

Summary

The Zoom session gathers Cornell alumni to preserve recollections of day-to-day student life from the late 1960s. This meeting focuses on the **summer after freshman year** and the **transition into sophomore year**.

Participants aim to document personal memories of Cornell 50 years earlier—dorm life, classes, social changes—not major world events, though they note the impact of the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy.

Key Themes & Stories Shared

1. Summer Jobs & Experiences After Freshman Year

Participants recall a wide range of summer jobs:

- **Temp agency office work** in NYC, learning office culture and commuting.
- **Registrar's office job** involving ammonia-based copying machines at Brooklyn College.
- **Department store jobs**, including advising girls on what to bring to college.
- **Work at a children's camp** for a child-development major.
- **Internship with the Department of Housing and Urban Development.**
Some participants cannot recall their summer activities at all, prompting sympathetic laughter.

2. Emotional Transition Into Sophomore Year

Experiences varied widely:

- Some described **sophomore year as their saddest**, feeling invisible or unsure of direction.
- Others felt that **things began to fall into place**—housing, academics, or sorority life.

3. Housing Decisions

Housing was often confusing or last-minute:

- One student returned to Ithaca mid-summer with parents to find off-campus housing, eventually renting a room for **\$16/week**.

- Discussion of the era's **single-sex housing norms**, and the shift toward **co-educational living units**, such as:
 - **Water Margin**, an alternative, integrated living society.
 - **The Shire**, a College-town cooperative living space.
- Water Margin's evolution, rules for women residents, and social mission were explained in depth.

4. Choosing Majors

Several alumni reflected on academic decisions:

- Changing majors after freshman-year coursework proved a common experience.
- Examples include shifting from mathematics to **philosophy (symbolic logic)** and interest in linguistics, though the latter had heavy prerequisites.

5. Social Life, Sororities, & Activities

- Some students pledged sororities, only to leave after realizing it wasn't a good fit. They nevertheless found value in the experience (e.g., learning "proper table-setting" or cocktail-party conversation).
- One participant helped launch the **first female cheerleading squad at Cornell**, describing how it was approved by university leadership.

6. Freshman-Year Memories That Resurfaced

As people shared stories, they prompted others' recollections:

- Dorm-life memories, such as pranks, community culture, and newspaper April Fools' jokes.
- The selective service (draft) lottery of the era, which created anxiety and watch-parties among students.