

Lafayette

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The Emerald Anniversary: 20 Years of Coeducation
An Inaugural Success
Arts and Letters: Phillip Glass, Lafayette Jazz, Jay Parini '70

Out of the fishbowl, into the mainstream

The story of 146 women, and how they grew, over the 20 years of coeducation at Lafayette.

By Jeffrey S. Miller

In the turbulent summer of 1969, June 27 was a relatively calm day. Congress was debating voting rights reforms; Vietnam news was limited to criticism of the U.S. Army by the GAO for its bankrolling of John Wayne's film *The Green Berets*; the Dow Jones industrial average stood at 870.28; the Cubs led the Mets by 6 1/2 games in the National League East. The triumph of Neil Armstrong's giant leap onto the surface of the moon was more than three weeks away; the horror of Charles Manson and his followers was six weeks off.

It was, in short, one of those days that history would little note nor long remember — except at a small college on a big hill in Easton, PA. In that community, June 27, 1969, was a day that, if not one of liberation or infamy, was one in which history began to redefine itself.

It was the day that Lafayette College went coed.

Granted, another 14 months would pass before women students became a permanent part of the college community. But when the Board of Trustees that day passed its resolution mandating "that women be admitted to all programs of the college" by a 19-9 vote, nothing less than a revolution commenced. Whether it would follow Thomas

Jefferson's observation that little revolutions now and then are good things or irreparably rip apart an institution and a community remained to be seen.

Twenty-one years have passed since the formal beginning of coeducation; women have been at Lafayette for 20 years now. With the passing of coeducation at Lafayette out of its traumatic infancy into adulthood, it is a fitting time to assess where that revolution came from, how it has proceeded, and what may lie ahead as the college moves into a new century.

To those involved with the college at the time, the struggle over coeducation was one of only several being waged at the end of the 1960s. The Vietnam War had had its inevitable polarizing effect on the campus; political debate over racial and class issues had also consumed large amounts of time and energy.

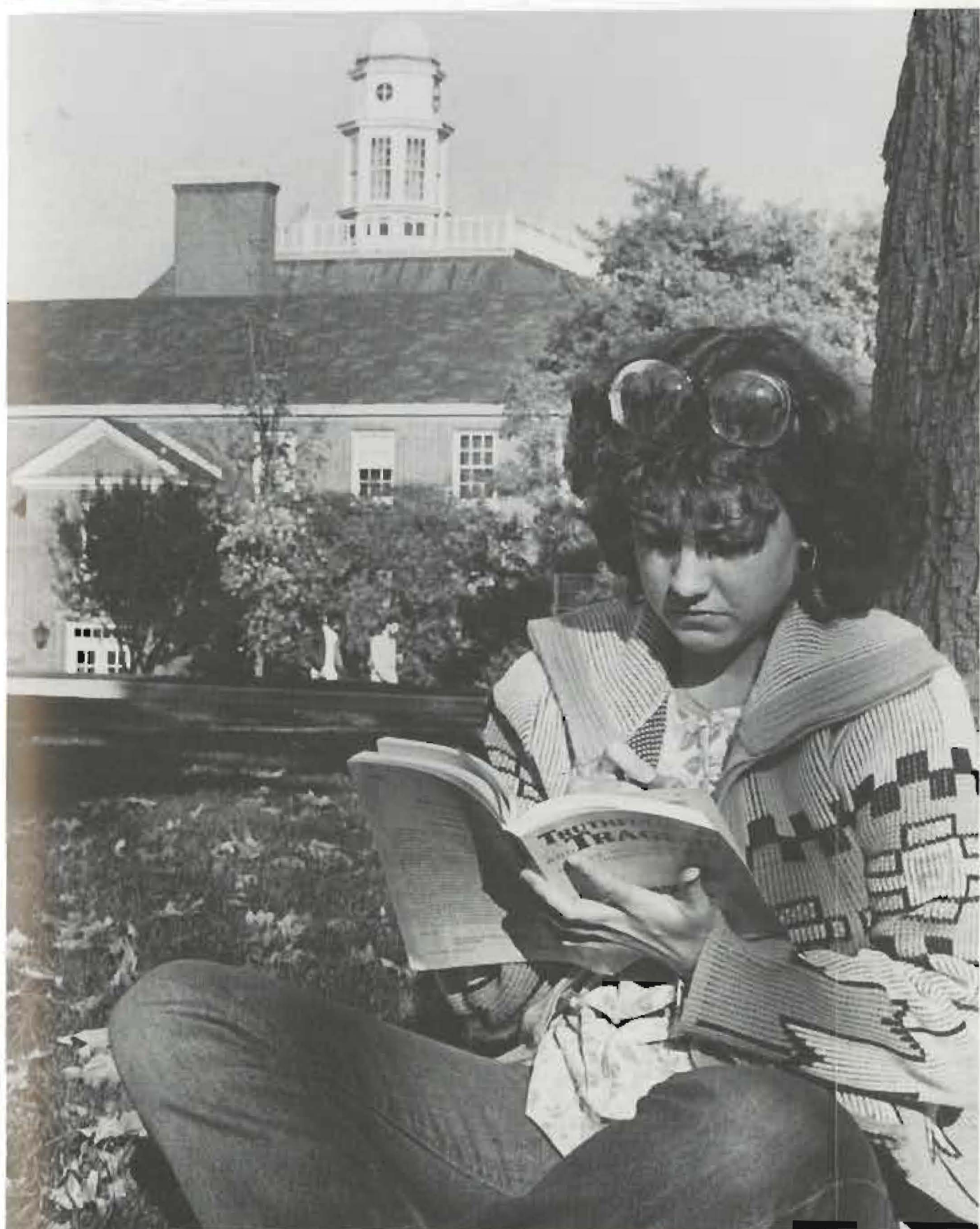
While those arguments were bitter, at times to the point of violence, they lacked the depth of emotion that characterized the debate on coeducation. Vietnam, Black Power and poverty were issues "out there" in the big world, for whatever ramifications they might have at Lafayette. Coeducation was internal, a family matter — and one that would

change the entire notion of what the family was and how it would function. One doesn't have to live through the *Godfather* saga to understand the feelings those potential changes engender.

Lafayette was hardly alone in its turmoil. At the beginning of the decade, there were more than 200 all-male colleges and universities in the country. By the summer of 1969, that number had dropped to 78; two years later, it was down to 26. (Today, the number of all-male colleges and universities in the country can be counted on the fingers of both hands. Some 60 institutions, compared to 160 in 1969, still educate all-female student populations.)

Why the big switch? The most basic answer is also the most obvious one: the postwar baby boom. Colleges and universities were experiencing a tidal wave of students, both male and female, crashing at their doors. The vast majority of these students had come through public school systems in which coeducation was a granted. As they viewed the world in which they grew up and the world that would follow college, single-sex institutions seemed anomalous.

And then there was the view from within. Officials of schools like La-



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Truth in advertising: Three of Lafayette's first women students, from the 1971 yearbook.

fayette looked at the demographics and reasoned that appealing to only 50 percent of the available consuming public was probably not a good idea if they wished to be competitive. As far as the educational product was concerned, those officials believed that coeducation would aid both academic and social life at their schools, providing differing viewpoints in discussions, strengthening various departments and extracurricular activities, and helping social development.

These were the arguments made in March 1968 by a Lafayette faculty committee when it recommended the college pursue a policy of coeducation—a recommendation that came not without reluctance, according to Albert Gendebien '34, now professor emeritus of history and then head of the committee on coeducation.

"We all felt it was the correct educational thing to do," recalls Gendebien. "We were not altogether sure it was the proper thing for Lafayette itself, but we all felt that in order to maintain and raise the quality of our students, it was something we had to do."

Gendebien and several other staff, students and alumni contributors made those same arguments in the winter 1969 *Lafayette Alumnus*. Their sentiments were met with equal fer-

vor and eloquence by staff and alumni opposed to coeducation because of the cost involved (something even its strongest backers realized was a problem), the potential debasing of the special quality of single-sex education, and the violation of tradition.

"I conclude with a simple plea to those who must decide this issue," wrote William Reaser '30, in a succinct statement of the opposition to coeducation. "Utilize every resource available to Lafayette College to fashion for its future the finest possible educational institution, cut to the same pattern which throughout the past 100 years has caused Lafayette to be an uncommon unit in the academic arena. Let's keep Lafayette unique!"

Those positions were debated widely for the 15 months between the faculty recommendation and the trustee vote. On campus, opinion was strongly in favor of coeducation: An April 1969 Student Council poll, conducted with the guidance of the psychology department, reported that more than 77 percent of the 400 student respondents favored coeducation. A less scientific poll conducted by *The Lafayette* reported only 8.6 percent of its respondents favored remaining all-male. *Lafayette* editor Robert Natelson '70, in a Feb. 7, 1969, editorial, wrote: "A

college that does not take advantage of the ever-increasing percentage of females wanting higher education is a college on the way to obscurity."

The alumni mind, however, was not quite so made up. A survey taken in early 1969 came out against coeducation, 56 to 40 percent. The low return rate on the survey—only 20 percent of alumni—cast some doubt on the strength of the result. What was clear was that younger alumni and alumni involved in education favored going coed, while older alumni favored keeping the college a male institution.

In the end, adapting for the future won out over retaining the past. The college faced just 400 days and almost as many questions until it heard its first sopranos and altos shouting "Lafayette, we are here!"

The belief that women were seen on campus prior to 1970 only as lissome consorts bused in from time to time is somewhat exaggerated. According to Herman Kissiah, dean of students then and now, faculty spouses had taken classes for years without the privilege of graduation. And there was a 1969 experiment called Coed Week, based on similar programs at Yale and Princeton, in which a student exchange was arranged with all-female Cedar Crest College in Allentown.

That experiment met with only limited success. Participation was less than hoped, and both groups felt a distinct discomfort with the situation. "Lafayette men looked at us as if we had three heads!" one woman told *The Lafayette*.

Disappointment or not, Coed Week showed that women as permanent participants in academic and social life at Lafayette would present distinct challenges to every aspect of the institution. Fortunately, says Herman Kissiah, there was a willingness to face those challenges and work through them.

"We were aided by a couple of things," Kissiah notes. "First, there was an enthusiastic desire on the part of the faculty and students that Lafayette admit women. Almost everyone wanted it to work. And then we put forth the resources to make it work. We didn't say 'We're going to try it awhile' — we spent a lot of time looking at plans and hiring the right people who could give assistance."

Among the first plans considered were ones concerning how coeducation would be incorporated and how the student population would change. Administrators, after looking at a coordinate college arrangement in which Lafayette and a women's school (most likely Cedar Crest) would share faculties and facilities, decided to employ a single-campus residential model.

This, of course, meant heavy work on residence halls to meet the needs of new female students. The college implemented a four-year plan that saw the renovation of Ruef Hall (1970), Watson Hall (1971-72) and Gates Hall (1972-73), followed by the 1973 construction of Watson Courts, Watson Hall and McKelvy House then both went coed, in 1973 and 1974 respectively.

How many women would live in those facilities was also a topic of debate. Originally, administrators conceived a three-to-one ratio of males to females that would result finally in a student population of 2,300, some 600 more than the college was used to. Trustees, however, objected to the strain that increase would put on endowment and capi-

tal funding. In the end, administrators and faculty devised a plan that would put the population at 2,000, with the three-to-one ratio still in force.

With at least an infrastructure in place, Lafayette College was ready to welcome the 146 women — 123 freshmen and 23 transfers — who arrived in September 1970. Even the most devout opponent of coeducation could hardly argue that the women who came did not belong academically. More than 86 percent were in the top quarter of their high school class, and their grades and SAT scores, according to Richard Haines '60, then director of admissions, were higher than their male counterparts. *The Lafayette* reported



Lafayette men and women manage to find a moment of harmony, circa 1971.

that the first 25 women accepted averaged a composite SAT score of 1276; of that 25, 18 were in the top 5 percent of their high school classes.

Scholastic matters were the least of the problems facing the campus, however. "There's not much you have to do to the classroom to have women go in as students," says Herman Kissiah. Social life was another matter. Lafayette was a society in which the natives were suddenly faced with a large group of immigrants, strangers, aliens. Assimilation from both parties would be necessary if the society were to stand, and that assimilation would necessarily be rocky at first — though the battle of the sexes that

ensued the first year was not quite what anyone expected.

A poll of Lafayette women in the Feb. 2, 1971, issue of *The Lafayette* indicated that almost half the respondents (26 out of 54) expressed "substantial dissatisfaction" with their experiences at the college. Those aggrieved cited a lack of interesting courses and athletic opportunities, but were most distressed about the absence of social activities (outside of fraternity parties) to bring men and women together, and about the less-than-courteous reception they felt they had received from many of the males. "They see us as things to be dated, not as people to be known and appreciated," said one woman.

The men thundered back in a Feb. 12 poll in *The Lafayette*. Out of 56 respondents, 37 had little good to say about their new classmates. "I wish the alumni would pull a coup d'état before this goes much further. I came to an all-male school, and I expected to graduate from one," one male said. Another respondent told the paper: "A few of them are really nice kids, but I'd say that 90 percent of them are snobs. They're a big bunch of stuck-up prudes."

The war of words was replayed in the winter 1972 *Lafayette Alumnus*, which was devoted to an assessment of the first year of coeducation. One female student told the magazine: "During the first semester, if you

didn't have a date, it was terrible. It's hard to explain when the ratio is so 'good' why a lot of girls on Homecoming weekend go stag to the game and parties." Her comment prompted the male response: "What do you care what people think? You call yourselves 'liberated,' dress like a bunch of construction workers, and you're still afraid to go in a fraternity house."

Faculty members did what they could to calm this Thurberian tempest—though their efforts today would have merely brought everyone more grief. "I think guys will work a little harder when there are three or four cute little girls in class," one unidentified professor told *The Lafayette*. Another faculty member told the *Lafayette Alumnus*: "Slowly, the coeds are being treated as human beings instead of as women. Boys are beginning to understand that not all girls are morons."

For all this surface tension, however, the presence of women in the student population almost immediately had positive effects, according to Joanne Follweiler, currently visiting assistant professor of chemistry. Follweiler, then an instructor and one of only eight women with teaching responsibilities (out of 185 teachers) at the college when coeducation arrived, had also witnessed the process earlier, as a student at

Muhlenberg College after that institution went coed earlier in the 1960s.

"What struck me most was when we started with a low number of women. They were all really good—everybody was talking in class," Follweiler recalls. "As a result of the women being here, men were chosen from a smaller pool. The academic level of the college discernibly went up in one year."

Vincent Viscomi, now professor of civil engineering, concurs. Even though engineering was a sore spot for many concerned about the effects of coeducation, Viscomi, then an associate professor of mechanical engineering, recalls that the addition of women to his classes had only a positive effect. "What happened was that the average quality of the classes in fact increased. The women tended to be on the average a little better than the men—they tended to get the better grades," he says.

And despite the harsh words, the same improvement was noticeable in the social climate. In the semester before women arrived, Follweiler says, "several male students asked to talk to me personally. They'd come in and sit down and start with 'I have no social life, I'm going crazy, what can I do?' It was a problem throughout the whole Lehigh Valley, where you had lots of male students and very few females.

"When the women arrived, there was an overnight change in the social atmosphere. One day there were all these social problems; the next day there were next to no social problems. There's no doubt that coeducation changed the atmosphere of the school for the better."

Al Gendebien agrees with Follweiler, although he points out some reticence from the faculty side. "Some faculty, to be fair, feared the presence of women in the class," he says. "It posed some intimidation for us. I suppose my biggest concern was that I occasionally made my point in a somewhat crude way. But I decided, hell, that's the way I do it, so I'm going to do it that way. As it turned out, it was the girls who laughed and the boys who blushed when I did it. With all of that, I don't think that there's any doubt that having women in the class improved the intellectual atmosphere of the place almost immediately."

Not all of the students, male or female, shared Follweiler or Gendebien's assessment at the time. There were still outbursts in the pages of *The Lafayette*—one 1973 letter condemned "The Whore of Babylon, the Lafayette Woman," and was condemned with equal force in return. And there were still the visible growing pains, such as the 1973 "goldfish protest" led by the 619 High Street Feminine Defense League, a group of women students who presented the administration with a bathtub converted into a goldfish bowl to make the point that Lafayette women seemed to be treated by the campus community as if they were trapped carp. In spring 1974, a less good-hearted furor erupted over the practice of some men in Marquis Dining Hall to cheer, whistle, boo and criticize women loudly as they were on their way to dinner.

But while an era of good feelings had not yet fully dawned on Lafayette, it was also evident that women were more and more becoming a part of the place—through participation in student government, the newspaper and other extracurriculars, through athletics, through the increasing presence of women on fac-

Women quickly felt at home in Lafayette classrooms, as this education seminar shows.



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ulty and in administration. By the time the first class of women graduated in 1974, coeducation was unmistakably a part of what it meant to be at Lafayette.

If the years 1970-74 can effectively be viewed as the infancy of a co-educational society at Lafayette, then 1974-81 can be seen as its pre-adolescence, years of learning to prepare for the responsibilities of adult life. They were years in which female students would go through rituals of forming their own social groups, years in which women would ascend to positions of responsibility previously the province of men.

[Douglas, an industrial chemist], shake his hand, introduce themselves — 'Hi, I'm a such-and-such in econ or bio or whatever.' They would have their wives with them, and the wives would move me off to one side and ask 'Where are you living? How many kids do you have?'

"In the early years, when I'd meet people I'd just immediately say 'Hi, I'm Dr. Follweiler.' Otherwise, they'd expect me to go give messages to someone."

Susan Blake, now associate professor of English, arrived at Lafayette in 1974, making her the senior woman among current full-time

who were old enough to be our fathers."

Perceived problems were such that in 1974, women faculty filed a complaint with the Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission charging the college with discrimination in hiring. Eight out of 27 faculty hired in 1974 were women, but action in hiring, particularly in the sciences and engineering, was far from affirmative, they said. The college in return promised to expand the applicant pool to try to draw more women to teaching positions.

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) nonetheless undertook its own examination of the situation in 1976, focusing on the lack of female representation on the powerful committee overseeing appointments and promotions. Its conclusion was that while no overt sex discrimination was taking place, the college did face an institutional problem in its attitude toward faculty women.

Enough documented evidence of gender-based slights — pregnant faculty being placed on unpaid leave, women being hired at lower positions than they were qualified for, inequity in committee assignments and tenure decisions — existed, however, to keep those attitude problems simmering, whether on a front or a back burner, for much of the period coeducation has been a part of Lafayette.

If changes in the faculty were happening more slowly than changes among students, then changes in the administration came down somewhere in the middle. Lafayette's first female administrator was Suzanne Hermann, hired in 1970 as an assistant dean of students. Hermann's first impressions of coeducation at Lafayette were positive ones. "The freshman women light up when they talk about their courses.... The women seem to be more aware of their professors as people than I've experienced elsewhere," she told Candace Kovner '72 (the first woman ever nominated for the Pepper Prize and one of the college's first female admissions counselors) in a *Lafayette Alumnus* profile.



Susan Blake, associate professor of English and senior woman faculty member.

The story of coeducation at Lafayette is not just a story of students, however. When the college described itself as "all male" in 1969, it was serious. Only two out of 128 faculty members ranked assistant professor or above — Clay Ketcham, associate professor of Latin and education, and Gertrude Graf, assistant professor of German and Russian — were women; in the administration, only two women had advanced to the position of office manager, the very bottom rung of the ladder. Trustees and alumni were men alone.

Joanne Follweiler's first faculty-staff picnic was a most confusing event, she remembers. "Everybody would come up to my husband

faculty. At the time of her arrival as a lecturer, five of the college's 139 full-time professorial staff — 3.6 percent — were women. Their small number, and the discrepancy in age between the senior male faculty and the junior female faculty, many of whom were not far out of graduate school, made for tough going. "I grew up in an educational system in which the figures of authority were overwhelmingly male, so Lafayette wasn't that much of a change for me," she says. "Still, I'd say we felt pretty embattled at the time, especially since we were all pretty young, except for a couple of women. At times it felt like we were being treated like little girls by men

Marriage took Hermann away from the college in 1972. She was replaced by Alice Sivulich, who stayed with the college for 16 years. *The Lafayette's* report of Sivulich's arrival in September 1972 shows some of the tensions between men and women at all levels of the institution: "I'm not a woman dean basically for women; I want to help both guys and girls." Thus, Mrs. Alice Sivulich made it clear she will not devote her time solely to women students on this campus."

By 1974, Sivulich had been joined by administrators in the offices of development and admissions, and by one of the most important figures both in Lafayette's coeducation and its athletic history, Sharon Mitchell. Nominally an instructor in the physical education department, Mitchell, hired from Easton High School in 1971, almost single-handedly established a women's sports program at the college, putting together and coaching teams in everything from field hockey to basketball to swimming, and teams that established winning records with amazing speed.

Her job was not an easy one. A 1976 evaluation mandated by Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972 revealed that women's athletics at the college suffered from inequality in terms of equipment, facilities, money, coaches and publicity. As Mitchell told *The Lafayette*: "Men had a lot of advantages in tennis last spring. We had only two practice courts on Sullivan Lane, no equipment budget, and we were given no practice balls." With increased attention to the program mandated by the evaluation, by the time Mitchell left the college in 1980, her program was among the strongest in East Coast athletics.

With students, faculty and administration slowly but surely integrating women into their ranks, and with alumni support returning to and exceeding levels before the decision to admit women (a sharp drop in 1969-70 giving was due more to changes in tax laws and reactions to student protests than it was to coeducation, then-director of development Gary Evans told the *Lafayette Alumnus*), coeducation

seemed ready to move into its next phase.

That phase would come in 1975-76, when the college dropped its three-to-one admissions ratio and adopted what was called Equal Access by Program. While the new plan would not push to create an immediate 50-50 balance between men and women, it did end the quota system that had defined recruitment and admissions for the previous five years. In 1976, slightly more than 29 percent of the student population was women. By 1979 that number had risen to 39 percent, and by 1982, women constituted 42 percent of the student population at Lafayette, a figure that has remained steady since.



Stacey Shelly '91 of the 1990 ECAC championship field hockey team — one example of Lafayette's success in women's athletics.

Pioneers had cleared the way; now the flood was coming in. And like immigrants anywhere, the women arriving at Lafayette sought each other for both succor and society. Men had had their social organizations for more than a century; now it was the women's turn.

A Woman's Caucus had existed fitfully during the early 1970s, when feminism was still laboring under its mocked "Women's Lib" sobriquet. In 1976, however, the Caucus sprang back into life, attracting more than 100 people to some of its meetings. That interest came along with

— and perhaps in response to — a second group: the Women's Social Organization, a group devoted to creating a sorority on campus.

Letters in support of and opposing the WSO appeared in *The Lafayette* throughout the term. (Jane Bealer '77, editorial page editor at the time, was the first woman to hold that position and focused in her own columns on women's issues, including faculty hiring and campus safety.) Those critical cited a need for women's organizations to be independent, not imitative, of men's campus groups.

Often voiced in the years since, that argument still had little effect on the move toward sororities. In 1976-77, a group of women calling themselves the Almost Sorority directly challenged Lafayette to address the issue of female living groups. Citing the "clannishness" of sororities, the administration viewed the prospect skeptically.

"The first class of women who went through here was almost like a sorority in the way they did things together," recalls Herman Kissiah. "Women's sports teams were like sororities — in fact, they became sororities when it happened. Those first classes of women made clear that they didn't want the formal divisions in the college community that we saw with the fraternities."

By the end of the year, however, a committee charged with addressing the issue of women's living groups approved both sororities and social residence halls, on the model of Kirby Hall, as possible living arrangements. There was a catch: The college would not give money or a campus building to create a sorority, while it would do both for social living groups.

The women of Lafayette were themselves divided on the issue. A questionnaire distributed among women students indicated an almost unanimous concern with living conditions. But of the roughly 50 percent who responded to the survey, only 25 percent said they would live in a sorority; 33 percent were opposed to their presence on campus.

With the approval of sororities in theory, however, it would mean



Lafayette's first sorority proudly poses for its picture in the 1979 yearbook.

only a short time until the college had sororities in practice. In October 1977, the Lafayette administration approved the creation of sororities, and in February 1978, Beta Gamma was recognized as the first official sorority on the Lafayette campus.

The idea of social living groups for women outside sororities had not been forgotten. A month after the recognition of Beta Gamma, the college announced that the formerly all-male Soles Hall would be turned into a social residence hall for women, a decision that led to one of the loudest campus uproars since the inception of coeducation. Soles Hall residents staged protests; several male seniors threatened to withdraw their senior class gift pledges.

Even women were upset. An official of Beta Gamma was quoted in *The Lafayette* criticizing "preferential treatment...given to unorganized women to establish a social dorm." Members of the Women's Caucus also criticized the way that the announcement had been handled.

Assistant dean Alice Sivulich defended the decision in blunt language, telling *The Lafayette*: "Women have been given a raw deal here as second class citizens because they simply don't have the

options open to them that men do in regard to living situations. We've reached a point where the women of this campus must be made full participating members of the college."

And so they would be, with the creation shortly thereafter of more campus sororities, their acquisition of living spaces and their affiliation with national organizations beginning in 1981; with the full transfer of Soles to women by 1981; with the development out of the Women's Caucus and other women's organizations of the still-existent Association for Lafayette Women; and with a full-blown women's sports program by 1980. The patterns of assimilation were complete: Arriving as strangers, women at Lafayette had joined together and created organizations that, while shaped by the society to which they had come, had developed a power to work in and potentially change that society.

By 1981, Lafayette women had seen their first Pepper Prize winner and Student Government president (Cathy Patterson) and their first *Lafayette* editor (Ann Gallagher), as well as numerous student government officials, club presidents (particularly in social service

and academic clubs) and star athletes. Interviews in the summer 1980 *Lafayette Alumni Quarterly* with six leaders among Lafayette women students indicated that they were pleased at least with the direction in which the college was moving in regard to women.

Nowhere could that direction be seen any more clearly—literally—than in the college's own publications. In 1969-70, when coeducation was mandated, the college catalog included 118 photographs, of which only 10 (8.5 percent) featured women in any role. By 1975-76, some 32 percent—25 photographs out of 78—included women students and teachers, and by 1980-81, almost 38 percent—40 out of 106—featured women in campus life. Women were becoming as vital to recruitment as they were to campus life once they arrived.

This is not to say that everything was working smoothly by 1981. Though women had established sororities and social living groups, they were still largely dependent on fraternity dining plans for food. Athletic facilities and intramural functions for women were the subject of numerous complaints. And while the number of women faculty had increased, that number (24 out of 167 full-time professors in 1979-80, or 14 percent) and the powerlessness it conveyed were still very sore spots for women faculty members.

As befit its age, coeducation at Lafayette was moving into adolescence. The basic exigencies of life had been mastered; now it was time to deal with more delicate balances of responsibility in heart and mind.

But, as is always the case with adolescence, it was more or less a glandular problem that overwhelmed the situation at first.

The Delta Upsilon fraternity had an established reputation as being first and foremost among Lafayette houses in partying. But its "Back to the Womb" party in February 1981 was something else altogether. Guests made their way up stairs that were lined with pink tissue paper and lit in red. A mattress had been converted into what appeared to be a giant tampon. Inflated condoms



The place of women at Lafayette? The official story seems quite different in the 1969-70 college catalog (left) from the 1982-83 version.

hung over the bar. A coathanger with what appeared to be an aborted fetus swung around the gathering.

At one point in history, the DU party might have been seen as harmless hijinks, madcap college antics at their zaniest. But that time, if it ever existed, had passed at least 11 years before.

The editorial page of the Feb. 27 *Lafayette* fairly scorched with a letter signed by all campus sororities, the ALW, the Professional Women of Lafayette, the Hillel Society and the Chaplain's Office condemning the fraternity for its party. In response, representatives of Delta Upsilon wrote a letter in which they acknowledged that the fraternity had offended people but refused to apologize for holding the party.

In the following days, the faculty moved that action be taken against what it called "violations of human decency." More letters poured into *The Lafayette*—including some from both men and women in support of the fraternity. One letter, published later in March, was signed by 29 women who took issue with their sororities' condemnation of the event.

Susan Basow, associate professor of psychology and a member of the Lafayette faculty since 1977, vividly

remembers the divisiveness caused by the DU furor. "Some women, both students and faculty, protested the event, and wrote letters to *The Lafayette*. The reaction of most of the campus afterward, though, was social ostracism. The women were not only publicly chastised and ridiculed but at times were harassed. It sent a chilling signal to other women who weren't so involved about the cost of raising one's voice against the current social practices. That has stayed in my memory ever since."

Though the "Back to the Womb" party was as immediately disruptive to campus relations as anything since the days of "The Whore of Babylon," it had a more positive long-term effect. As part of its punishment for the party, Delta Upsilon was ordered to sponsor a symposium on male-female relations for three years. To its credit, the group followed through wholeheartedly; one member told *The Lafayette* after the first symposium in 1982 that he felt "...the experience has been useful for the brothers." The ALW also praised the fraternity for its efforts.

(Although no longer chartered at Lafayette, Delta Upsilon has continued to address male-female issues at the college through an annual lectureship; this year's speaker was

feminist scholar Paula Giddings.)

With the calming of the waters after the "Back to the Womb" storm, men and women at Lafayette could turn their attention to less visceral, though perhaps no less emotional issues.

Campus safety had become a major concern of the Lafayette community during the late 1970s and early 1980s. News and rumors of assaults had circulated around campus from time to time since women had arrived in 1970; several assaults against women, including a rape, that occurred in late 1980, heightened concern over the issue.

"Security problems were not as much a concern when women first arrived here," says Herman Kissiah. "Society was different 20 years ago, whether we like to admit it or not. In the 1980s, we were, and are, dealing with a culture that has different kinds of issues and concerns to be addressed, including security."

Students themselves addressed those security issues and needs in the early 1980s by promoting the use of the "buddy system" at night on campus, and by sponsoring campus meetings on issues of harassment and safety. Fraternities and sororities cooperated with each other and with organizations includ-

ing Student Government and the Association for Lafayette Women in presenting these programs.

The Lafayette administration has responded over the past decade with measures both popular—additional lights, security telephones outside residence halls, self-defense classes—and unpopular—additional security staff, locking halls—to ensure campus security. “We had to take certain precautions to make sure that sexual assaults didn’t take place here at Lafayette,” says Kissiah.

Of less immediate physical importance but of greater importance to the life of the mind at the college was the issue of curriculum. Women from the first days of coeducation at Lafayette had said that many courses neither appealed to nor interested them. With the development of Women’s Studies as an interdisciplinary academic field in the 1970s, an incentive to address women’s issues in the classroom developed among both faculty and students.

By 1981, the college had started courses in history (Women’s History), sociology and anthropology (Sex and Gender: A Cross-Cultural Perspective) and psychology (The Psychology of Sex Roles). An English course (Literary Women) and an interdisciplinary women’s studies course (Introduction to Women’s Studies) began to be offered in the 1983-84 academic year. Today, Women’s Studies is recognized as a minor in the college curriculum, with a course on Women and the Law and one titled Women’s Lives, Women’s Work, along with several independent study possibilities, added to the earlier classes.

“Lafayette is fairly conservative in that it tends not to do things until they’ve been done elsewhere, and that was the case with Women’s Studies,” says Susan Basow, currently coordinator of the Women’s Studies program. “We have more courses now, though—and we have faculty who, though they don’t teach Women’s Studies, incorporate it into their classes, just to keep current with their fields. For a college this size, Lafayette has a good

Women’s Studies program now, although much more can be done.”

And so coeducation at Lafayette has entered its maturity, an imperfect beast but one far more aware of itself and its place in the world than it was 10 and 20 years ago. Before addressing the status of coeducation today and where it might be headed, our story needs a context it has so far lacked.

Lafayette, like the scores of other colleges and universities that have become coeducational institutions over the past 20 to 30 years, has



Susan Basow, associate professor of psychology and Women's Studies coordinator.

gone through a number of shocks in transition, shocks that still affect the men and women of this institution today. Anyone looking back over the history of coeducation at Lafayette can find instances of unfair treatment and sexism in each of its 20 years that have sadly diminished the experiences of people affiliated with the college.

But Lafayette, because of the way it adopted coeducation, was forced to meet those issues immediately and head on. Women were introduced as academic equals, and for

whatever problems there may have been with living arrangements, women were treated—at least with surface details such as open hours and curfews—no differently than men.

Lafayette did not have to face the problems of institutionalized sexism on campuses that had been coeducational since the mid-1800s. The overt and covert tracking of women into courses that would prepare them for homemaking, the early social hours and reduced study spaces of women’s dormitories, the subtle differences between education for men and for women that pervaded recruitment material—little of that was present at Lafayette.

And though the traumas that have occurred in relations between the sexes at Lafayette may seem uniquely serious, they were traumas that had been endured for years on campuses where coeducation did not mean that male faculty or male organizations would have any less power than they might at a single-sex institution.

The difficulties Lafayette faced in adjusting to coeducation, in short, were not just particular to the 100 acres on top of College Hill. They have been an inherent part of higher education in this country. How Lafayette has dealt with them and will deal with them can be judged only in that light. But to judge, one must first see where the college is now in the continuing evolution of coeducation.

ACADEMICS

One of the hidden agendas behind the establishment of coeducation was the propping up of what was felt to be a weak humanities division. Women, the reasoning went, would “naturally” be attracted to humanities and fine arts courses, while men would continue to get degrees in engineering and the sciences. “That’s where the argument got a bit sexist,” notes Herman Kissiah.

As it’s turned out, however, sexism wasn’t the only problem with that reasoning. The most recent statistics indicate that women do indeed register for humanities courses

at higher rates than men, and that men do indeed register for engineering courses at higher rates than women. But women also register for social science courses at a higher percentage than their presence in the student population, and for science courses at almost exactly the ratio of women to men.

Even the registration for engineering courses — about 33 percent of engineering students are women — is higher than the national average of 23 percent. George Hoerner '51, currently professor and chair of the chemical engineering department at Lafayette, reports that his classes currently exceed 50 percent female enrollment. "There was a lot of concern at the time that coeducation would ruin engineering, but I think in the end it's helped save us," Hoerner says. "It gave us a bigger pool of applicants, and just in terms of numbers, that certainly was a contribution to keeping us going. When you look at 50 percent enrollment, you wonder where you would be without that."

Both Hoerner and Vincent Viscomi suggest that the presence of women in engineering classes represents the way the profession has opened itself to women, something those concerned about the issue in 1970 did not foresee. "Opportunities right now are greater for females than they are for males," says Viscomi. "That's completely opposite the case 20 or 30 years ago."

In the classroom itself, things have loosened up considerably, both in terms of students' relations with each other and their relations with women faculty. Joanne Follweiler remembers one of her first classes at Lafayette: "One day after class, one student came up and said, 'When you first walked in this classroom I almost fainted! I thought you'd be like one of those hard women — I was terrified you would be really really hard to prove you were as tough as a man. But you're like a regular person!'"

"Those things have kind of evened out."

Susan Blake agrees: "The atmosphere in the classroom is much better than when I got here. Attention

to gender issues is something now that's accepted and expected in the classroom. In 1974, it was considered beyond academic discussion. And now many fewer male students resent having a woman as an authority figure. In the past, when there were conflicts over grades in which males got less than what they expected, they would take it personally, and get angry at me personally. That doesn't happen nearly as much anymore."

Heidi Ludwick '91, an economics and business major and co-editor this year of *The Lafayette*, has had several classes in which the student ratio is roughly one woman to three men. "I haven't felt any problems, either from the teachers or from the other students," she says. "It may be because the classes are small, but I've never felt any kind of discrimination."

While Ludwick and others suggest that unfair treatment of women may still exist in some classrooms on campus, the classroom atmosphere is one place in which the air has largely cleared since 1970.

LIVING GROUPS

From Beta Gamma's humble beginnings in 1978, the number of sororities on the Lafayette campus grew to six nationally affiliated groups by 1989. A bit of history came to an end this year, when Sigma Kappa, the national affiliation taken by Beta Gamma, closed due to low membership; preliminary approval for a new sorority, however, was granted last fall.

Coeducation has had a debilitating effect on one campus group: fraternities. In 1969-70, 19 fraternities were busy rushing Lafayette students; more than 70 percent joined. That percentage dropped in the early 1970s, due in part to a national anti-Greek trend; by the end of the decade, it rose to 82 percent. The addition of sororities appeared for a time to strengthen the Greek system.

But with more and more women students coming to Lafayette, the pool available for fraternities necessarily dwindled, with the result being the closing of several. Eleven fraternities now remain at Lafayette, counting 65 percent of male stu-

Equal access has always been guaranteed in Lafayette's computer labs.



Lafayette College Archives

dents as members; the five existing sororities involve some 70 percent of Lafayette women.

"The sorority system here helps develop more chances of leadership for women," says Jocelyn Davies '91, president of the Panhellenic Council, the governing body for Lafayette sororities, and a member of Pi Beta Phi. "They've given women confidence to be leaders in their own groups, and then to go into the community with those capabilities."

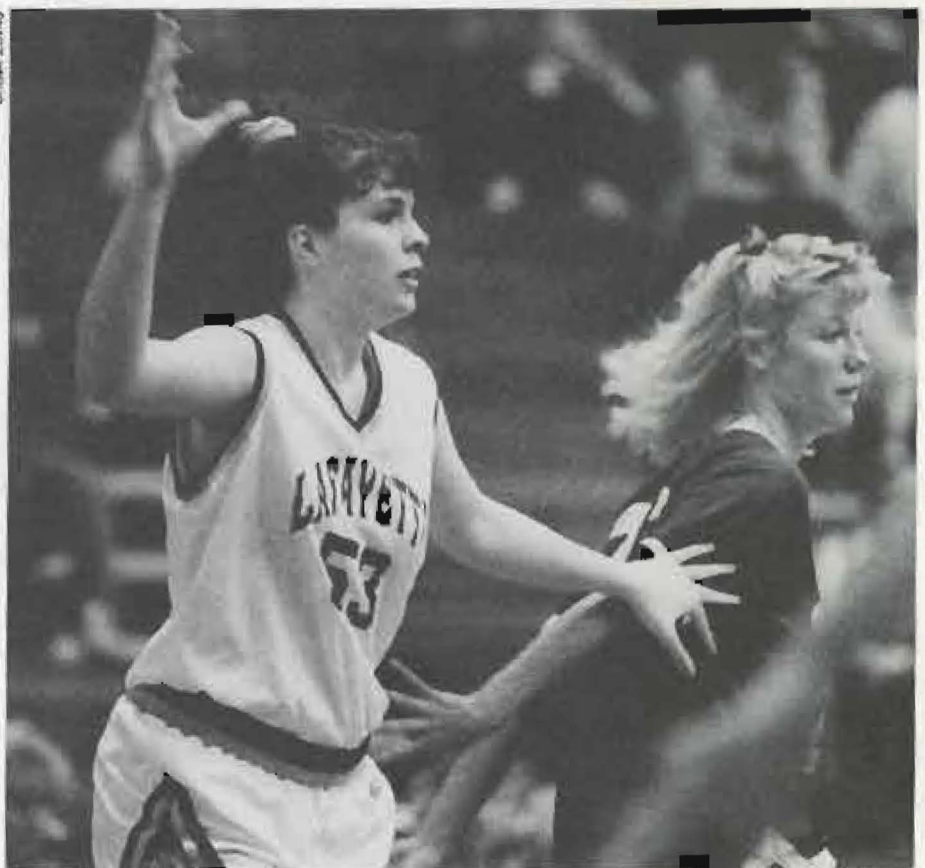
"Sororities here have been a mixed blessing," says Susan Basow. "They have provided a buffer from some of the harshness women have faced here. They still encourage social conformity and exclusivity, though. They separate women from each other and create new social pecking orders. Still, having their own organizations, for good or ill, has made women feel like they have a place here. They've helped develop some empowerment among women on campus."

Lafayette's sororities, according to both Davies and Ludwick, who is a member of the defunct Sigma Kappa, have been working hard to promote their social service programs, both on their own and in cooperation with fraternities. This kind of work, suggests Davies, may make sororities the model upon which the future Greek system at Lafayette is based. "The sororities are governed more tightly from their national organizations, which make them function more to the ideals of the organization and the college. Fraternities here have a longer history and a lot more to change. It seems harder for them to adapt to what the school wants now."

One concern the college and sororities have yet to face is the dining situation. Sororities still have no dining facilities; members are largely dependent on meal plans sponsored by fraternities or Kirby House. Heidi Ludwick doesn't necessarily see this as a debit: "We organize groups to go out and go to different houses. It helps us to get out and meet other people on the campus."

Jocelyn Davies believes that this year's completion of the Farinon Center will help alleviate the situa-

Christi Zowko



Lauren Mazza '92, center for the women's basketball team, looks for the assist in a 1990 game against the University of Delaware.

tion. But Davies counts the current meal setup as a strong negative when assessing Lafayette's current attitude toward women. And in on-going discussions among faculty and administrators, dining facilities are going to play a major part in determining future campus living arrangements.

ATHLETICS

Women's athletics has to be considered one of the great success stories of coeducation at Lafayette. Originally considered some feminine fillip — *The Lafayette* didn't even mention the first season of field hockey in 1971 — the women's sports program has risen through the years in which Sharon Mitchell called it "a real cheap date" to a level involving 11 varsity teams, many of which have won league or regional championships.

Still, some of the inequities outlined in the 1976 Title IX evaluation trouble the program. While women

athletes feel that their sports have by and large reached parity with men's sports, they believe they lack the publicity they deserve. Suzi Farrell '92, most valuable player on the 1990 ECAC field hockey championship team, says that too few people know about her team's success. "We got better crowds at the end of the season, because we'd have our friends and parents bringing out people when they saw how we were doing, so we know there was support for us," she says. "But often we'd be playing in front of just 20 or 30 people. It would get frustrating."

Farrell and Jocelyn Davies repeat a claim made by Sharon Mitchell in 1976: Men's football and basketball get the leopard's share of attention at the college, leaving women's sports to scarp for the leavings with other men's sports. "They do bring in more money than we do," Farrell says, "so it's hard to complain. And it's always going to be that way. But

it would be nice if we could get some of that attention, especially when we have a season like this one."

An equally long-standing complaint, and one more immediately remedied, concerns the women's intramural program. From the first years of coeducation, women argued that the college did little to promote or support an intramural program. Athletics officials argued back that the women were not giving them anything to help; participation was so low that there was no point trying to build a program.

The stalemate over women's intramurals has eased over the years, but a 1989 survey indicates that women's approval of the intramural sports program rates far below their approval of the intercollegiate program and far below male approval of both. Athletic director Eve Atkinson has named an assistant coach to help build participation and management of the program. Anything they do will likely be successful: Future Lafayette women could hardly be less pleased than their predecessors have been with intramurals.

FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATION

Of the many aspects of coeducation at Lafayette, the place of women faculty at the institution may yet be the thorniest. The numbers, to be sure, have changed since the first days of coeducation. By 1979, 24 out of 167 full-time teaching staff (14 percent) were women; by 1985, that number had risen to 32 out of 159 (20 percent). This year, however, the number stands at 32 out of 160—no change over the past five years. Given that the national average for private institutions of higher education is 28.5 percent women faculty, Lafayette still seems to be lagging.

On the positive side, the number of women faculty (12) ranked above assistant professor has doubled over the past five years, with a similar increase (to 11) in the number of tenured women. In both instances, however, women constitute fewer than 15 percent of those qualifying, a lower figure than that of total women on the faculty, and again lower than national averages.



Elizabeth McMahon, assistant professor of mathematics and one of 32 women now teaching full-time at Lafayette.

As those averages indicate, the problem of low female representation on faculties is indeed a national one, and one that is worsened by the traditional practice of hiring faculty at assistant professor and instructor levels and promoting from within, rather than hiring at advanced levels. (Lafayette's one current female full professor, Catherine Perricone of the department of foreign languages and literatures, was one of those hired at her rank.) With assistant professors being more likely to move than those at higher ranks, it becomes difficult for any college with a low proportion of women faculty to add substantially to that, even with equal opportunity and affirmative action policies in place.

Though Lafayette seems to be spinning its wheels in terms of women faculty, progress has been made within the administration. From ground zero at the time coeducation was instituted, Lafayette administration has, as of the 1990-91 catalogue, become almost 40 percent female. The staffs of offices including admissions, alumni, counseling, development and financial aid are at or above 50 percent female; the Skillman Library professional staff is at the same level.

Lafayette became the first Division I school to hire a female athletic director in the person of Eve Atkinson; two of the four assistant athletic directors are also women. Until the summer of 1990, when both departed, Provost Sarah Blanshei and Director of Libraries Dorothy Cieslicki were responsible for two of the most important administrative bodies on campus. Of seven full-time administrative hirings, including President Robert Rothberg, between June 1, 1990, and Jan. 1, 1991, five have been women.

"There is a strong unity among women faculty and staff here," says Susan Basow. "It's a tremendous asset and resource for all the women on campus." The college shows the intent of developing that resource. Whether it will succeed remains to be seen.

PROGRAMS

One of the hidden benefits of coeducation at Lafayette has been the openness with which the community has had to deal with issues involving gender. Over the past 10 years, beginning with the town meetings held concerning safety and living arrangements, the student population has regularly discussed the role of men and women on campus and in society. "The awareness level regarding women's issues has definitely increased even in the time I've been here," says Jocelyn Davies. "Compared to other schools I know about, people here notice things as being sexist that others might not."

That level of awareness may have reached a new peak this year. The fall semester saw an all-campus symposium on Issues of Sex and Gender. Authors and scholars including psychologist Phyllis Chesler, historian Natalie Zemon Davis, philosopher Sandra Harding and literary scholar bell hooks came to campus to discuss various aspects of women's place in the world. Painter Grace Hartigan and choreographer Bill T. Jones added an aesthetic dimension to the discussion; the Lafayette Film Society presented a series of movies in which gender relations were the dominant theme.



Lafayette College Archives

One of the participants in a 1982 phonathon demonstrates the enthusiasm women have shown in alumni efforts.

This spring is seeing an additional focus on women's issues, with a series of lectures and performances dealing with sexual assault awareness and a separate series in honor of Women's History Month and the 20th anniversary of coeducation. The Association for Lafayette Women, headed this year by Laura Brader '91, is actively participating in these and other programs concerning gender.

The sexual assault awareness program points to one other current development addressing the safety of women at Lafayette: a new and clear policy concerning sexual harassment that includes a section on acquaintance rape.

"It's a shame, but there are still women who don't speak out when something of this sort happens," says Herman Kissiah. "We're trying, with this new policy, to establish in the minds of students and faculty that support is available here on campus."

One other student group has been trying to address gender disputes for

the past three years. The Campus League Against Sexual Stereotypes (CLASS), an organization of some 25-30 male and female students formed in 1988, presents programs of skits, discussions and improvisations to coeducational groups on campus in the hope of creating better communication between men and women.

"I've been pleasantly surprised with the overwhelming popularity of the group," says Karen Forbes, counseling psychologist at the Bailey Health Center and CLASS advisor. "I think they've helped develop an increased awareness of the issues they're trying to address. And in terms of performances, we're unable to meet the number of requests we get from fraternities, sororities, classes and other groups on campus."

ALUMNI

Needless to say, the role women played among alumni in 1970 was negligible. As of 1990, that role has become among the most outstanding of all the campus constituencies.

The Alumni Association will next year have its first woman president, Deirdre Bradbury Keenan '74. Almost 40 percent of all alumni admissions representatives are women. Forty-five percent of Alumni Association chapter leaders graduated since 1972 are women. Almost 50 percent of alumni attending the three most recent 5- and 10-year reunions have been women. All are figures substantially greater than the 33 percent representation women have just among alumni who have graduated since 1972.

"Women just seem to want to jump in and do hands-on stuff when they graduate," says Debra Lamb, associate director of alumni relations. "Even with the students who are involved with the Student Alumni Association — most of them are women as well. They've had women presidents for the past five years now."

Lamb suggests that the most active alumni tend to be those involved in the first 10 years after graduation, a fact that would help

explain women's current involvement. And, she says, the fact that the three administrators most involved in the frontline of alumni activity (Lamb, Julie Martin '87, Autumn Leciston '90) are women may have something to do with relatively high levels of female participation in alumni activities. In both cases, it's clear that women continue to contribute to Lafayette after they leave in both quantities and qualities not envisioned when coeducation became the code of the campus.

No one with any knowledge of Lafayette over the past 20 years would argue that coeducation has been an unqualified success. As the story told in the previous pages indicates, countless hopes have been dashed, expectations betrayed and feelings damaged.

But that story also indicates the many ways in which the college has

been able to adapt to a new way of life. Like any society accepting a large group of newcomers, the men of Lafayette have had to watch in anger and frustration as cherished ideals and customs have diminished in their importance and, in some cases, faded away. And like any large group of newcomers to a society, the women of Lafayette have had to endure anger and frustration with their status as outsiders, a status that has been made clear to them in any number of ways over the years.

In the end, however, Lafayette's essential core value — "to foster intellectual curiosity in the pursuit of truth and the mastery of a body of knowledge" — has held the place together. Arguments will rage for as long as there are people to conduct them as to whether the college should have taken the step it did beginning on June 27, 1969. That

step, however, has been taken, and a path continues to be cleared, even though brambles and briars still tear at the fabric of Lafayette from time to time.

"There are three questions I would ask in the end about coeducation here," says Herman Kissiah. "Are we a successful college today? Yes. Are there things we would do over if we could? Yes. Are there things we would change today? Yes again. But as I look at other schools making this transition, I can see that ours is clearly better than most."

Many on both sides would take issue with Kissiah. But many more would agree that the struggle has been and will be worth it, as the women and men of Lafayette continue to learn how to live and work with each other in this very small place on this very high hill. ♦

