

My Year At Dartmouth

By THERESA WILLIAMS



I looked forward to spending a year at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire with great anticipation. I saw no pictures and read no literature on D. C. before I got there. Curiously enough our packets, registration and housing, were completely devoid of such trivia. I didn't think about it at all THEN, but now sometimes I wonder, what would my attitude have been had I seen pictures of the campus, of the students, and of the faculty? How would I have reacted to my dormitory, and to the idea of having a white room mate?

I arrived in West Lebanon, N. H. on a beautiful September day, it was the 19th to be exact, and I saw what "Fall" really looks like. The countryside was very green, and the leaves on the trees were of deep orange, yellow, and golden hues. This part of America is very clean, very rustic, and quite picturesque. Within a few days I became aware of why people choose the New England countryside as their hideaway. The further up you go, from Connecticut to Massachusetts, from there to Vermont, and from Vermont to New Hampshire — and from New Hampshire to Maine, then Canada, the more quaint, the more quiet, the more stilled your existence becomes. For the people who truly appreciate quiet life, twenty years of hard living blends in with the wood work and they feel

a new found freedom. The quiet was fascinating — at first, but by winter it had become too quiet, unsettling, and unreal.

Our first week there was a type of orientation. We quickly discovered that 75 co-eds would not meet the social or psychological needs of over 3,000 young men. And of those 75 females, 5 were Black, one Oriental. For the minority group students, then, it was "get while the gettin's good." BUT NOT FOR LONG. For the five of us, there were several points in need of immediate attention concerning our presence on campus and our relationships with "the Brothers." (1) We did not come to Dartmouth to find husbands or lovers, (2) we did not come to Dartmouth because we felt that our own institutions were inadequate, (3) we did not intend to live down or up to reputations of the previous year's co-eds (we represented the second year of co-ed learning at Dartmouth), and (4) we weren't out to change the lifestyle of the typical Dartmouth man.

Our classes began on the 24th of September, and we all could make the same observations: (1) "I'm the only girl in my class. The dudes are either very polite and gentlemanly or they just ignore you or (2) "Today was the first day of class and Mr. ----- has already invited me up to his office to talk."

I, for one, was very skeptical of these invitations, the first day of class hadn't yielded any problems that I couldn't handle. Around the end of October I began visiting my teachers, incidentally, they were all men. And the questions all ran along the same lines: (1) How do you like Dartmouth, (2) What do you think of the Black students, and (3) How does Dartmouth compare with Bennett?

The truth was, there were things I definitely liked about the school: no curfew, open dormitories, non compulsory classes, the student union building and the Village Green (a restaurant). There were also some aspects of the college which I distinctly disliked: "Brothers" who dropped by at 7:30 p.m. and 1 and 2 a.m. start dropping subtle hints like, "Man, I'm beat. Your roommate comin' in tonight?" and then got uptight when you showed them the door, "Brothers," who, when it was warm only said "Hi and bye," and then when the temperatures dropped to -20 deg. and -30deg. want to discuss the state of your (rapidly failing) health. It was extremely difficult for me to be friendly when I just knew that my fingers and toes had fallen off from frostbite and that my nose was next. I disliked seeing dogs in the dining hall and having dudes using OUR showers, for 30 minute clean-up jobs no less. So whenever

I was asked that question, I hemmed and hawed, and said "Well . . . yes, it's okay, mean YOU know . . ." and my professors would nod affirmatively as if they really knew. Perhaps they did, but I wondered, I still do.

Dartmouth is an Ivy-league college, over 300 years old. With an excellent reputation. Today, however, some of that good reputation has been lost in the crowds. The rules are lax — here, learning is strictly up to the individual. You may come to class one day and discover that your instructor has gone off on a skiing trip and will be back in a few days. For the Black students, the attitudes of faculty and administration was one of parental condescension — "I'll make things real easy for you buddy." Many of the Black students bragged about the fact that they hadn't had to take one exam or do one research paper. "Man, all I do is write my "Black stuff" and the cat digs it." Or does he? Have they scored a victory or are they just proving a point?

I resented this paternalism. I came from Bennett very well prepared, and did not wish to be treated as a poor little dumb Black child. I went round and round with some of my male acquaintances and teachers on this point. For me, achievements in college are a direct result of your own efforts to take advantages of resources and resource people. A well-educated student KNOWS his business. In the same way the reverse is very true.

Social life? At Dartmouth one learns to be resourceful and clever. We all had offers for dates, but sometimes our dates asked us to pay our own way. They made other requests, equally as outrageous. Dartmouth men have the ages old reputation of being beasts — sad, but true, some of the brothers tried to live up to this image.

There was a definite lack of unity and brotherhood among the Black students. Consequently they really didn't make any significant contributions to the student body as a whole. The two main attractions the whole year were Roberta Flack and

Vinnie Burrows and as popular as Roberta Flack is, her program was not strongly supported by the Black students.

Why were the Brothers such a let-down? Well, they weren't. They provided me

with great insights. I came away with a greater appreciation for Bennett, and for the role of the Black Colleges. Every Black student should go to a Black College. More important than being well-educated is being able to inter-relate with your own people. Learning to really understand and appreciate them. The Black students at Dartmouth will come away knowledgeable, but their usefulness will be shortlived. They will not function very effectively within the Black community because they do not think BLACK — BASIC BLACK.

Being at Dartmouth was good for me. Because I discovered that there was so much about it that I didn't like, I was forced to find the positive aspects of my presence there. And I did. I came to grips with myself about my own views of Blackness and what I want for myself, for my Black man, and for my children. As a Black woman I learned through my Brothers in the wilderness what I must do to perpetuate a strong sense of identity and awareness. I had to deal with myself because I knew that the friction which existed between the brothers and sisters wasn't all their fault. They were themselves in an unrealistic setting.

Sometimes I ask myself would I do it again? I don't know. And yet, I feel that NO ONE should pass up an opportunity to broaden his scope and education. So, I guess I would. But I like to think that having gone and tried, I am a better and wiser person.

How does a woman adjust to an all men's school? She maintains an open and receptive mind, an open heart, and she maintains a set of standards which can not be compromised. then she says a prayer for luck and keeps right on pushing.

Campus Notes

THE STUDENT SENATE WISHES TO COMMEND THE FRESHMAN AND SOPHOMORE CLASSES FOR COMING UP WITH THE IDEA FOR THE CAMPUS "FACE-LIFT JOB". WE'D ALSO LIKE TO THANK ALL PERSONS WHO HAVE VOLUNTEERED THEIR HELP. SEE YA SATURDAY!

A NOTE OF SINCERE THANKS TO ALL STUDENTS WHO ASSISTED OR OFFERED THEIR ASSISTANCE IN THE INFIRMARY DURING OUR RECENT EMERGENCY.

Nurse A. Trammell

GET WELL VAL!!!

Be sure to remember our sister Valerie Moore by dropping her a sunshiny note or a get-well card!!! All correspondence may be forwarded to the following address:

Miss Valerie Moore
Room 4022, Cone Hospital
1200 N. Elm St.
Greensboro, N.C. 27401

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