

# The SALEMITE

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serving the salem college community since 1920

## "THE FUTURE OF THE PAST"

Many people has asked us how we arrived how we first arrived of Salem up there in Pennsylvania and what brought here. I have to discount one honor. Supposedly we were out on a drive pondering our decision and just as we looked up, saw in a flash the word SALEM, surrounded with little bits of smoke alongside the highway. Allegedly we mistook the billboard for a divine vision. The TRUTH is that we followed almost the same path as the first Moravian missionaries who came here to Wachovia from Pennsylvania some 60 years ago. Now in any historical movement of large numbers of people, you have to expect that there'll be some who get the word late. Our family has never been on time for a trip, and in this case we are really the last of the stragglers. We're glad we finally made it. This past summer and fall has produced a spate of publicity about the perils of the future of small private colleges. NEWSWEEK proclaimed in banner headlines that "Small Is Perilous." Our own Winston-Salem journal had an insightful cover story and editorial about the coming changes in National and North Carolina High School enrollments. The optimists seem to be saying that 200 of the present 1,500 independent colleges will fail; the pessimists see 200 as making it to the year 2000. Similar headlines have appeared about the prospects for private secondary schools comparable to the Academy. Bringing all this home with a vengeance for us at Salem have been the stories about Wilson College in Pennsylvania. Wilson, a proud and strong women's college for over 100 years announced in February that it was closing its doors. After a traumatic court battle, a judge ruled WITH a group of alumnae that the college must keep those doors open. Eight years ago Wilson

had 700 students and an 8 million dollar endowment. Today it has 110 students, and less than 3 million dollars of the endowment is left. In its turmoil and courageous struggle, Wilson shows us much about life in these times, and the depths of commitment that a college can inspire in those who love it. The trends in population are but one of many factors shaping the dismal decade that is said to lie ahead for the small college. Mass higher education has become the norm of society. In the mind's eye of legislators and government policy makers, the large university serves as the silent model for all programs and regulations. Those regulations now come with backbreaking frequency for all of higher education, and they largely ignore the special circumstances at small institutions. It's literally impossible to have staff specialists and administrative offices for handicapped regulations, occupational health and safety requirements, wage and hour laws, energy programs, retirement laws, affirmative action, and various financial audits. This is precisely what the regulations presuppose and what large universities have had to develop. The pressure against smallness mounts. The future seems dismal in other regards, too, in ways that especially touch our past at Salem. Vocationalism augurs to be with us for a long time, based as it is on structural factors in the economy. Liberal education appears ever more as an elegant luxury--fine to have, but later, please, when there's time, not now, thank you. Co-education, too, is the unspoken expectation, fostering a stereotype that women's schools and colleges are quaint and dainty relics. Add to the list the high cost of tuition in a period of unprecedented inflation and our litany of woe begins to sound like a dirge.

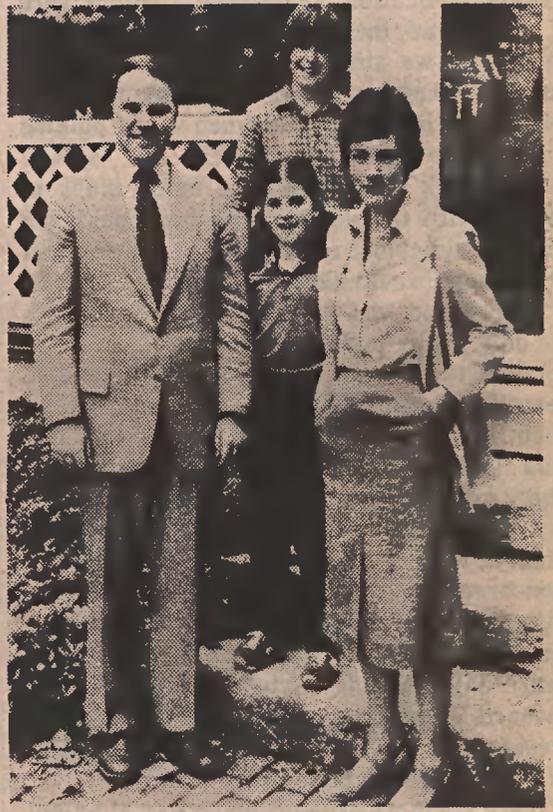
These factors and forces are at work in many ways beyond their immediate and visible impact. Among other things, and perhaps most important of all, they are casting up new images of education. They are offering a different way of portraying the relationship between the student and the school or college. An image is less precise but more powerful than a concept. It lodges in the imagination and controls expectations and assumptions. These in turn define specific policies and procedures. The newer images have overshadowed earlier ones such as those which saw the student primarily as a member of a large collegial family; or, which portrayed the student as essentially a scholar in a community of scholars. I submit that the prevailing new image is that of a student as a consumer with preferences operating in a marketplace. On this view of things, education is a consumer service like any other. The payment of a fee gives the purchaser the right to a certain set of services. Failing that, I take my money and go elsewhere. Schools and colleges have been brought to court by students over grading policies, junk courses, false claims about programs, inaccurate catalogue information, and escalating tuition increases. As with any defective product so presumably with education--there should be a money-back guarantee clearly printed on the label. The rather startling conclusion for us is that these many forces seem to be creating a world in which Salem Academy and College do not fit. We sharply contradict every single trend. Even consumerism is acceptable to us only as a protest, and surely not as a vision of education's best possibilities. It is a wretched ultimate image for education. Our aims go far beyond the minimal requirements

of a contract. We probe at the depths of human experience and push at the edges of human potential. We make silent promises to one another about human fulfillment that no contract could ever fathom and no mere consumer could ever understand. Where then do we belong in this emerging world? Do we go with the flow and bend with the trend? Do we out regulate the regulators to be safe? Do we go into debt to hire a sharp-eyed compliance staff? Do we replace liberal education with vocational training and try to triple our enrollment? Do we go Co-Ed and seek our salvation in football? In my view we should do none of these. Rather we should find our future in our past. We should build our hopes on our memories. And we should try ever more to be and to become what we are. We must have the self-confidence to affirm our uniqueness and to relish our distinctiveness. Salem is special. We must above all aspire to be and to do what other schools, colleges and universities cannot.

### Salem is special

Ours is a special community of living memory. We are the embodiment of an unbroken historical community of faith and learning. The Moravians who built Salem fashioned and left to us more than a place of simple beauty. They were drawn together by bonds of human community, inspired by visions of true brotherhood and sisterhood, and sustained in their life together through education, worship and work. We now live in this community as the literal and direct heirs of those compelling ideals. The relationships of mutual care and affection, of kindness and sensitivity, that are unmistakable

throughout Salem Academy and College are no mere accidents. They rise from the roots of our history. The intimacy of the campus repeats itself in bonds of an enduring Salem closeness. Steal a quiet and pensive moment to walk across the square. You will feel that continuity with the past, and will learn how memory deepens our present and prepares our future. To be a community is both a gift and an achievement. It is a possibility that few other schools and colleges in this bloated bureaucratic age can live so richly and deeply as can we. Ours is a distinctive opportunity to overcome the yawning gap between the dorm room and the classroom, between learning and living. Community provides the chance for ideas to spill over into the lounge, for faculty and staff members to be engaged in a give and take that reaches after hours and beyond the four walls of a building. This happens at Salem and I strongly support its happening even more. Our closeness as a community is not simply an end in itself. Warm feelings are nice, but not enough. Ultimately, we prize community because in it arise the fullest possibilities for education. The intellect never reaches maturity without the commitment of the whole person to basic values. Douglas Heath convincingly describes the nexus between moral and intellectual development: "Finally, and more compelling, the maturing of certain values is so intrinsically a part of intellectual development that the failure to develop one limits the growth of the other. Intellectual activity requires values such as honesty, objectivity, openness to alternatives, flexibility, humility, respect for dissenting views and so on. Associated with intellectual activity is an ethic about what is appropriate intellectual activity. A person who fabricates or distorts information, consciously ignores contradictory data, plagiarizes the work of others, and interprets information to fit some purpose other than truth loses the trust and respect of others. A liberal education must educate for the ethic of truth if it is not to produce intellectual psychopaths." We at Salem can make personal integrity a centerpiece in education because we place it at the heart of our life together. Unlike many other schools and colleges, the honor code at Salem is alive. It must remain so because integrity is inseparable from knowledge. I propose, then, that we take a bold step. We should, all of us, make the care and nurture of community a primary part of our



The Morrill Family

personal and educational and professional responsibility. We need to become acutely conscious of the values we embody and transmit through our common life. This can happen if we learn the habit of putting critical questions to ourselves as a basis for self-awareness and mutual affirmation. How do we as faculty and staff members and students and as president really treat one another? Do we set high expectations, or are we satisfied with less than our best? Do we offer and insist on mutual respect, or do we deny it to others and shrink from it ourselves? Do we interrogate rumors and get to the facts, or do we let them run free? Do we meet adversity with courage, or with self-pity? Do we criticize in order to build, or to tear down? Do we affirm people and even show affection when we have the chance, or do we let the occasion slip away? No one can build our common life except we ourselves--each of us. Our past lives in us and can inspire us. But the future of community is our distinctive opportunity and obligation. It takes little imagination to see other unique ways in which the past is our future. I believe strongly in the logic of the obvious. The Academy and the college happen to be part and parcel of one of America's finest and most authentic historical restorations. Old Salem is a splendid and extraordinary achievement. More than the exquisite charm of its buildings, Old Salem is an educational institution. We are surrounded on every street corner by museums. There is Mesda--the museum of early southern decorative arts,

the Wachovia Museum and the other exhibit buildings, and the Moravian Archives. We have done much with this rich proximity, BUT we can do far more. As if Old Salem were not enough we happen to be situated in one of the South's centers of art and culture and commerce. Within a small stone's throw are the Moravian Music Foundation, Winston-Salem State University and the North Carolina School of the Arts. Downtown soon will be bustling with new artistic life under the leadership of the arts council and the School of the Arts. In a slightly wider arc are Wake Forest University, SECCA--The South Eastern Center for contemporary art, and the museum of American painting at Reynolda House. Add all this to the special and historic strengths of our school of music, and there are dazzling opportunities all around us for the study of music, art, drama and history. Our emerging distinctiveness shows itself in the special projects and internships students have pursued in these places and in our new program in arts management. Again, we have done much but we can do much more. Consider the possibilities for special courses and programs, such as in our proposal for Piedmont studies, that bring these rich resources in people and places into our curriculum in direct and innovative ways. Consider, too, the simple fact that Old Salem, and Mesda, and SECCA and Reynolda House already offer dozens of museum courses, workshops and programs and have excellent professional staffs. The logic of

*We shall excel. Then we shall not count our past as a long golden age, but as a prelude for the best of Salem which lies ahead.*



The Back View of Knowledge

Photos courtesy Salem News Bureau