



WABASH COLLEGE

Class Agents Letter

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Class of 1955

Class Agents

Vince Grogg

Vaino Grayam

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September 11, 2013

Men of 1955:

Greetings on Patriot's Day...can still recall with icy clarity that morning in New York. It changed our country and all of us...and it seems the headlines underscore the fear that came rushing upon us that day.

Hope your summer has gone well. Unlike last summer when the Midwest was in a drought mode, and the heat stifling, our summer here in Indiana has been relatively cool, and although we are short on moisture, we have had some good rains, and the rows and rows of corn and soy beans all look healthy, and it appears the farmers will have a good, if not bumper crop.

Wabash's new president Dr. Gregory Hess was sworn in and took over the reins in time to ring the bell welcoming 245 new freshmen to the College. The students come from 22 states and eight countries...eight were valedictorians of their high schools...30 were Indiana Boy Staters...and 31 % graduated in the top 10% of their classes. I expect some are homesick...some are confident...some are scared...and some wish they were back in high school. In any event the College is alive with fall activities. Many are adjusting to fraternities...many are on the football, soccer, and intramural playing fields, or running cross country, swimming, etc. Although the schedules have changed since 1951, I expect the life changes and adjustments are pretty much the same.

Incidentally, many of the freshman class came due to alumni referrals. The Admissions Department hopes to secure 1200 alumni referrals this year to fill a projected class of 275 freshmen for next year. Referrals can be made on-line to the well-staffed Admissions Department which will be on the road throughout the country looking at high school seniors. Quite a change from the one-man on the road show of Myron Phillips in the summer of 1951. Myron sat on my front porch while my Mother pitted cherries and sold her on a Wabash education. He was a rabid Wabash man...I recall his license plate number was 1832...and a really nice gentleman. Due to him, my three younger brothers all came to Crawfordsville and graduated.

I mentioned in my last letter that Lacrosse will soon become a varsity sport at the College beginning in 2014-15. Terry Corcoran, a two time Division III coach of the year was hired to head up the program.

The football season begins this coming Saturday, September 14, at home against Hanover College. The 2012 Little Giants had a record of 8-2, but did not win the Conference championship and did not make the playoffs, which was a disappointment to many. Homecoming is set for September 19-21, with a full schedule of events, including the football game on September 21 against Denison. If you are interested, you can secure a schedule of all the events on-line (<http://www.wabash.edu/alumni/homecoming>), and the entire 2013 football schedule as well.

One of the homecoming events is the inaugural “Team Athletic Hall of Fame” Induction, including a reception and dinner, in the Athletics Center on Friday, September 20, at 6:00 p.m. Among the eight teams to be honored is the 1951 undefeated football team. As is the custom at Wabash any freshman who wishes to come out for football can come out, secure equipment, and be a member of the team. In 1951 there were 50 of our class on the 80-85 man roster of the 1951 undefeated team. As I recall, there were only a few of those fifty who got to play on that team. Most of us dressed for the home games, but usually we were used as cannon fodder on the “scout” team taking our licks from this senior-laden and outstanding group of players. But, the coaching staff and College all treated us as members of the squad, although our roles were mostly rooting for the team and players like Holstine, Beasley, the Huntsman brothers, Buktenica, Dooley, Hay, Hilgedick, Jones, etc. A few of us played in spots, on kickoff teams, etc. or a few snaps when the games were not in doubt. As I recall only two of our class made significant game contributions to the season, Vaino Grayam and Ralph Cook. Ralph was a starting tackle most of the season and Vaino was the place-kicker and I think was the leading scorer on the team. I recall the 1951 Bell Game at DePauw...it must have been below zero and for the first and only time in history, both teams were undefeated. Wabash won easily 40-12, and it was a great celebration...and we all enjoyed an extra day of Thanksgiving vacation. It was so cold; barrels of burning wood were placed near the team benches for players and coaches to warm their hands.

Of course, many of that team are now deceased (including Cook) or will be unable to attend. As I write it is hoped Vaino will be able to make it, as his health has been poor of late. I have heard of a few of our class who plan to attend, viz. Dick Payne, Lee Thornton, Dick Barger, and myself. It is hoped others will make the event.

Ran across a reference to an event that occurred in 1954 (I think). It was an account taken from Byron Trippet’s memoir, “Wabash on My Mind”. I am sure many of you will recall the building of the Campus Center...I think it was finished the summer prior to our senior year. I am also sure many will remember the mixed reaction to the

building, and then the “incident” involving the statue of a young Abe Lincoln and his obviously large male dog. I am attaching the same, hoping it will bring back a memory and perhaps a smile.

Had a nice e-mail from Ernie Henninger...he is a retired DePauw college professor. He and his wife, Melva, live in Harrodsburg, KY. We lived together our freshman year at Scott House, eating our meals at Kane House, and shared a lot of laughs. Good to know he and family are doing well, and enjoying his retirement.

Don't forget to keep a contribution to Wabash in mind as you end the year. Last year was not a banner year for the class of 1955, and we need to do better. It is not the amount, but the act that counts...it goes a long way in keeping a great place going.

Until next time,

Vince

The Lincoln Statue: The story from the memoir of Byron K. Trippet, "Wabash on My Mind"

"The reaction to the Campus Center when it was finished and completely furnished was decidedly mixed. Visitors to the campus were enormously impressed. Alumni and their wives on the whole were pleased, even proud. On campus the reaction was largely unfavorable. Some thought the Center looked too feminine, too lavish for a men's college. Some faculty members sneered at the elegance. But secretly, I believe they were pleased. Certainly the quickness with which the faculty began to use the Center and to boast about it off campus belied their criticism on campus.

The student reaction was in the beginning at least harshly negative. The Bachelor and The Caveman were cruel and at points devastatingly funny in their criticism. There were repeated references to "Creeping DePauwism". Don Cole, the leading student cartoonist, did a series of cartoons ridiculing the elegance of the Center. One showed a student sinking into the lush carpet as if it were quicksand, while other students threw him life savers attached to ropes. Another showed campus dogs foraging in the Campus Center garbage cans, one saying to another: "Oh, it's an elegant joint all right, and the food is the best in town". Bill Cook, editor of The Caveman, was vicious in lampooning the "millionaires" college, especially after the unfortunate "You can't be a big shot in overalls" chapel speech by Dr. Sparks.

The swirling controversy about the new Center came to a peak and then subsided until an incident involving the plaster cast of the statue of Abraham Lincoln in Indiana. Eric Gugler had acquired from the sculptor (Paul Manship) the original cast of a Lincoln statue done for the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company in Fort Wayne. It depicts Lincoln at the age of seventeen before he left Indiana for Illinois. Gugler persuaded Lee McCanliss to buy the cast and give it to Wabash to be erected on the east portion of the Center in front of the "Look Through". Lee was delighted with the idea and suddenly, without much warning, the enormous crated arrived on campus. Lincoln was established in the appointed place, and all hell promptly broke loose as far as the student reaction was concerned.

"This is a fraud!" Lincoln had nothing to do with Wabash!" "A rich man's whim!" "Get this atrocious insult to Lincoln and Wabash off campus at once!" And so on and so on. By this time Frank (Wabash President Sparks) recovering slowly from a broken hip and distressed by some of the previous student criticism, was on the defensive. He was torn between sympathy with the student point of view and loyalty to Lee McCanliss (a Wabash Trustee). He left it to me to reason with the students. I did the best I could, pleading for time to resolve an embarrassing and delicate problem. But my best was not enough for student hot heads. The end came suddenly in the following way.

About that time Herman Wells, president of Indiana University, telephoned me one day to explain that he was hosting a group of distinguished European educators which was visiting a number of American universities. It was a prestigious group, including men like the Master of Balliol College, Oxford, the rector of the University of Lausanne, the prefect of the Sorbonne, etc. Dr. Wells had suggested to the group that before returning to Europe, it should take a look at a typical American liberal arts college. It was a very kind and gracious thing for Herman to do. He had suggested a visit to Wabash. I was delighted and we agreed on a date for the visit. I at once alerted the faculty to this rare opportunity for Wabash, and gave instructions to the maintenance department to manicure the campus in readiness for our guests.

The morning of the appointed visit I came on campus quite early to be sure everything was in good order. As I passed the new Campus Center I was frozen in sudden horror at what I saw. The Lincoln statue was of heroic proportions (perhaps twelve feet high). Young Abe is standing with an axe under his left arm, and a book, presumably a Bible, in his left hand. His right hand rests gently on a massive dog, obviously male, which is sitting on its haunches, resting gently against Lincoln's right leg. During the night before the morning of which I speak some students had painted the genitals a brilliant scarlet---just the genitals, nothing else. It had been expertly done. That spot of scarlet was visible from as far away as Yandes Hall! It stood out like a red flare in a black night.

As I say, I was horrified. The bus load of educators was due at ten. What to do? I called the superintendent of buildings and grounds. His men went to work at once with scrapers, chisels and sandpaper. In due time the scarlet was removed but even so, this operation was only partially successful. The plaster cast of the statue with age had become a dusty gray in color. This meant that the paint removal left the dog's genitals as white as newly fallen snow against a gray background. It was the best that could be done.

A few days later the statue was dismantled and recreated . Thereafter the controversy about the Center faded into history”