

Summary

1. Opening and Introductions

1. Participants greet each other and confirm attendance.
 - Example: several join by phone or reconnect after previous sessions.
2. The group explains the format: say where they're from, where they lived freshman year, then address a starting question.
3. The starting question for this session is: **Which freshman-year professor had the greatest impact on you, and why?**

2. Influential Professors and Academic Experiences

1. **One participant's influential professor:**
 - He praises Uri Bronfenbrenner (CDF 115), describing inspirational lectures on sociology and child development.
2. **Another's academic challenges:**
 - As an unprepared entrant into the Art & Architecture program, she struggled in studio courses and found refuge in her freshman English class.
 - She recalls Mrs. Admins, a strict but excellent writing teacher whose class boosted her confidence.
3. **Large lecture experiences**
 - Many recall huge lecture classes (history, physics, sociology), but also small seminars and the surprising feeling when a professor knew students by name despite large class sizes.
4. **Reading & Study Skills Program**
 - A third participant describes a non-credit study-skills course that transformed her academic performance by teaching how to read and study efficiently.

3. Social Life, Friendships, and Dorm Living

1. **Dorm friendships & curfews**
 - Women had curfews; these curfew gatherings created strong hall friendships as everyone sat by the lone hallway telephone talking before the nightly deadline.
2. **Dorm options**
 - Freshmen lived either in dorms, sororities, or small living units. This shaped social connections.

3. **Rush/sorority recruitment**
 - Rush began second semester; for many, it exposed them to more people in two weeks than the rest of their Cornell years.
 - It simultaneously broadened and narrowed social circles by creating a “family” unit while also exposing students to upper class networks.
4. **Small living units**
 - Several ultimately joined small living units (e.g., Watermargin) toward the end of freshman year, providing a stable community.
5. **Friendships that endure**
 - Participants note that freshman friendships remain some of the tightest in their lives, with several still in touch or living together decades later.

4. Extracurriculars and Making a Large University Feel Small

1. **Octagon theatre involvement**
 - Two classmates discuss their work on productions such as *Pajama Game* and *Peter Pan*; joining Octagon introduced them to new social circles and meaningful friendships.
2. **Church, clubs, and casual networks**
 - Some met people through church, student groups, or shared activities, piecing together their community from various small encounters.
3. **Navigating multiple communities**
 - Participants describe moving among dorm friends, major-based communities, and social groups like fraternities/sororities, which collectively made Cornell manageable.
4. **Cultural experiences in the dorms**
 - One student recalls a hall mate from Pakistan who cooked rice for girls on the floor—an example of spontaneous bonding experiences.

5. Dress Codes, Social Rules, and Changing Norms

1. **Strict dress norms for women and men**
 - Women were expected to wear skirts; men sometimes wore jackets and ties even to class.
 - Participants describe “dinner dresses” kept on hooks to quickly comply with dining hall dress codes.
2. **Rapid cultural shift**
 - By senior year, these expectations had evaporated; dress culture changed dramatically within four years.

3. **Curfew rebellion:**

- The Class of '72 women refused to follow curfews, leading to the rapid abolition of the policy within weeks.

6. Historical Context and How Events Impacted Daily Life

1. **Vietnam War influences**

- Arthur recalls debates over military recruiters on campus; he supported allowing recruiters even while protesting the war itself.

2. **Assassinations of MLK and Robert Kennedy**

- These events occurred at the end of freshman year; the group wants to discuss how they affected students personally.

3. **Straight Takeover (1969)**

- Recalled in connection with theatre involvement, illustrating how major events occurred simultaneously with students' daily routines.

7. Emotional Reflections & Adult Perspective

1. **Shift in priorities**

- Many remark how what seemed important at age 18 feels insignificant now—and vice versa. Priorities as older adults differ dramatically from those during college.

2. **Recognition of community's value**

- Participants admit they underestimated the value of friendships and networks when young. In retrospect, these were far more important than they realized at the time.

3. **Humor and nostalgia**

- Stories about bad weather gear, wearing skirts in winter, firetrap apartments on Eddy Street, and shared misadventures reflect fond recollection.