

Students' behavior not a new topic in college town

In 1840, Andrew Wylie, Indiana University's first president, sat down at his desk to write a lengthy statement to the Indiana General Assembly. (What had prompted the report was a decline in enrollment, among other problems.)

What's interesting about the statement is that it revealed Wylie's feelings about the way students behaved during their years at the university. The president wrote: "Young men (IU was an all-male school until after the Civil War) should be formed in character and habit, so as not merely to shun vice, and to practice virtue, but to love the latter and detest the former. And this is what mere law and authority can not do. No one becomes good by constraint. Besides, laws often provoke to their own violation."

If William Lowe Bryan had read Wylie's report by the time he took over the presidency in 1902, there would have been a wry smile on his face. Bryan probably would have given Wylie credit for being a realist when he read the report. Wylie had continued, "A generous youth does not like to be commanded to do what he knows he ought to do and would do if left to himself."

In other words, Wylie expected the students to be gentlemen and scholars. By the time Bryan came along, he must have wondered at the transformation of the students Wylie was describing.

Consider Thomas Clark's description of what life was like for the students after the turn of the century. "Bloomington may have



LOOKING BACK

By Rose McIlveen

been a 'sleepy county seat town' but it was not entirely safe for coeds to walk unaccompanied on its streets. Four women returning to their rooms at the end of the Thanksgiving holidays in 1906 were assaulted by a man, and Pearl Stover was dragged screaming down an alley and robbed. These same women had been attacked a month earlier on Kirkwood.

On another occasion during that same period, the *Bloomington Telephone* reported another incident. "Two coeds were held up and searched by a lone male robber. When the bandit demanded the girls' money and was told they were penniless he said he knew where women hid things. The girls were so embarrassed by the thoroughness of the search that they refused to report the incident to the police."

The incidents involving female students were not the only evidence that things were very different from what was going on during Wylie's administration. As Clark put it in his book, *Indiana University Midwest Pioneer*, "Throughout the post-Civil War and World War I years, a very difficult adjustment Indiana University had to make was in the field of human relations."

For example, male students began to exhibit the kind of hazing behavior often seen in private prep schools. Freshmen had to be put in their place and made to feel their inferior status. Clark wrote, "A troublesome legacy of the academy was the annual burning of Homer or Horace by the sophomores on or near Abraham Lincoln's birthday. For Bryan and his colleagues this affair proved an annual horror; for students it threatened tragedy."

The faculty tried to tone down the frolics of students, but did not succeed. Clark explained. "In 1902 three thousand persons braved February cold to watch 65 enraged sophomores assault freshmen in pioneer Ohio Valley Indian style. In 10 minutes the 110 freshmen had the sophomores pinned to the ground and were pummeling them into a bloody pulp."

What changed the direction of student rowdiness was the birth of intercollegiate athletics. A successful football season prompted students to become overzealous in their celebration. Clark described the scene in 1906. "Students in all states of dress and undress flocked into the square in the evening, built a bonfire, made inflammatory speeches about nothing and otherwise held the cottagers at bay. They rushed the southside theater sending the actor-villain to the wings in flight where he demanded police protection."

Students held some of the merchants hostage in the sense that the students demanded a blind eye toward their actions. Otherwise the merchants might have found

their property damaged. It was a form of extortion.

During that period, IU Professor Ernest H. Lindley spoke at a "Love Feast for Law Enforcement" banquet. He told the audience, "It has been said that what happens between 6 o'clock in the evening and 6 o'clock in the morning has more influence over a student's life than anything else that happens in the classroom ..."

Finally, in 1915, the Student Affairs Committee of the faculty wrote a resolution about athletic victory celebrations and any other mayhem. "This practice tends to dull the student's sense of the personal and property rights of individuals, and if unrestrained, may lead to violence and disorder ... Be it resolved, therefore, by the Faculty, that any student found guilty of participating in such disorder shall be subject to such penalty as may be deemed fitting."

Experience and a new breed of students had indicated to the faculty that Andrew Wylie's best thoughts on the subject weren't too far off the mark. "The society of a college ought to be a family in which the faculty is the parent and the pupils the children — of different tempers and attainments, and therefore to be treated differently, but all under the same kind and paternal government. And those who cannot be governed in this way, it would be wrong to (be) educated, if it were possible."

H-T 11/11/96