

# "SPEAK TO THE CHAPERONES"

NOVEMBER, 1979

## Sunday Afternoon Fraternity Visits

By Emmie Jackson McDonald

The highlight of most of our week's pleasure was the eagerly anticipated visit of the fraternities to your's or a friend's house—Mary Wade, Mae, Carrie, Frances, Jo and the rest of our "group" would spend endless hours on the telephone discussing whose house would be chosen this Sunday afternoon. We hurriedly left our respective sorority meeting to await what would hopefully be the fraternity visit. Can you remember the thrill of all the cars arriving and the boys tumbling out? The "old men" would bring the younger ones along to introduce them. I remember Nelson Bryan owned a beautiful classic Model-T. John Barton, Nelson, Elmer Davies and I would crowd in for a drive to Percy Warner Park. At the fast clip of probably 10 miles an hour—of course the trick in those fun days was to never be obviously pinned or involved with one beau. The more the merrier and was it a great game to play—! The fraternity visits were especially interesting because you not only avoided being tied to one boy but never to one fraternity. The dances, hayrides, swimming parties were too much fun to miss. The visits would last for a couple of hours, then back home and study until another glorious weekend. I remember the realities of Monday morning and school. The Club House at good ole W.B. was the meeting place for us all to share the good times and sometimes disappointing times of our weekends. Maybe we, in those days, lived for one weekend to the next. We ran in a group, both male and female, with a good many activities.

One of the highlights of the fall was Billy Waller's annual possum hunt. There was always a big barn fire with weiners, and marshmallows to roast and cokes and cider to drink. We actually had the dogs chase a possum (whether planted or real, it didn't matter) because we always treed our possum.

Also a happy part of these fun-filled years were the house parties we periodically attended. Deannie Hart Boteler's family had a marvelous country house at Ridgetop. This was a lovely isolated community 50 or 60 miles north of Nashville, where many old Nashville families used to "summer" many years ago. Deannie's house was large and rambling with a porch all around. The boys slept in one dormitory type room and the girls in another. We mainly laughed, ate and shared a close comradeship. Never was there beer, pot or the tragic temptations to marry the happy innocence of those times. As my life has broadened from the shelter of love of family and close friends of those four happy years, I treasure the opportunity I had to have "passed this way." I know that the close ties we all established one to another are everlasting. As our lives have led us along different paths, I never cease to be grateful that when opportunity brings us together The ties are still strong and tight! For this, we are all extremely fortunate and I for one am grateful. P.S. Mrs. Souby would give me my usual "D" in English for poor sentence structure and grammar in this.

## PREFACE:

We graduated from high school thirty-five years ago—which is very strange, as none of us are that old in our own minds. 1944 was the end of an era for us. So many changes to come—new school, new friends, new emotions. But, what a glorious adolescence in a rather provincial town, Nashville. We thought it was grand, and indeed it was.

There is still a magic—our lives have greatly diversified—but reuniting does somehow sweep away the years. We have all made other good friends, but we have never had better friends than those God just gave us.

## Dedication:

We think we had the best of everything (all worlds). This group of contributing authoresses crossed lines of religion, schools, neighborhoods, sororities, and interests. And yet cohesive friendships and memories were formed. Few have wandered far from Nashville, but we do share the loss of Mary Erwin Smith, who is the first of us to leave our earth, and who could have contributed yet another chapter in our history.

## A 'Youthful' Saturday Night Episode

by Mae Elizabeth Caldwell

Saturday was our one big night out (so to speak) during those war years. I was very popular, especially on weekends, because I possessed the three-top essentials. Number 1, my own car (a used 1939 Plymouth, two-door, maroon, with good tires, most all cars in those days were dark colors, black, grey, brown, dark green or blue, maroon was considered quite fancy, (Joan Hampton's light blue Packard convertible was the envy of all).

I lived in Hillwood, which was a working farm then, located on Harding Road and therefore on the streetcar line (which is point number 2).

Hillwood was subdivided after the war and became "Hillwood Estates"—all streets being named for family, friends and places—Greeley Drive as in Horace Greeley—Hickory Valley Road for the farm where my grandfather was born—Wilsonia for my great-grandmother, Wilson-Price Circle for a close friend, Edwin A. Price, Sedberry Road for the Sedberry Hotel in McMinnville, where my grandfather often ate Sunday lunch.

Point number 3 was that I had B gas ration tickets which allotted me a few more gallons of gas for running the school "hook-up" to Ward-Belmont once a week. But back to Saturday night. We all gathered at my house (each getting there the best way they could). There was no pairing off, and I had to be sure that there was enough gas in the Plymouth to go somewhere exciting—otherwise I would have had to just stay home alone with my two younger sisters, which was a "fate worse than death" (I still to this day get Saturday night fever.)

As I recall, the regulars in the "group" were me (Mae Caldwell), Mary Winn, Carrie Proctor, Mary Louise Zamone, Deannie Hart, Lavinia Jones, Elmer Davies, Duck Henry, Nelson Bryan, Freddie Rowe, Bee Hunter, and on rare occasions Emmie Jackson and Mary Wade. (They usually had dates with boys that had cars, putting them in a very enviable position.) Now for the most daring and adventurous in the group, the big Saturday night escapade was to pile in the Plymouth (at least two deep) and drive downtown—behind the State Capitol, and cruise around in the Red Light District! Gay Street, being the most wicked area. This was terribly thrilling especially if

we were lucky enough to see one of those "ladies" sitting in an upstairs window, who occasionally would wave to us as we passed slowly by—at which point Duck Henry would make a dive for the floor—but I had to "keep my cool" as I was driving. After a while when the police started patrolling the area more frequently, we had to resort to a milder and less exciting pastime, such as draping trees with toilet paper, usually in the yards of school mates that we didn't like—better known as "squares" today. Also as a diversion, it could be fun to drive around at night and look for lighted smudge pots in construction areas, that we would pick up and move to another spot. Then for those of us who sometimes lost our nerve, as a last resort we could sit in my mother's "study" and listen to victrola records.

Well, time marches on, and these times did pass, but then we thought we were having the "time of our lives"—maybe we were, as everything is relative.

One of my vivid memories of high school was gas rationing during W.W. II. I always seemed to be trying to get from home, on Franklin Road to the west side of town where "everything was going on." I wonder if any youngster of a Belle Meade Club member today would want to go swimming and eat lunch at BMCC enough to catch the interurban bus into Nashville and transfer to the Belle Meade bus.

If I was lucky enough to have a date on the weekend, I usually needed to find a place to spend the night that "wasn't so far out" as my house.

Mother had a blue 1937 or 1938 Plymouth that some of us named "The Warren." This name came from a movie about a reconditioned old battleship (of the same name) and of its heroic performance of duty through many battles. The car was well named as it served us nobly through the entire war years.

Slumber parties were always fun. I remember the pretty granny gowns we used to have. My mother made me a beauty with a rolled and whipped eyelet yoke edged in beading with blue ribbon running through it. Some one usually had a slumber party after one of the fraternity or sorority dances, but I can't ever remember sleeping very much, if at all. That has not changed too much the kids of today!

by Lavinia Jones Fillebrown

## High School Fraternity Dances

by Josephine Darrett Doubleday

Anticipation and planning always ran high when it was time for someone to ask me to his fraternity dance—hopefully! It was a great challenge to be present at most of the dances, therefore; you had to have a "friend" in several fraternities.

The next big problem, after you received your invitation, was what to wear! This problem kept us all excited and in a constant state of planning for originals. There were only so many colors in the rainbow but every girl wanted a different shade or hue for floating ecstasy—one that would be unique and breathtaking. This fete of dreaming about bouffant dresses was half of the fun. Mother and I would spend hours in Cain-Sloan—downtown—of course, since it was the only one. Selecting lace, net, velvet, sequins, feathers or anything for the big spectacular!

After selecting your dream material you took it to your dressmaker and after sketching and much explaining, your creation was started. It took at least two or three fittings and when the final product was ready it was a real squeeze to even get it into the back of your car because you had about five or six crenoline petticoats to put in first. It always necessary to transport these monstrosities back and forth for each fitting because the length had to be perfect for our dancing.

A personal note I might add—was my most time-consuming creation, a white net dress with applique leaves on the skirt. This was to be worn when I led the Grand March at the Delta Sig. Only one slight problem that night—I had the German measles. Naturally, I looked like a red speckled pup in a pale white dress—and did I itch! But the thought of staying home never crossed my mind as it did my mother's.

Dancing, that was the exciting part—you had to work your way immediately to your spot on the dance floor. Mine happened to be right opposite the balcony at the Belle Meade Country Club. It was necessary for everyone (males that is) to know where you were. You naturally wanted to have room so your line of stop could cut in on you. Naturally you didn't want to dance with anyone, no matter how fond of him you might be, more than a minute! That was the reason for no-breaks usually four or five. This was a big thing too! You usually filled them with your other current boyfriends. Some "madly in love" girlfriends might fill them with their one true love but that was very rare for most of us. We certainly wanted to play the field and see Nashville—that being Candyland, the dances and all the movies!

One other very important aspect of high school dances was the Grand March. The officers of each fraternity were the leaders and their dates were the recipients of bouquets of roses or some other exotic flowers which later were usually pressed between two encyclopedias for safekeeping. Old flowers and old ribbons were big dust catchers in their large cardboard box under the bed. This box also held other flower treasures such as corsages received for dances. We all

hoped for and desperately wanted the biggest orchid, whether white or purple. They were the big status symbol. No wonder we now usually prefer smaller flowers.

There were many preparations to be made for the big night, like leaving your hair rolled up as long as possible—like all day and night—oh, how horrible to sleep on those rollers! The second requirement for being "gorgeous" for that special night was to wear no make-up all day so it would be very fresh or at least it was a real improvement when you applied that very deep red lipstick after that pale worn look all day. However, at dear old Ward Belmont it was a little different. We couldn't wear make-up to school anyhow.

Going to and from the dance was a matter for great planning. Who would you double-date with?

This was a matter of great importance and your date tried to please you. You usually double-dated with one of your good friends or one of your date's good friends.

To sum it all up in one importance sentence, your date really wasn't that important—just so you got to go to the dance and danced the night away, with all the males you knew!

Deanie's house was always bustling—the family has more brains and energy! It was a special treat to be invited there. Most of us remember more things that happened at Deanie's than Deanie does! Jo Doubleday recalls most vividly the marvelous meals that were served there—especially the egg kisses with peppermint ice cream and the chocolate sauce passed in a silver gravy boat by Rosa. Deanie says she is essentially a bookkeeper not a book writer—but does say:

Regarding the two areas you addressed to me.

1) All I remember about my birthday party at Mr. Fitz Hall's private (train) car is that it occurred at sometime during grammar school years. I thought Aunt Martha might have more vivid recall, but she was in Boston during that era and didn't even know it had taken place. It came about because Elizabeth Hall was my godmother I couldn't name one invited guest. I am fascinated to know who recalled that event.

2) Ridgetop—off the top of my head, my fondest memories are entirely family oriented. My impression is that you are seeking peer group nostalgia. (We did have a marvelous houseparty there in the Lindsay home in the summer of 1942! 16 people, 8 boys and 8 girls.)

The one item in your letter that has haunted me is "what a Sunday afternoon sorority meeting was like." A SAP meeting took place at our house on Sunday afternoon, Dec. 7, 1941. Over 37 years later I am still appalled by whatever lack of dimension in our lives—or just provincial oblivion—permitted us to meet as usual two hours after Pearl Harbor was announced. Two of our acquaintances running off and marrying at an early age caused more flap in our group than any national or international happenings. I trust our horizons have expanded since those days.

Deanie (Lucy Page Hart) Boteler