

Summary

1. Purpose of the Meeting & History Project

1. The facilitators, Naomi Katz Mintz and Arthur Mintz, explain the goal:
 - o To compile stories, documents, and memories capturing daily life at Cornell between 1967–1971.
 - o The archive will include **written accounts, audio, transcripts, and photos** submitted by classmates .
 - o The project aims to create a record so that their experiences are not “lost” and can be understood by future generations .
2. The meeting continues earlier discussions about:
 - o First impressions of Cornell
 - o Dorm life
 - o Favorite memories
 - o Plans to present the project at a future reunion

2. Major Historical Events Affecting Freshman Life

2.1 Vietnam War & Draft

- The Vietnam War profoundly shaped student consciousness.
- One participant describes being politically “humbled,” transitioning from a confident high-school graduate to someone grappling with national issues, draft pressures, and campus activism
- Many recall that nearly all students knew someone affected by the draft, which forced them to reconsider their priorities and perspectives.

2.2 Bruce Dancis and Anti-War Protests

- A vivid memory: activist **Bruce Dancis** holding a dramatic draft-card burning rally, announcing he would have to flee and ultimately serving prison time for draft resistance .
- Events like rallies, tie-dyed American flags hung outside offices, and visiting religious activists (e.g., Daniel Berrigan) contributed to a politically charged campus atmosphere .

2.3 Assassination of Martin Luther King Jr.

- The MLK assassination occurred at the end of freshman year and had a deep emotional and social impact:

- Some students admitted they did not fully comprehend its magnitude at the time, but understood it more deeply later in life.
- Some Black students left their sororities in response to the climate afterwards.
- Several recall increased campus tension, including unexplained fires near the same period.

3. Social Life, Dorm Culture & Changing Rules

3.1 Dorm Restrictions & Gender Differences

- Freshman women recall strict residential rules:
 - Curfews, sign-in/sign-out procedures, no men upstairs, required dress for meals .
 - Men faced far fewer restrictions.
- Changes began during their freshman year, gradually loosening dorm regulations.

3.2 Diversity & Culture Shock

- Students from largely homogeneous hometowns describe meeting people from vastly different backgrounds for the first time.
- Even simple differences—such as meeting a “natural blonde”—were striking to some, reflecting how sheltered many felt before Cornell .

4. Academic Experiences: Courses That Mattered

4.1 Influential Professors & Classes

1. **Biology 101 with Professor Keeton**
 - Recalled by multiple participants as transformative, shaping views on science and even influencing future careers in research or molecular biology .
2. **Food & Nutrition 101 with Marjorie DeVine**
 - A demanding 5-credit course with labs twice a week.
 - Students describe DeVine as passionate and inspiring; her encouragement even changed some students’ career paths .
3. **HDFS 101 in Bailey Hall**
 - Memorable for its massive lecture size and intense note taking, representing a major shift from high school for some students .

4.2 Academic Culture & Pressure

- Freshman orientation sometimes included intimidating lines like “look around—you won’t all be here in four years,” especially noted in the engineering school .
- Students recall large numbers of peers switching out of engineering or architecture due to the workload.

5. Extracurricular Life & Student Media

- **WVBR (the student radio station)** played a key role for several students.
 - It provided community, news awareness, and a steady social outlet.
 - Those working there often learned major world events before the general student body thanks to incoming news feeds (“press chela types”).

6. Personal Adjustments & Challenges

6.1 Cultural Adjustment

- Some students came from immigrant families or moved from overseas; e.g., one participant had recently emigrated from England and was surprised to learn they must buy their own textbooks (a financial strain) .

6.2 Academic Transition

- Many felt unprepared for Cornell’s rigor—large lectures, note-taking, demanding labs, and competitive grading were all part of the adjustment.

6.3 Emotional Growth

- Several reflections center on becoming more mature, thoughtful, and politically engaged during freshman year.