society is a delightful way to meet people who share a love of and interest in Granville's rich, well-documented history. Monthly programs, quarterly publications, and a museum that is open five days a week during the season are some of the ways that enable Society volunteers to share facets of what makes Granville so fascinating with members and guests. Volunteers are welcome in the Archives and Museum Collections areas, as well as museum hosts.

Please visit Granvillehistory.org for further information about all that we do and how you can get involved.

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