

From the Desk of . . . Everett Tucker, Jr.

Phone: [REDACTED]

December 13, 1983

President Wilson:

You did a masterful job in setting out most of the pros and cons in going coed and I am glad to have a copy. You put me to work in trying to put together something of a mild rebuttal and I enclose a copy herewith.

Warmest regards.

Everett Tucker, Jr. '34

Everett Tucker, Jr.

Alumni Bd. Pres. '74-'75

ET/lm

Industrial Development Company

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Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT COMPANY

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LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

December 13, 1983

Mr. Peter A. Agelasto III
President
Washington & Lee Alumni Association
[REDACTED]
Norfolk, Virginia 33501

Dear Peter;

As you have already anticipated I am sure, I am sending you herewith a copy of a "thesis" I have composed on Coeducation at our Alma Mater. I don't recall having put as much thought and effort into anything even remotely comparable, but I feel it deserves considerable earnest consideration.

Jack Warner sent me a copy of his excellent letter to you and I heartily concur in everything he wrote. Maybe it will be decided on a vote which could be decided on a vote between us old codgers and the younger alumni and our several representatives.

I won't repeat any of my arguments here and I know that whatever decision is reached, it will result from earnest and honest consideration of all the various angles and will represent a concensus view of what those making the decision feel is best for our school.

Cordially yours,

Everett Tucker, Jr. '34
Everett Tucker, Jr.

ET/lm

ENCLOSURE

CC: Alumni Office
Mr. Jack W. Warner
Various other Alumni

Coeducation at W&L at the Undergraduate Level

In responding to President Wilson's "Reflections", I am going to pretty much follow his line of topics which are indeed most informative and well thought out. Before doing so, however, I will include a paragraph or so on my own background which perhaps influences my thinking to some extent. I was on the Board during the 70's when the idea last arose and my father was there (in law school) in 1900-02 when it apparently first surfaced. I don't recall that he ever mentioned it as being either a "for" or an "against" advocate.

Like President Wilson, I was pretty surprised that it has raised its (lovely, female) head again. I thought we had laid it to rest in 1975 which, I believe, was the year I was President of the Alumni Board.

As to my educational background, I was born (1912) and raised at Tucker, Arkansas, the headquarters of our family's cotton plantation the supervision of which is still my responsibility. The (white) public school (8 grades only) was practically in our back yard. I have a photograph of the entire study body in the year 1922-23, and the sexual mix was pretty well divided - 20 girls and 15 boys, so I started my academic career in a co-ed atmosphere for 8 years. I then left home to attend, successively, Webb School in Bell Buckle, Tennessee, which was almost (but not quite) all male; the Sewanee Military Academy for three years - all boys; W & L 1930-34 and all male; the Harvard Business School in 1942-43 (a war-time Air Corps program and all males) and, finally, after the war, a year of first year law at the University of New Mexico while out there for my health. There were perhaps 5 or 6 girls in the class of 50 to 60 males. (This was the first law school ever in the "Land of Enchantment".) Probably the prevailing male dominance throughout my 16+ years in six different schools from Massachusetts to New Mexico may have influenced my present thinking but I am trying my best to be objective.

Aside from my own educational background, I had the added experience of serving on the Little Rock (Public) School Board during the second phase of the overly-publicized integration fracas from 1959 into the early 60's and most of the time I was President of the Board (1959 to 1963.) This is not to infer that there is any similarity between the integration of the races with the mixing of the sexes, but I believe some of the same problems would be encountered in the latter. We succeeded in integrating the races but in the procedure the public schools have virtually been destroyed; whereas the racial mix used to be 74% white to 26% Negro, it is now 70% colored and 30% white, and climbing!

Let me emphasize again - I wouldn't dream of likening the two procedures, but I do believe there would be some negative fall-out as a result of admitting females at W & L. But I am not trying to do anything except to point out that the only similarity in the two procedures is that in both situations, "a good deal of new ground would have to be plowed", and many old prejudices would have to be overcome.

Another personal factor which no doubt influences my thinking is that my wife, Francis, is a Vassar graduate (1936) and she was so displeased when Vassar admitted boys she didn't even consider sending our daughter to her alma mater; we sent her to Stephens which, so far as I know is still exclusively for girls and intends to keep it that way. Our daughter illustrates another angle which prevails at W & L: she married a University of Missouri boy just like many Minks marry girls from neighboring Hollins, Sweet Briar, Randolph-Macomb and Mary Baldwin. Our own W & L son (Everett III, '72) married a Mary Baldwin girl. I have questioned him as to his feelings in the present dilemma and he says I can quote him as being opposed to admitting girls at W & L "unequivocally". Now that is a 38 year up-date to my equally strong opposition.

I was not aware that the possible threat of legal action was what intimidated us into admitting girls to the Law School. Even so, I believe I approve of this move. Could this point the way to a similar solution by broadening W & L's scope by adding additional graduate schools, or would this be an impractical approach?

This brings me to another question - maybe several of them. What is the sexual ratio in the Law School? Is this breakdown prescribed in advance or does it just work out that way? Is the ratio of admissions between males and females virtually the same - I mean the ratio of applicants who are accepted. This prompts another question: how many girls do we admit under our existing exchange program? Are they required to meet the same criteria as the boys? How do these girls adapt to the predominantly male enrollment?

President Wilson cited a question from Lem Tucker (no relation) as to the pedagogical justification of staying all male. Wouldn't this be a natural reaction of a person accustomed to looking after minorities? And how many parents of W & L boys have expressed an interest in sending their daughters to our school?

I heartily agree that we need only point to the successful careers of our alumni over the years to negate the view that our "unnatural" setting has "impeded intellectual or social development". I was a fraternity brother of Lewis Powell and a contemporary of John Stemmons and Tommy Anderson to name a few. Both our John Warners and Sydney Lewis

seem to have survived this hypothetical impediment. How do they feel about going co-ed? A more mundane question, perhaps is: have we evaluated how Development Dollars would be affected either way - all male vs. co-ed? This is not to say this should be the deciding factor but it not doubt will be a factor in the ultimate decision.

Another persuasive factor in my judgement, as pointed out by President Wilson, is the comparison of W & L with the other all-boy schools such as Amherst, Williams and/or Davidson: it has something none other of these excellent institutions ever had: it had General Lee and the living, spiritual presence of a rare human being who in five years left an indelible mark upon the institution that bears his name. In briefer terms, he accented the responsibilities of the true gentleman, a code of conduct fitting the men of his college. It lives on in the continuing traditions of the Honor System, in particular, which is a precious part of our heritage.

This is not intended to infer that young ladies would not follow these precepts but it seems to me it is more appropriately applied to young gentlemen. It would seem to be more of a male ambience or atmosphere that permeates W & L and which is referred to as "tradition".

President Wilson very properly raises the question that beyond the above considerations we have to consider the future health and usefulness of our school. I agree but I submit that a school that has survived and, yes, even prospered for 200+ years is not likely to falter by following the same precepts and principles set out by General Lee.

As for the diminishing numbers of college applicants in the '90's, haven't we survived similar periods in the past and isn't there some appeal in being one of only three or four all-male schools in the country? I do not favor dropping W & L's admissions standards but I don't believe that will be necessary. Of course, I could be wrong. One way to combat such a decline, in my opinion, would be to lay out a much more aggressive recruiting program, primarily by local alumni. In years gone by, I was frequently advised to pursue certain high school boys, but this has not happened even once in the last decade.

Is there any practical way to evaluate the positive vs. the negative appeal of a single sex (male) student body? I am sure that this could be ascertained by professional consultants. Shouldn't we try this? Whatever we do, we should not lower our standards of admission be they boys - or even girls.

I am inclined to agree that admission of young ladies would strengthen courses in music, drama and the other fine arts, but are these the courses in which General Lee wanted us to excell? They are all right but - - - as a male-only school do we need to excell in these courses?

Considerable importance seems to be directed toward the negative effect or liability inherent in the "inarticulated lesson we inadvertantly teach our young men about women". I was not concious of any such teaching then or am I now 50 years later. I concede that we need to become more concious of young ladies' serious intentions and/or serious work, but can't the girls' schools implant this philosophy? I have accepted the "colleagueship" of women in the business world without any strain.

As for the weekday excursions to the girls' schools, we rarely did this in my times. No doubt a co-ed scenario would reduce these trips, but is this a plus? Maybe there has been a change in dating patterns but the switch to open houses with carloads of uninvited girls converging on the fraternity houses leaves me fairly cold. From the deteriorating condition and the appearance of the houses (including my own Phi Kappa Sigma house), I would suggest that we go back to having house mothers. This provided a more home-like atmosphere than the present filth and physical deterioration I have observed. (In three years living in the Phi Kap house, I can recall only two or three occasions when young ladies went up stairs. What's the story now?)

Prohibition still prevailed in three of my four years, but we had our share of moonshine. It was just child's play compared to today's obsessions with drugs as I understand the situation, but letting girls in wouldn't help this, would it? Coeducation seems to work at Princeton and Davidson - both excellent schools - but are they surrounded by girls schools like W & L is?

I do not for a minute believe that admitting women would do one thing toward improving our school's output of civic leaders. And how many alumni write to inquire about gaining admission for their daughters? Would they match the number who would vote for a continuation of simple sex?

I am encouraged by the concession that many perhaps most of the current student body - prefer to remain all male. They should be the best qualified judges we have. Why try to over-rule them? Admitting women might very likely damage the fraternity system but it couldn't begin to match the damage inflicted by turning out another group of females - the house mothers. If we had them back we probably wouldn't have 500 non-frat members.

I think there is no question but what admission of women at W & L would do considerable damage to Hollins, Sweet Briar, Randolph-Macon and Mary Baldwin. The very proximity of these excellent girls' schools is what has negated previous efforts to admit women to W & L. The existing relationship vis a vis males and females is a demonstrably good one, so why destroy it?

In wrapping up my lengthy thesis, may I pose several questions?
As a 50-year alumnus, I need a little updating:

1. How many girls are enrolled in the law school? In the Exchange Program for Undergraduates? Are there limits?

2. How do these girls fit into the student body? Do they participate in extra curricular activities? Which ones?

3. How does the current faculty feel about co-education?

In closing, I go back to my earlier proposal: if women on campus are a definite plus, how about more graduate school courses that would accommodate girls but keep the undergraduate school in its present, pristine unisex format. As stated previously, its worked pretty well for over 200 years. Who would volunteer to take responsibility for altering the eminently successful course we have followed?

But if the decision should be to "let'em in", I will start immediately to prepare a 5-year old granddaughter for admission to the class of 2000!

Respectfully submitted,

Everett Tucker, Jr. 1934
Alumni President 1974-75

January 3, 1984

Mr. Everett Tucker, Jr., President
Industrial Development Company

Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Dear Mr. Tucker:

Your very thoughtful response to my "reflections" is deeply appreciated. Many of your apt questions are now on our agenda and I hope we will be successful in coming up with responsible answers to them.

Re the Law School, the women students now number something like 130 of 350. This pretty well represents the proportion of applicants from both sexes. I'm told that we are exactly in line with law enrollments across the country. From practically no women students in the learned professions, we now are running some 35% in the United States. Undergraduate women at Davidson and Princeton (after a decade and more) still hover around the 35-40 percent range.

The exchange program here in the Valley is very small, almost inconsequential. We may have a dozen women in residence in any one term. Very few of our men choose to enroll in the women's colleges. This is a major problem for the women's colleges who chose to admit men (e.g., Vassar, Connecticut College). Enrollments in the women's colleges are badly weakening and yet they do not have quite the same capacity to attract the opposite sex as do the men's colleges. Why this should be so (especially for a strong college like Vassar) would require a deeper understanding of gender psychology than I will ever possess.

I enclose a copy of a letter I recently wrote to another alumnus. I do so only because it speaks to some of the quality problems we are now facing. Your other questions will be, I hope, answered properly in due course.

I can't thank you enough for writing so carefully on this difficult subject. It is precisely what I hoped for.

Every best wish for the New Year.

Most sincerely,

John D. Wilson
President

JDW/bcb

Enclosure

bcc: Mr. Peter Agelasto