

1902-1915

edited by Jennifer Estes

The yellowing pages of Meredith's first Oak Leaves, dated as far back as 1904, smell of mildew and dust, yet the maroon leather covers still have their character and dignity. Each haunting, girlish face in black and white, stares out of the page and the familiar lines from Dead Poets Society are called to mind: "seize the day, seize the day..." These young hopefuls of the Baptist Female University had so many dreams and aspirations that women of the nineties, perhaps, take for granted. Learn from them our heritage of being women. It is because of them that we have come this far.

The cost was high for an education based strictly on religious principles with high standards expected of each who entered. At this time the college was located in the heart of Raleigh, near the capitol and two Baptist churches. The surroundings of B.F.U. were thought to be "tempestuous" to the young women, and many parents worried about their daughters in such a "big city." The demand for a room was still great, however, and the college went into heavy debt with the construction of more needed housing.

Dr. Richard Tilman Vann became the president of B.F.U. and freed the school of its debt in 1904. And so a college was born, (the young sister of Wake Forest). It was difficult in the early days—no traditions, no precedents to follow as a guide, and mistakes were made and learned from.

In 1905 the name of the college was changed to the Baptist University of Women. Unusual college clubs were formed: The Friday Afternoon Sketch Club, The Wild Goose Club, and even a Spinsters Club, whose motto was "of all sad words of tongue or pen, the saddest are these 'Oh, where are the men?'"

In the 1906 handbook the laws were made firm. There were demerits (not call downs). Tests were called recitations. There was no leaving campus without notifying the lady principal, and church and Sunday school were both required. There was a rising bell every morning at 6:15am and another at 10:15pm, which meant that "all lights are extinguished" no matter what. Written permission slips from a parent or guardian was mandatory to leave the campus or receive visitors. One could not call home more than twice a month (only on Mondays between 3:30-5:30). The students could not visit restaurants, hotels, or places of amusement without permission and a proper chaperone. Only if the lady principal approved of the contents, was it acceptable for a package to be delivered to a student. The telephone was not allowed to be used without permission, and there were frequent room inspections. Rule #19 stated "Any woman communicating with a man in any way will be publicly reprimanded, suspended, or expelled at faculty discretion." In 1907 the new rule, shoppings was permitted once a week on Monday. In 1909 "students are allowed

The Baptist Female University

A HIGH GRADE COLLEGE FOR WOMEN



OFFICERS AND TEACHERS

SIX MEN AND NINETEEN WOMEN

DIPLOMAS given in the Arts, Science, and Philosophy; in Music, Art and Expression & School of the Bible under graduate of Newton Theological Seminary & Thorough Business Course & Exceptional advantages in Music & Excellent equipment for teaching Science & Club system adopted by two-fifths of the boarding pupils, at a saving of \$50.00 per session & Students cared for by lady principal, lady physician, matron, and nurse & Another dormitory in course of erection to accommodate 96 girls & Board, Literary tuition, heat, light, baths (hot or cold), fees for physician, nurse and library, \$167.50 per session—in clubs, \$40.00 to \$50.00 less

R. T. VANN, *President*, Raleigh, North Carolina

advertisement in local Raleigh newspaper, 1902

walk in groups of two." In 1912 rule, #27 stated that "No student may have colored women come to her room or to the dormitory corridors."

"JUST SUPPOSE"

(from the 1907 Oak Leaves)

...the juniors didn't have a big head
...physics wasn't required
...we had good laundry women
...we had supper on Sunday evening (?)
...Miss Schuster didn't make nightly rounds
...the entire Physics class should pass a quiz
...you could laugh out loud in the library
...examples in love-making were not set for us by certain members of the musical faculty.

FROM THE DIARY OF A FACULTY MEMBER

1907

"I have met all my classes for the first time, and indeed, I am not very favorably impressed with them. The young ladies are very rude and disrespectful; they whisper and laugh among themselves - in common parlance, and giggle."



Richard Tilman Vann

In 1910 the name of the college changed from Baptist University of Women to Meredith College. The Oak Leaves was dedicated in memory of Thomas Meredith whose "character, culture, and masterly leadership soon set him in the front rank of North Carolina Baptists." Thomas Meredith became "one of a committee of three appointed by the state convention on the feasibility of establishing in Raleigh, a seminary of high grade for women."

Feminism is sweeping the nation today, but in the early year of 1910 the women accepted their role to be whatever their husband wanted them to be. In the Oak Leaves that year appeared a two page ad—

**BARGAINS! BARGAINS!
MEN SAVE MONEY
OUR LOSS=YOUR GAIN**

The photographs accompanying the advertisement showed women dressed in high class attire and captioned, "beautiful women for you to choose from." The other pictures were of the same women cleaning, cooking, with out-stretched arms begging to be chosen.

Through all our exciting years at Meredith College, let us not forget our "sisters" from the past decades who journeyed down the road of rocky success before us.

*Here's to the place we love by spells-
But which all the time our joy dispels-
Where the newish (freshmen) becomes
bold,
Soph horrors a myth,
Here's even to the fare at Meredith.*