

# Pranks

*Courtesy of Drew Magazine. Article originally appeared in the Spring 1997 edition, by Sara Nuss-Galles*

Pre-dawn VJ Day in the Forest: As Pat Adams ('47) and Peggy Lance Osborn ('47) regaled dorm-mates with their hitchhiking adventure to the peace celebration in Times Square, they heard male voices in the driveway beneath their windows. The Coeds discovered that "denizens of the Rogers House were hunting a clothesline to rig up to the bell in the Brothers College Tower." A quick search revealed that Adams owned the only line longer enough to ring out the news. "If I contribute," she declared, "I insist on being a part of the action."

Cloaked by darkness, the patriots ascended a metal ladder to the bell, and dropped the other end of the line to the ground. Then, returning to their lair in the shrubbery, Adams and "more than one pre-ministerial student took turns pealing out the new sof the end of the war."

While the former Acorn editor conveniently dismisses the official consequences of the act, she clearly recalled "the thrill of seeing the beam from night watchman Fred's flashlight hurrying our way to put a stop to this latest eruption of college craziness." The prank that she credits with crowning her college career left Adams with a single regret: "That climb up the tower left ineradicable grease stains on the only white silk dress I ever owned."

Although such high-jinks go unmentioned in colored admission brochures or high tech CD-ROMS, or campus tours, their niche in campus life is as enduring and hallowed as the Forest's fearlessly abundant squirrels. While yesterday's students donned beanies and dressed decorously and today's shave their heads and sport sweatshirts, their pranks live on. Responding to a *Drew Magazine* inquiry on college pranks, dozens of letters, faxes, e-mails and phone calls regaled us with fond shenanigans. Some were third hand, like well worn stories recounted to awe junior alumni at reunions. Others were sketchy recollections pieced together from bystanders, each bearing their own truth. And there were even confessions, wherein a no longer fearful "L" proudly, brazenly, and sometimes embarrassedly shared misdeeds of long and not so long ago.

Motivated by patriotism as mischievous as those port-WWII Quasimodos, a group of Haselton Hall residents threw themselves into the democratic process. Moved by Professor Julius Mastro's claim that "organization won campaigns more than ideas or personality" Lloyd Louis Hyman ('77) and friends decided to test their Political Science professor's theory. The student government election of 1875 provided the opportunity.

"We ran a write-in campaign in the name of one Peter Arlo," Hyman recalls, "a commuter student who wanted to help out but was too busy to campaign personally." The Committee to Elect Arlo campaigned energetically and, as momentum increased, the candidate's low profile seemed inconsequential; the voters elected Arlo by a landslide. Thereupon Hyman and fellow king-makers scheduled a photo-op with the Acorn "to introduce our new senator, Peter Arlo the hamster."

What Acorn writer Alan Langlieb ('88) described in 1985 as "the most outrageous caper in the history of Drew campus" entailed subjects beyond Arlo on the food chain. That December 36 lab cats disappeared from Hall of Science. Arriving for Professor Joy Phillips' Zoology 13 practical exam, the students found the wooden "coffins" where their dissected cats normally reposed empty. Without specimens, the exam was postponed.

Recounting "the prank of the hidden lab cats" Patrick Foye ('88) recalls that a campus wide uproar ensued with "an excessive campus search, interrogation of the students, search of dump sites, and fear that an organized animal rights group had orchestrated the disappearance." Efforts by in house and off campus searches turned up nothing.

At midday, Foye says, an anonymous note surfaced revealing that the cats lay peacefully on the ceiling panels in the same lab. To some dismay, the exam proceeded. While the cat-nappers eluded capture, Foye confides "Rumor has it that the three culprits are doing well in their current medical careers."

Although pranksters tend to favor smaller creatures, a few brave souls strove for larger, if not better. Evoking a long suppressed memory, Michael Lang ('67) recalls that he and his friends "borrowed" a sheep from a nearby farm, transporting it to campus in a VW Bug convertible. Flagrantly violating curfew, the sheep was liberated in female Brown Hall. Karen Long ('67) remembers awakening to a racket, but is no longer certain if she actually saw or only heard the sheep. Either way, she insists, "it was over almost immediately." Although Lang too pleads vagueness, he recalls that the women contacted the relieved farmer, who retrieved his sheep.

No such haze surrounds artistic additions to the sculpture of Francis Asbury near Mead Hall. While the rider always remained respectfully unscathed, a ritual of highlighting certain attributes of the horse evolved. "I heard that back in the depression days Drew green paint was applied annually to the horse's genitals" Howard Slaatte ('56) wrote in. They were never caught, but he heard that "one of them later became a type of administrator." One late 1940's Halloween Pat Adams recalled "a crew transformed two appendages on Francis Asbury's horse into miniature jack-o-lanterns." Returning WWII veterans ensured that "Asbury's horse continued to suffer the indignity of having some of its body parts painted" according to empathic witness Geraldine Abbott ('50). By 1960 the entrenched rite provided "The Waverly Raiders one of their first magical moments on campus. John Greco ('65) and fellow Raiders embarked on deflating the highly pretentious Freshman Tea" held for first-year students and their parents. After examining the statute of limitations on pranks, Greco confessed, "To liven up what we thought of as boring, we painted the horse's private parts international orange." The artists then hung around to enjoy reactions.

As colorful as those misdeeds were, the highest point in campus animal lore remains the horse whom attended chapel. Beyond the facts of horse and Craig Chapel, accounts ranged from facilities needing to make use of a crane to remove the horse to removing a window frame to lower it down in a sling. Bystander Frank Cariwithen ('32) wrote this account: "One night near Halloween I returned from downtown to find some classmates doing a war dance with the night watchman in the center of the ring, to prevent him from punching the clocks in the buildings. The horse used on the mowing machine was being led to the second floor chapel and tied to the altar rail. The next morning the janitor force was unable to persuade the horse to go down the steps so the stable man from Madison was called in. A cover was put over the horse's head and it was led down the steps." Despite administrative threats to expel the perpetrators, Cariwithen says the entire class shouldered responsibility and the pranksters were never discovered.

As horseless carriages replaced animals, the car became the new outlet for pranks. Geraldine Abbott recalls the time "a Model A Ford Coupe, rumble seat and all, found its way one night to the Faulkner house Veranda." And Pat Adams remembers when "several able bodied friends conveyed 'One-Beer' Shiffman's famous jalopy, Miss Carriage, into swollen Tiptoe Pond."

The pond's existence was a source of great mischief and frequently played host to messy tug of war. Ruth Zecchini ('55) says "the mud hole sported faculty cars on Halloween, and they were not easy to remove." She also witnessed Volkswagen Beetles that had been spirited over a three foot high brick wall onto the Brother's College quad. David Leslie ('64) recalled when "Registrar John Bevan's VW wound up on the patio between Baldwin and Haselton Halls, ringed with flammable liquid and lit."

While favored for their portability, cars other than VWs were apt to turn up in odd places; Leslie reminisced the Simca that appeared on the steps of Bowne hall one morning; and bystander Stephen Arrants ('79) witnessed the time "a couple rugby players moved someone's Honda to the Tolley-Brown lounge."

Perhaps the greatest event recalled was by Allen Joseph ('51); in 1949 he and "Larry Leiter ('51), Donnie Holtzman ('50), Bernie Belsky ('51) and Paul Drucker ('51) carried a classmate's VW up the steps of the library and left it there. Additionally, we tied the owner up naked in the car so as to achieve the greatest shock value."

Robert Franek ('93, former RA and a high ranking SGA officer decided to take a stroll attired solely in "sensible shoes and optional baseball caps." The evening was temperate, the breeze gentle and the campus still until they walked directly into the headlights of a Drew security car. The men ran off in different directions, but security followed Franek. After security ceased searching, Franek returned to Welsch hall where a startled resident answered his knock.

For decades night time panty raids were so common on the womens' dorms that they nearly achieved the imprimatur of college sports. After New Dorm was raided in 1965, Karen Long recalls that the women plotted to "raise Cain" in all-male Baldwin Hall. The would be perpetrators were caught and lectured by the dean of women.

Another time undergarments, either donated or stolen, were flown for a "pompous Methodist procession scheduled to drive in the gate near Asbury Hall" Ned Woisard recalls. The night before the luminaries arrived, a line was strung from the roof of Asbury to a tree across the road. On the line were strung six pieces of female underwear: five panties with the letters A,S,U,R,Y and a wire bra to represent the letter B. The parade, according to him, passed beneath Asbury's proud laundry line.

In addition to animals, autos, and undies, pranks also entailed furniture, water, technology, and affairs of the heart. Bishop Monk Bryan ('41) shared a secondhand tale about Dean Lynn Harold Hough, "a handsome gentleman and the epitome of propriety who married in midlife." No sooner had the house darkened on the newly weds first night home when the doorbell rang. Hough came down to greet an apologetic student who had an urgent problem to discuss. "Always the gentleman, Hough unhurriedly talked with him." When that student left and the house again darkened, another student knocked with a similar ploy, then another.

Plenty of mischief also went on in the resident halls; Pat Foye ('88) recalled jamming pennies between a door and its frame so the inhabitants could not get out. "This could be a mild problem if you were heading to an exam," said Foye, "but was much worse if you were heading to a keg party in Hoyt or the Suites." At other times, he says, you could rile friends and enemies equally by blowing talcum powder under doors with a hair dryer. But perhaps the most priceless dorm scam of all, he relates, was when Jon Simmons ('88) ran speaker wire from his stereo out the window and hooked it to speakers in neighboring rooms. "At 4 am, they had no idea what was happening as music blasted from their stereos and even unplugging the equipment could not stop the racket."

Long before Foye's time, a popular past time was "short sheeting" beds so that they were nearly impossible to climb into. But John Schabacker ('38) relates that getting into bed certainly offered no guarantee of rest. "In a practice called rude awakening, a gang of friends seizes another student peacefully sleeping in his bed. Then, the victim, screaming terrible things, is transported and dropped into a bathtub filled with cold water." By way of explanation, the professor emeritus of German mentions that this "boredom chaser" predated women students on campus.

Furniture as a central theme in pranking took a new face with each generation. In Geraldine Abbott's year, there was "stacking", in which all of someone's possessions were piled on her bed up to the ceiling. Someone took that idea one step further. Fondly recalling the "less than dignified days of seminary in the 1940s" Roger Thompson ('48) describes a friendly feud he and Fay Smith ('47) had with Bill Calkins ('50) After Calkins short sheeted and stacked them, they moved Calkin's room to the attic of Asbury. Eventually Bill found his room, but was satisfied with the relocation and lived there until summer break.

In a similar vein, in the spring of 1950 a hard working senior returned to find "his room bare and the dorm silent." One of the perpetrators, Alan Biczak ('54) relates that "the entire contents of the room were set up in identical positioning outside at the bottom of Tipple pond." After ignoring the pranked student's cries for help, Biczak says, "10 or 12 of us moved as one into Tipple Pond and had him set back up in a jiffy."

An account by Cassandra Allen ('96) recounts how one Greg Mattison's room was moved onto Hoyt lawn. "Tv, stereo, bed, desk, even posters which were hung from trees." Perpetrators Eric Rich ('96) and Don Cipriani ('96) were merely continuing "an extended practical joke war" and only regretted that "Greg didn't come home that night to see it." Moving on, the Class of '96 focused on Brother's College, Allen says, transporting the contents of room 10, including maps and waste baskets to the court yard. By spring the class was ready for their big shot: transporting hundreds of chairs from inside the Commons to the roof. Via e-mail, Allen Walker ('96) confesses that he and Cipriani organized the prank for April Fool's Day. Meticulously planned and rehearsed, the feat required a convoy of 10 men working from 2 to 4 am. He says that everyone had a great time, apart from the grumbling early birds who ate their breakfast standing up, the sore muscles and delighted reactions were worth it. To the graduate's delight, President Kean's commencement address even alluded to the instantly legendary prank.

Dining hall pranks on a smaller scale were of equal good fun. Francine Hannigan ('88) and Robin Balchen-Fish ('89) proved it's best to be cautious when at the buffet. replacing an appetizing-looking dish of mustard and mayonnaise for vanilla custard, they lay in wait for a taker. They then followed the victim to his lunch table and waited for him to eat dessert. "He threw down the spoon, spit the stuff out, shouted a choice obscenity, then muttered "Figures, it's the Commons.""

In the more genteel 1930s, dining customs were stricter, but practical jokes still happened. Bill Hedden ('40) relates that "chow hound" Ugo Lisi ('40) had a routine that gave him first crack at the entries already arranged on the table. "Everyone remained standing behind his chair while Grace was said," Hedden explains, "Then we all sat down and drank the fruit juice that was already in glasses at each place setting. But Ugo would get a head start by gulping down his fruit juice before grace." To fix Lisi, Hedden and his friends replaced Lisi's fruit juice with gin. "As usual he chugged and got the surprise of his life. He gasped for breath and reached for his glass of water, which we also had replaced with gin. Needless to say, this compounded his problem." Lisi, of course, gave up his gluttonous ways.

Water itself provided opportunities for would be pranksters. Having noticed that water in the dormitory showers became hotter when the toilets were flushed, Robert Cunningham ('83) says he saw great potential in this. To liven a dull afternoon, a gang decided to help an exhausted friend wake up. As he began to shower, his buddies flushed the adjacent eight toilets on signal. "The water pressure in Morristown dropped with a sudden rush," Cunningham recalls, "and the ensuing scream of the poor soul being incinerated could be heard in Brother's College."

Perhaps in payment for his own pranks, Jon Simmons was the beneficiary of another water based prank. While Simmons was away for the weekend, Class of '88 pals Horst Staunder, David Greenbaum, and John Kelleher gained access to his room, rubber cemented hundreds of 8 oz paper cups, covering every inch of floor space, save enough room for the door to open, and filled each one with water. "Have you ever tried to take apart filled cups that have been glued together without spilling them?" Staunder asks.

When the weather turned balmy, water fights were inevitable and relatively benign water pistol duels tended to escalate into buckets and hoses. To short circuit the wave of damaged dormitories, Dean Allen Weatherby offered himself in sacrifice. "Attired in shorts and trench coat he made himself available as a target," David Leslie recalls. "We was richly, or wetly, rewarded, and it got the water out of the dorms and onto Young field."

The greatest spritzer of all was probably the "funnelator" created by B.J. Leska ('77) and fellow "superior intellects of '77 to terrorize The Establishment". The giant slingshot, created from a large plastic funnel and several feet of surgical tubing, took four people to operate and was able to propel water balloons 50 yards. In an award-worthy, multi-page memoir penned for his 15 year reunion, Leska relates that the targets were "unsuspecting Drew cherubs, walking exposed in tank tops and cut-offs; Continuing Education women with their briefcases; and the maintenance men, who, beer-bellied and lounging in their electric carts... simply deserved to be stimulated in this way." But the target of note was "Guy Blumberg, who, in his blue Drew Security uniform, "represented the Establishment."

Insisting that he merely "tagged along to record the event for posterity," Leska relates that, all morning long, the terrorists splattered the planned targets as well as "drunken Pubbers rolling home in the dead of night." As graduation neared, the funnelator's final mission had the good fortune to douse Blumberg with "a full frontal assault of water." The next few minutes featured, on one side, a dripping wet Blumberg racing towards the origin of the attack - New Dorm (Riker) - and, on the other, "our highly synchronized, automatic, paramilitary maneuver of dismantling and relocating our Assault Unit. In other's words: complete pandemonium." In what Leska attributes to a combination of providence and Blumberg's girth, the security officer questioned the guilty parties and departed without noticing "the balloons, ripe and wet and sitting in pools of water on the tray in our midst." The band was stunned straight. "We never funnelated again," Leska writes. "A miracle had occurred and we had been there to witness it."

Technologically inclined pranksters even found a creative outlet in telephone antics. Gitesh Pandya ('94) relates one prank in which you dial extension 000 and then a person's voice mailbox number, and as the recording is playing, transfer the call to that person so they leave themselves a message usually consisting of "Hello? Hello? Is anyone there?"

Why do inventive, high-spirited souls choose to embark on such sophisticated pursuits? In the words of Robert Stern ('59), "The ideas were conceived late at night, , during the week prior to the due-date of an important project or term paper." The pranks that he and roommate Paul Berson ('59) considered "so brilliant, funny, and urgent at the time took immediate priority" requiring complex planning and several trips off campus. The two had a tender spot for bureaucracy and often printed official looking material. For one prank, Ster and Berson fabricated contest entry forms and placed one in each mailbox. Students were asked to complete the phrase: "I recommend Drew because..." and submit their forms to Personnel. As incentive, the forms claimed the best entry would receive a \$10 credit at the Drew Bookstore."

In another prank, the pair took advantage of the mandate that students go on field trips "to experience the cultural opportunities" of the surrounding area. They posted this notice: "The following students will meet at 5:30 am on December 27 for a trip to the Vermont Stone Quarries." "This announcement, implying that students would have to come back from their Christmas vacation to go on this ridiculous trip, created considerable consternation in students and their families" says Stern.

Those who suffered pranks might take heart in the saying: what goes around comes around. To wit, Stern shared a turn-about prank that occurred after he visited drew as an alumnus. "I obtained a sheet of zoology department stationary," he admits, using the university paper to send a note to Berson stating, "Dear Paul... We want to convert the genetics laboratory into an art studio. Please return your locker key." Stern waited anxiously, but nothing happened. When the two got together months later, he recalls, "Berson didn't mention the letter until a day or two into my visit when he said that he had received 'a crazy letter from Drew' that asked for his genetics lab locker key. 'But don't worry' Paul told me, 'I told them you had it.'"

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