

Summary

1. Major Campus Events & Historical Context

1.1 Willard Straight Hall Takeover (April 1969)

1. Participants recall the student-led takeover, its political significance, and the atmosphere on campus afterward.
2. Books such as *From Willard Straight to Wall Street* are mentioned as offering perspectives on the event.
3. The takeover triggered faculty turmoil—some prominent professors resigned in protest.

1.2 Barton Hall Demonstrations

1. Occurred shortly after the Straight takeover.
 2. Motivations varied widely—some attended in support, others to oppose.
 3. The campus climate was described as “a mishmash” with diverse viewpoints represented.
-

2. Social Groups & Extracurricular Life

2.1 Music & Performance Groups

1. Many participants were in Cornell’s choral and musical groups (Women’s Chorus, Sage Chapel Choir, Glee Club, Savoyards).
2. Musical performances were important social anchors, including holiday concerts and campus caroling.
3. One student recalls doing a Bailey Hall solo with orchestra.

2.2 Radio & Media (WVR/WCB)

1. WVR served as both a workplace and a social hub.
2. Students left each other messages there—an analog communication network.

2.3 Sports

1. Some participants were members of club gymnastics, which traveled by carpool (no university support).
 2. Daily routines involved long hours away from dorms due to rehearsals, sports, and studying.
-

3. Life Before Digital Technology

3.1 Communication

1. Students relied on:
 - dorm phone lines
 - bulletin boards
 - written messages
 - in-person meetings
2. The “WCB” (“Will Call Back”) message system is recalled.
3. Being unreachable was normal; they didn’t feel disconnected because they had never lived otherwise.

3.2 Time Management

1. Students planned everything on paper calendars—classes, studying, rehearsals, dates.
 2. Punctuality was essential; no way to notify someone if you’d be late.
 3. All-nighters were sometimes common, sometimes avoided.
-

4. Academics & Courses

4.1 Varied Course Experiences

Participants discuss courses such as:

- African American literature
- Southern literature
- History of Science
- Macroeconomics (with Prof. Alfred Kahn)
- Geology (with field trips)
- Statistics
- Organic chemistry
- Development of American Ideals (Milton Konvitz)
- Astronomy
- Sociology (notably Prof. Dan Sisler, who was blind)

4.2 Influential Teachers

1. Multiple respected professors are remembered fondly for their teaching excellence or personal impact.
2. Others are recalled as poor lecturers—difficult accents, disorganized teaching, or material too esoteric.

4.3 Faculty Departures After 1969

1. The Straight takeover caused turmoil in the Government Department.
 2. Professors such as Rossiter, Burns, and Sowell (later conservative commentator Thomas Sowell) left around that time.
 3. Faculty diversity was extremely limited—very few Black or female professors.
-

5. Books & Intellectual Climate of the Time

5.1 Books Students Read

Sophomore-year reading—assigned or self-motivated—included:

- *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*
- James Baldwin's works
- Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*
- Richard Wright's *Native Son*
- Feminist literature
- Allen Watts' *The Wisdom of Insecurity*
- Vietnam War scholarship (e.g., George Kahin)

5.2 Political Awakening

1. Civil rights and feminism influenced students' reading choices.
 2. Students felt these books were eye-opening and socially transformative.
-

6. Dorm Life & Housing

6.1 Transfer Student Experience

1. Transfer students initially placed in makeshift arrangements (basements of Clara Dickson, then old fraternity houses).
2. Dorm rooms varied widely—some found them “creepy,” others enjoyed privacy.

6.2 Dorm Incidents

1. Panty raids—treated humorously in recollection—occurred in that era.
-

7. Accessibility & Disability Experience

7.1 Campus Accessibility (or Lack Thereof)

1. Cornell had virtually no accommodations for disabled students.
2. Participants remember almost no visibly disabled classmates.
3. Contrasted with modern expectations under the ADA (ramps, support services).

7.2 Stories of Disabled Professors

1. Prof. Sisler, a blind rural sociology professor, is remembered fondly.
 2. His daily experiences illustrated how unfriendly the built environment was.
-

8. Reflections on Teaching Quality & Institutional Change

8.1 Then vs. Now

1. Many feel Cornell in the 1960s valued research prestige more than teaching skill.
2. Today, they believe Cornell focuses more on teaching effectiveness.

8.2 Large Lectures vs. Small Classes

1. Large STEM lectures were seen as impersonal and harder to learn from.
2. Smaller humanities and social science classes allowed better engagement.

8.3 Teaching Assistants

1. TA quality varied; some were excellent, others unprepared or absent.