

Summary

1. Purpose of the Zoom & Opening Context

1. The meeting focuses on eliciting junior-year memories—from political activism, academics, social life, and conversations worth preserving—to time-capsule items representing the era.
2. Some participants admit to remembering very little of that specific year and rely on others to fill in the gaps.

2. Housing, Living Situations & Co-ed Dorm Politics

2.1 Off-Campus and Dorm Experiences

- Students lived in varied places: Cook Street apartments, Watermargin, Algonquin Lodge, and the new co-ed North Campus dorms.
- Transfer student Andrea lived in the new co-ed dorm when she arrived junior year.

2.2 Creation of Co-ed Housing

- Watermargin became the first co-ed residential house; women were recruited to fill new spaces.
- Algonquin Lodge's shift to co-ed status became a major political battle, opposed by traditional residents ("upstate dairy farmers"), with abstentions counting as "no" votes until a constitutional amendment fixed the rule.
- Early co-ed bathroom logistics sparked conflicts, such as women locking entire floors' bathrooms, causing late-to-class mornings. Locks were removed to solve the problem.

2.3 University Oversight

- Watermargin was required to wall off floors, designate a women's bathroom, and even install a bathtub to gain university approval.

3. Political Climate: Vietnam, Protests & Campus Shutdown

3.1 March on Washington & Anti-War Actions

- Many attended the large mobilization ("the mob") in Washington, some traveling dangerously in a mattress-lined U-Haul truck.

- Participants still have memorabilia such as “March on Washington” buttons.

3.2 Kent State, Cambodia, and Campus Closure

- After Kent State and the Cambodia bombings, Cornell shut down many classes. Some teaching assistants still held sections for any student who showed up. One TA recalls teaching symbolic logic to a single politically conservative student who demanded the instruction he “paid for.”

3.3 Draft Lottery, Neil Young’s “Ohio”

- Kent State was frequently remembered; the Neil Young song “Ohio” was mentioned as a symbolic time-capsule item.

4. Academic Experiences & Professors

4.1 Symbolic Logic and Teaching Roles

- Some students excelled in symbolic logic, earning rare A+ grades and becoming undergraduate TAs due to shortages of graduate assistants. Teaching sections, however, felt intimidating and imposter-like for some.

4.2 Struggles with Statistics

- Multiple participants describe statistics courses—particularly in the ILR school—as disastrous due to poor teaching. Many barely passed or changed majors after failing to understand the subject. Decades later, they still shared relief that it “wasn’t all my fault.”

4.3 Math Department & Teaching Quality

- Several describe incomprehensible math professors (some with heavy accents or esoteric specialties), uneven teaching standards, and a department more focused on research than teaching.

4.4 Changing Majors

- Some shifted majors (e.g., ILR → Arts & Sciences → History) due to misaligned interests and difficult required classes like labor law and statistics. Others added majors such as American Studies after discovering they had enough credits.

4.5 Intellectual Stimulation

- Despite academic challenges, several expressed deep gratitude for Cornell's intellectual environment, professors, and stimulating peers—especially compared with prior institutions.

5. Social Life, Relationships & Personal Growth

5.1 Friendships & Reunions

- Many remain close with roommates decades later, staying in touch through Zoom or reunions.

5.2 Engagements and Breakups

- A memorable story: Kathy became engaged at 21 junior year, only for the boyfriend to break it off—twice—once pretending to stay together so she would finish the school year without emotional upheaval.

5.3 Hitchhiking Culture

- Hitchhiking was common, sometimes dangerous; people shared stories of broken-down cars, strangers who warned them, and trips to hockey tournaments. One alumnus recalled a long improvised hitchhiking journey to see Cornell win a championship.

5.4 Anti-University Movement

- One student lived in the co-ed dorm and joined “Anti-University,” a countercultural group known for nightly weed smoking and skipping class (except her).

6. Athletics & Hockey Culture

- Hockey played a big role in student life: going to games, following the team to tournaments, waiting tables for freshman hockey players, and observing the tough, tooth-losing nature of the sport.
- Hockey players were often older Canadian recruits placed in fraternities rather than freshman dorms.

7. Weather, Campus Life & Daily Living

7.1 Ithaca's Climate

- Several recall the perpetual grayness, harsh winters, and claims that Ithaca caused vitamin-D deficiencies.
- Students would watch lake-effect snow roll in from the library windows.

7.2 Snow Trays & Outdoor Fun

- Dining hall trays were used for illegal sledding, complete with hay bales to prevent students from sliding into streets.

7.3 Old Ithaca Businesses

- Memories include local eateries like McDonald's (which once served actual fried chicken), W's Drive-Up, and Kentucky Beef.

8. Time-Capsule Items Mentioned

Participants suggested symbolic items to represent junior year:

- Kent State / "Ohio" by Neil Young button or record.
- March on Washington buttons.
- Gene McCarthy political button.
- Old notebooks from classes.