

Directors Break All-Male Tradition With 1963 Limited Coeducation Ruling

(Continued from Page 1)
wished A&M all-male, and progressives, who supported coeducation, finally seemed to be leaning toward the progressive viewpoint in the early 1950's.

And two months after the Board Council the Former Policy of Limited Coeducation. The 1962 Faculty-Staff Student Study on Aspirations carried faculty recommendation that coeds be admitted since refusal to enroll them caused loss of appeal and support for the college.

"The faculty is overwhelmingly in favor of coeducation. Their training has led them to the philosophy of equal academic standards and rights for all students, and they believe the present negative policy toward coeducation constitutes a major obstacle to academic excellence and institutional stature," the report said.

DESPITE THE APPROVAL of these two prestigious groups, there was still an abundance of diehard anti-coed fighters willing to contest the issue.

And the fireworks, both before and after the Board decision, were more than enough to make newsmen drool.

T. L. Smith Jr. of Houston, member of the class of 1898, began circulating a letter to former students urging them into action against the admission of females.

Smith said if women were permitted to enroll the additional cost required to duplicate facilities for them would cost from \$5 million to \$20 million. He also laid the blame for attempts at coeducation to Bryan business interests.

SMITH'S LETTER was answered with a sharply-worded telegram from Sen. Moore, who declared the fundamental purpose of the college was "to give our youth, regardless of sex, the best educational opportunities possible."

"Legend, tradition and selfish pride cannot be served where such would impair fulfillment of that purpose," Moore added. "Hundreds of families who do not have the means to send their daughters off to school have asked why their children should be deprived of educational opportunities at nearby A&M," he continued. "I feel these young women, as well as young men, are deserving."

Moore also harshly condemned Smith's reference to integration at the Universities of Mississippi and Alabama.

"It is regrettable that the

thoughts of any graduate of Texas A&M should become so twisted that he could selfishly attempt to draw a parallel between coeducation at A&M and the racial difficulty experienced in Mississippi and Alabama," Moore noted. "It is beneath true dignity to infer that the citizens of Bryan have anything less than the best interest of A&M at heart."

"I submit that Bryan citizens long have been the staunchest supporters of A&M. They have readily made sacrifices for its advancement and, I am confident, will continue to give A&M . . . and its students a responsive and responsible atmosphere."

ALL WAS NOT calm on campus, either, as juniors in the Corps of Cadets began preparing a questionnaire-petition on coeducation for possible presentation to the Board.

Thus were the battle lines drawn as the Board assembled for its regular meeting April 26-27, 1963.

The Battalion had contacted all nine Board members in March and each said no vote on coeducation was being planned for the April meeting.

The coed question was not listed on the official agenda of the meeting, but officials quickly pointed out omission of a topic from the agenda did not prohibit discussion or action on the subject.

And Board President Sterling Evans had been quoted earlier in the week by a Houston newspaper as saying "Since the matter has received so much publicity, we will discuss it."

THE BOARD ADOPTED the resolution admitting women by unanimous vote, but one official source said the Board's closed session the previous day had lasted long into the morning, with members bitterly divided over the issue.

Evans said there were two basic reasons prompting the policy change. He pointed out that there were 1,800 married males enrolled at A&M, with 700 living in college housing. Many of these students' wives were having to drive 50 miles to Sam Houston State College each day to receive an education.

The other reason was that some Texas girls were having to attend vet school in Oklahoma at an expense to the state of \$1,500 per year, while there were suitable facilities to educate them at A&M instead.

The decision delighted the pro-

coed backers, notably Barron, Moore and Haines. Most Bryan leaders also supported the new policy.

Even T. L. Smith Jr., who had crusaded against coeducation and had spoken before the Board that morning, conceded that "We as good Aggies must follow the decisions of constituted authority."

But a 1957 graduate, Bob Rowland of Houston, promptly surrendered his class ring in protest and vowed to continue the fight for an all-male school.

THE STUDENT BODY, most of whom were away when the decision was made public, were also unhappy. While feelings among civilian students were mixed, the Corps of Cadets was furious.

More than 4,000 students booted President Earl Rudder Monday, April 29, when he told them there was no possibility of repealing the new policy.

The meeting in G. Rollie White Coliseum was called by Corps leaders. Students chanted "We don't want to integrate" and continually booed Rudder throughout his talk.

"The Board of Directors has absolute authority on this and other matters," he said. "The U. S. Supreme Court has twice upheld the board's authority."

By noon of the next day 12 persons contacted the Registrar's Office for information concerning the admission of women for the fall term.

Mrs. Lester Haupt Jr., a Bryan school teacher, was the first woman to file for admission. Wife of a student from the class of 1927, she applied for admission to the Graduate School to study education.

Even as her application was being processed Board President Evans agreed to meet with student leaders Thursday, May 2.

EVANS TOLD 400 students admission of coeds would not cause any danger to the future of the Corps. He also added that the Board did not think coeds would necessarily raise the standards of the school.

"But the Board feels it is handicapped in hiring professors," he noted. "Many of the better professors want a place for their wives and daughters to go to school."

Student Body President-elect Harlan Roberts presented Evans with a protest signed by 75 per cent of the members of the Corps. But Evans later said a student vote rejecting coeducation would not affect the Board ruling in the least.

"You cannot run an institution such as A&M on the basis of student polls," he replied.

SHAVED HEADS of a few freshmen were the only radical signs of the considerable student opposition, but as the tension died on campus the Legislature rolled into action.

Rep. Will Smith of Beaumont attempted to submit a resolution May 7 asking that the school remain all-male but was refused permission to introduce it for lack of a 4/5 vote.

But a second resolution was later approved for introduction, and 500 Aggies plus other supporters marched into the Capitol May 13 for a committee hearing on the resolution.

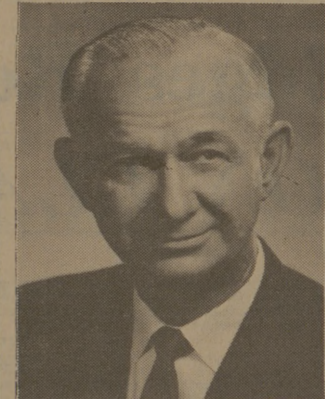
It received subcommittee approval, was later endorsed by the full State Affairs Committee and sent to the floor for debate.

And on May 17, over the violent objections of David Haines, the House passed by a 99-22 margin Smith's resolution urging the A&M Board to reconsider its recent action on coeducation.

BUT SEN. BILL MOORE, who had pledged he would use every weapon available to block the bill, was successful in doing so in the Senate. He also rammed through a resolution commending the Board action.

And in September, 1963, the Agricultural and Mechanical College of Texas started a new year with a new name — Texas A&M University — and 175 female students.

(Next: 1965: Back to the Legislature.)



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