Rhode Island College: On the Move

A Fiftieth Anniversary Collective Memoir

edited by

Marlene L. Lopes
Published on the fiftieth anniversary of Rhode Island College’s move from downtown Providence to the Mt. Pleasant campus.

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Dedicated to the memory of

Ridgway F. Shinn Jr.
Professor Emeritus of History
November 17, 1922 – December 14, 2006

whose belief in the importance of collecting and documenting an oral history of the College and whose willingness to devote his own energies toward that end continue to inspire us all.
About the Cover and Symbols

The cover design represents the new College seal emerging from the old Rhode Island College of Education seal. Designed by Professor Emerita Edith Becker in 1960, the College seal features the flame from the Holbrook murals in the lobby of Roberts Hall. The lion head on the dedication page and the angel image on page 107 are from architectural details salvaged during the demolition of the original Rhode Island College of Education building.
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Preface

The oral history committee of Rhode Island College began its work in December of 2004. Over the course of the next several months, the committee expanded to include its full complement of members: James Bierden, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics; Robert Bower, director of publishing services; Mary Davey ’41, Director Emerita of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs; Donald Driscoll ’54; P. William Hutchinson, Professor Emeritus of Theatre (co-chair and recording secretary); Marlene Lopes, associate professor, Adams Library; Patricia Nolin ’84, special assistant to the president; Ellie O’Neill, director of alumni affairs; Thomas Ramsbey, Professor Emeritus of Sociology; Brenda Rapoza ’82, transcriptionist; Kathryn Sasso ’69, director of conferences and special events (presiding co-chair); the late Ridgway Shinn, Professor Emeritus of History; Michael Smith ’79, assistant to the president; Susan Soltys ’06, typist.

The original focus of the committee was to collect oral histories from professors emeriti, in an effort to capture “the color behind the chronology” of the history of Rhode Island College. It soon became evident that the committee needed to narrow its focus. In light of the upcoming 2008 celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of the opening of the College’s Mt. Pleasant campus, and the move of the College from the two-building campus in downtown Providence to the six-building campus in the northeast section of Providence, the committee decided to focus on the years 1952 to 1960. With this newly determined emphasis, the committee began interviewing individuals who were active members of the College community during that time period.

The committee taped the interviews of professors emeriti, former faculty members and administrators, alumni, family members of the late James P. Adams, who served as chairman of the Board of Trustees at the time of the move, and current president of the College, John Nazarian ’54. These taped interviews and their transcriptions have been preserved as archives for the College in the special collections area of the James P. Adams Library.
After considering how to present some of the most pertinent information discovered by the committee over the past three and a half years, it was decided that the most interesting approach would be to publish the findings of the committee in a symposium format, as if all those interviewed were sitting around the same table and were contributing their comments on a series of mutually agreed upon topics. To this end, we are pleased to present this fiftieth anniversary collective memoir.

Members of the Oral History Committee include (seated from left) Brenda Rapoza ’82, Ellie O’Neill, Marlene Lopes, Patti Nolin ’84 and Rob Bower; (standing from left) Michael Smith ’79, P. William Hutchinson, Kathy Sasso ’69, Jim Bierden, Tom Ramsbey and Susan Soltys ’06. (Not pictured: Mary Davey ’41 and Don Driscoll ’54.)

Publication subcommittee: Marlene Lopes, Rob Bower, Michael Smith, P. William Hutchinson, Kathy Sasso, and Jim Bierden.

The committee extends its appreciation to the News and Public Relations team of Raymond Ragosta, editor, Paul J. Silva ’03, designer, Eugene St. Pierre ’77, photographer, and Chris Giroux ’08, student assistant.
Meet the Interviewees...

Raymond E. Anderson ’58

His was the last class to graduate from the downtown campus. Ray Anderson received a bachelor’s degree in elementary education and later returned for his master’s. His two children are also graduates of Rhode Island College. He and his wife, Paula, are residents of East Providence. They have been foster parents to over thirty children.

Billie A. Burrill
Professor Emerita of Health and Physical Education

Professor Burrill developed the physical education program as the College made the transition to the new campus. She pioneered modern dance and established the dance company. Her success in bringing professional performers to the campus eventually evolved into today’s Performing Arts Series. In 2005 she was awarded an honorary doctor of fine arts degree.

Joan Murphy Casement ’57

Having earned a degree in elementary education, Joan Murphy Casement went on to teach in the East Bay area until her retirement. Her daughter, Caitlin, is also a Rhode Island College graduate. Joan now resides in Bristol.

Walter A. Crocker ’59

His was the first class to graduate on the new campus. In 1971 Walter A. Crocker returned to teach secondary education and, soon after, was appointed assistant dean of the educational studies division (now the Feinstein School of Education and Human Development). He was later appointed the first, and only, dean of continuing education, a position he held from 1979 to 1984.
Mary G. Davey ’41  
*Director Emerita of Public Relations and Alumni Affairs*

As alumni secretary and public relations officer, Mary G. Davey rallied students and sparked the alumni in efforts to pass the bond issue that made the new campus possible. During her twenty-five years of service and in her retirement she has been a tireless advocate for the College.

Donald J. Driscoll ’54

After his years as teacher, assistant principal, and assistant superintendent in Providence, Don Driscoll was named assistant commissioner for operations for the Rhode Island Department of Education. His had been the centennial class at RICE. During its golden anniversary celebration in 2004, he was instrumental in raising nearly $125,000 for the College.

Henry P. Guillotte ’59  
*Professor Emeritus of Mathematics and Secondary Education*

Following military service, Hank Guillotte enrolled as a non-traditional and older student, with a double major in French and math. After graduation, he began a teaching career which concluded with thirty years of service on the College faculty.

Lawrence W. Lindquist  
*Professor Emeritus of Anthropology*

Professor Lindquist helped to launch the Department of Anthropology and Geography. Larrie and his wife, Kathie, have many fond and vivid memories of colleagues and of their years spent at Rhode Island College. They are currently enjoying retirement in Florida.
Patricia Ross Maciel ’61
A past president of both the Rhode Island College Alumni Association and the Rhode Island College Foundation, Ms. Maciel was honored in 1992 as Alumna of the Year. Although she received her degree in elementary education and taught for a few years, most of her professional life has been spent in the field of development.

Everett Maxwell ’57
Instrumental in the efforts to pass the bond issue for the new campus, Student Council president Everett Maxwell held one of the shovels at the groundbreaking ceremony. In 2005 he was inducted into Rhode Island College’s Athletic Hall of Fame. He received his master’s degree from Syracuse University and went on to a very successful career in business.

Joseph W. Menard ’60
Interrupting his college years to honor his military commitment, Joseph Menard returned to campus life as an athlete, theater enthusiast, and class president. He has served as president of the Alumni Association and was inducted into the College’s Athletic Hall of Fame. A professor of mathematics, he retired from the Community College of Rhode Island.

John Nazarian ’54
President of Rhode Island College
For nearly sixty years – as student, alumnus, teacher, and administrator – John Nazarian has played a unique role at the College. He was a professor of mathematics, the associate dean of arts and sciences, an assistant to President Joseph Kauffman, and the vice president for administration and finance. Twice he served as acting president. On May 9, 1990, he was appointed president.
Marianne Maynard Needham ’59

Marianne Needham was a member of the College dance company. She earned a master’s degree at RIC and became a mathematics professor at the Community College of Rhode Island. She has served on the Alumni Association’s board of directors and as the association’s president. In 2008 she was named Alumna of the Year. She is a trustee of the Rhode Island College Foundation.

Dorothy Mierzwa Pieniadz
Professor Emerita of Foundations of Education

Dorothy Pieniadz was the first dean of students, a post she held from 1956 until 1969. She then joined the faculty of the Department of Philosophy and Foundations of Education. An avid traveler and student of culture, she initiated in 1974 the College’s first study abroad program.

Ridgway F. Shinn Jr.
Professor Emeritus of History

Ridgway Shinn came to the College in 1958 and through the years served as professor and chair of the history department, dean of liberal studies (now arts and sciences), and vice president for academic affairs. Upon his retirement, he oversaw and nurtured the birth and successful development of the Ridgway F. Shinn Jr. Study Abroad Fund.

Chester E. Smolski
Professor Emeritus of Geography

Professor Smolski came to the state and the College in 1953 and stayed more than forty years. He began his career as a junior high instructor at the Henry Barnard School on the old campus, and soon after joined the social sciences faculty as a professor of geography. Known for his writings on urban matters, Chet is currently enjoying his retirement in Bristol.
Chapter 1

Arrival

John Nazarian:
In 1950 I was interviewed by President Lucius Whipple for admission to Rhode Island College of Education. You may remember that he was a very tall man, and my stature is 5’6”. He wanted to know why I was applying. I said, “Well, I had planned to make music my career and I had applied to the New England Conservatory for acceptance and scholarships. The long and short of it was that I came in third in a national competition in which they gave a four-year scholarship to the first place winner, a two-year scholarship to the second place winner, and I received a beautiful letter of commendation. So I decided that the writing was on the wall. Mathematics, music, and languages were my passions, and teaching was always a love of mine, so I applied to Rhode Island College of Education.” After I said that to him, he said, “Well, we are very happy to have you here. You could have been accepted to any college in the country.” I said, “That may be true, but I couldn’t afford to go to any other college; I had to help the family out.” And that is how I got started.

Don Driscoll:
Mary Lee, who was dean of the school and a major player in the selection of students, interviewed me in 1950 and asked why I wanted to come to RICE. I said to her, “Because I think I can be a good teacher.” And she said, “The interview is over. You have been accepted.” We chatted for a little while. I was very comfortable, and I think the interview was genuine.

Chet Smolski:
In 1951 I graduated from Bridgewater State College. I went to Clark for a year, and then an opening came up to teach geography at Fitchburg State College for one semester. I had just finished all my course work and
was working on my thesis, so I jumped at the chance. Then another one-
semester job opened up in Groton, a nearby town. So I finished up the
year there. I was hired by the two big names in education at RICE at that
time – Mary Tucker Thorp, principal at Barnard School, and S. Elizabeth
Campbell, from the education department. They came to Groton High
School to observe me, and I was pleased that this resulted in my teaching
geography in the Barnard School. My starting salary was $3,300 per year.
I came to Rhode Island College of Education in 1953. I came all the
way from Massachusetts. Growing up south of Boston, you never came
to Providence. Rhode Island was kind of foreign territory. The feeling
was that Rhode Island was simply a stepping stone along the way; it was
small – in a positive sense, like the Pawtucket Red Sox; they are minor
league, too.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
I really did not know much about New England when someone called
me at Teachers College, Columbia University, and said they had met Bill
Gaige at this conference and that he was interested in me. I should have
done a better job of studying up, but I was just sort of attracted to the
fact that a certain person wanted me to come to build a program. You
know this is challenging when you are very young. It is dumb, but it is
good in other ways. The first thing I learned was that everybody talked
about going to RICE. I thought they meant Rice University! I was hired
to become something called the dean of students, which very few faculty,
if any, understood at that time. I was the first dean of students. Originally
the school had a dean of women and a dean of freshmen, and, I think for
a short time, they had a dean of men/vice president, Dr. Fred Donovan.
(Given all the years I worshipped the man, I still refer to him as Dr.,
no matter what.) President Gaige wondered what the faculty was going
to say when it learned that he was hiring a woman dean. I said, “Well,
are you hiring a woman or are you hiring a dean? You know, there is a
big difference. If you are looking for the person with the credentials you
want and it happens to be a female, then why should that matter?” In my
generation there were very few female deans of students.

Billie Burrill:
Well, I arrived with Hurricane Carol in the summer of 1954. Coming
down the highway from Maine was very dangerous; many trailers were
in ditches, anything tall was vulnerable, and signs were swinging from
restaurants and diners. In downtown Providence, cars in the parking lot, between the railroad station and the Capitol, were all in a heap, and many horns were tooting. I went up the steps of the main entrance, approached a janitor, and said, “I am here to check in.” He said, “Well you better come back in a couple of weeks; nothing is going on here now!” So that was my introduction to the campus. My master’s degree is from Smith College and I had been teaching at Connecticut College. President Gaige hired me and gave me a kind of carte blanche, “The physical education program needs development, and you can do anything you want.” I was really excited, except for the salary. It was $3,600.

Mary Davey:
I was just here. I have kind of always been here. I graduated in 1941 and was in the Alumni Association. When a position opened up in 1954 it was just logical for someone to ask if I wanted it, and I said “sure.” In fact, I think that that was the year in which I ran the Senior Tea which was a big deal in those days — introducing the seniors to the world — and that brought me to the attention of a lot of people on campus. Professionally, Bill Gaige was the one who had to make the decision to hire me, but I just sort of slid into the public relations spot. They called it alumni secretary.
and public relations officer. It was very vague. I had been working very closely with Rae O’Neill, and when she decided to leave it just fell to me. It was not a big process; they did not interview anyone else or look around. I guess there was one young man who was being pushed for the position, but there were some very strong women on the Board of Trustees who decided that this position should belong to a woman because almost every alumna or student on campus was female. The women won.

Walter Crocker:
I graduated from East Providence High School in June of 1955 and enrolled at RICE in the fall. Of the fifty or so male freshmen about twenty of us were of traditional age (seventeen to eighteen). The rest were returning Korean War veterans using the GI Bill to go to college. This makeup of incoming males was new to the College, and it hastened the maturing of us seventeen-year-olds considerably.

Larrie Lindquist:
During the year 1956–57 I taught at Brown University in the Department of Religious Studies. My doctorate was in anthropology, but Brown did not have any kind of anthropology, and I also had a background in theology. Dr. Barnaby Keeney, who was the president of Brown at the time, asked me if I would be interested in becoming curator of the newly acquired and large Haffenreffer Indian collection that was housed, I believe, in Bristol. Well, that was not my line, and so I said no. He then contacted Bill Gaige and said that I was here, and that, if possible, maybe I could stay in the Providence area. So, I got a call and went down to the old campus for an interview. Dr. Gaige said, “What we have here is a situation where we have set up courses that we are required to give.” I think it was a state requirement for something called Social Aspects of Education. His plan was that three of us would teach the same basic course and then in different sections we each would provide input from our individual specialty. I asked Dr. Gaige if I would be allowed to teach a course in anthropology. I remember that he sat back, kind of chuckled, and said, “Is that what it takes to get you to come? That’ll be okay, but it’s like giving you half a loaf, because I don’t think anybody will sign up for something called ‘anthropology.’ How would they know what it is?” I said, “Well, sir; if you wouldn’t mind, I would like to try.” And he said, “We’ll work it out.” My first appointment at RICE was as visiting assistant professor of social science, May 7, 1958. I still have the note that served as the contract at that time! The new campus was alive with a certain excitement and anticipation.
Arrival

Ridgway Shinn:
I came in 1958 as an associate professor of history. I had taught for fourteen years before I came here, in a variety of settings – in secondary schools, in junior high schools, and at the collegiate level. I was going to complete the Ph.D. degree and was looking for a move. The problem was that I was also teaching in a school system that paid extremely well, and I knew that in any move back to the collegiate level I was going to lose money. At that time we had five kids. Notice of the vacancy at Rhode Island College of Education came through the Oberlin placement office. Bill Gaige was an alumnus of Oberlin, and so he had sent the notice there. Rissie and I had never been in Rhode Island and didn’t know anything about it, but we looked at it, and said, “Well, can’t lose anything by going and interviewing.” I came to Providence by train, which was the easiest way to come, and of course the rail station was just across the street from where the College was located. The key person in all of this was Marion Wright, and she introduced me to Catherine Connor, who was kind of the senior member of the history faculty and had been dean of women, and to Evelyn Walsh, a graduate of the College who was working on a degree at Brown in American colonial history. They were impressive, all three of them. I was interviewed by them and then by the president. I was offered the position; Bill Gaige and I negotiated the salary. I indicated that I couldn’t lose too much money, but I knew I would lose some and was willing to do so because it would give me the time to do some other things. I think we agreed on $7,500 or something like that.
Chapter 2

The Old Campus

Dorothy Pieniadz:
My first impression was of being led to an office on the third floor of that building with the fireplaces. It was small.

Chet Smolski:
The accommodations were horrendous. I never had an office. Frank Greene, who taught English, had a tiny one, and Marion Wright had a closet for an office with a classroom just beyond. I just had a desk and no place for books or security or any of that stuff. So I carried everything in my brief case for five years.

Billie Burrill:
We had a gymnasium that was very small, but it did have a regulation basketball court. When you took the ball out of bounds under the basket, you could not bring your arm back very far or you’d hit the wall. Most people stood behind the line with one foot against the wall.

Ridgway Shinn:
The New England Association came and rejected the College for regional accreditation primarily on the basis of its physical plant. It was so totally inadequate.

Chet Smolski:
By the mid fifties both buildings, the Barnard School and the College, were inadequate – big, old, dark, somber, and uninviting. There was lots of space for parking, but half of it was unpaved. We were right in the center of town, and Providence was going through its de-population phase, so the area around it was not very inviting at all. Today, of course, it’s the Providence Place Mall.
The Old Campus

Marianne Needham:
We were very disgusted with the building downtown. It was dirty. In fact, our class had a scrub brigade, and they scrubbed the lounge, the big room that we congregated in. One day we were convinced there was a dead animal or something in the ladies locker room. It was a decrepit place.

Chet Smolski:
Amy Thompson was an English teacher, a very gentle, sweet little lady, and we always thought about her that way. One day when we were in the cafeteria, down in the basement of the old building, she was just so disturbed by the dirty dishes that had been left there that she took her cup and saucer and just threw them against the wall. We were shocked. Amy never did anything like that. So it became the talk of the school, at least among the faculty. This was how Amy expressed her objection to dirty dishes in the cafeteria.

Joan Murphy Casement:
To tell you the truth, I do not remember us being discontent about the facility. I remember a wonderful camaraderie especially when we were younger. Maybe by the time we were seniors it was different.

Chet Smolski:
Marion Wright and I did all the geography at that time and there was one big advantage that we did have in the old building. The ceilings were high. Marion glued together thirty-seven regional topographic maps to make one large map of Rhode Island which she hung on the ceiling. You could see the whole state, and none of it dragged on the floor. When we brought that map to the new campus we lost South County! You could walk on South County.

“Mary Tucker Thorp was just an icon. She had such a presence.”
Marianne Needham:
I remember the old library with Miss Joan Owen.

Pat Maciel:
I remember being in awe of the Henry Barnard School building, the construction of it, the architecture, and the exhibition rooms where you could watch Mary Thorp teach a lesson.

Joe Menard:
All I could think of then was the trial from The Crucible!

Ray Anderson:
As I recall, there were only two main stairways, so when it came time to change class you saw everybody because we were all walking up or down. You saw one another all the time. That I think enhanced the camaraderie. I think that with a spread-out campus you may never even see some of your classmates.

Joan Murphy Casement:
We did not think we did not have a campus. We used to sit out on the grounds, even in front of the big building. We would go over to the State House, and that was our campus, too.

Pat Maciel:
Talk about camaraderie and places to congregate! We were always out on those big, dirty old cement steps. They were like a platform, so you could actually sit out there and watch the boys go by (the few that there were).

Walter Crocker:
Until the creation of Route 95 took it down, the Dew Drop Inn was right next door. Both faculty and students would go and get a draft ten cent beer and have excellent discussions. No ID’s were ever asked for, and there was never a problem with excess or rowdiness.
Everett Maxwell:
The State House, as Joan said, was part of our campus. This beautiful great lawn was only a two-minute walk across the street. On a nice day in April or May we would go there between classes, sit down on a blanket, and talk.

Ray Anderson:
As freshmen we were all matched up with big brothers and sisters.

Everett Maxwell:
Juniors and freshmen.

Ray Anderson:
That was excellent. When you were paired off with somebody, it made you feel comfortable. There was a camaraderie when classes were over, especially with our freshman class.

Joan Murphy Casement:
There were several places where we hung out. Sometimes we would go down to the cellar to play cards in the cafeteria. On the first floor was a lounge. There was a lot of good feeling.
Ray Anderson:
At lunchtime we would all gravitate to the cafeteria, and I remember that there weren't as many aisles as there were tables. We were so close together that my chair was up against another chair. You could not get out until the whole table finished. That is how crowded it actually was. So, there was a necessity for new facilities.

Ridgway Shinn:
My understanding is that, along about 1956–57, there was a major debate as to whether the College should just be closed and everything moved to Kingston. It took rather intense lobbying from the alumni to maintain the College as a separate institution. The price of that was to build new facilities.
Don Driscoll:
When my freshman class arrived on campus in 1950 we were almost immediately plunged into a great debate as to whether the College was going to exist or not. That lasted for two years. The students were very much involved in the discussion. It was a defining period.

John Nazarian:
After its most recent accreditation visit the New England Association of Schools and Colleges had given the College great marks, except for its physical facility. They said that the downtown building, which had been in use since 1898, needed some really major changes.
Everett Maxwell:
There were rumors that URI wanted to take us over and make RICE a school of education under the University.

John Nazarian:
RICE students took pride in their institution and in what they learned. We had great teachers who dedicated themselves to the College. We did not feel that we wanted to be part of a larger group, and the University was much larger than the College back in those days. This was our College.

Don Driscoll:
What attracted me to the debate at the beginning was the fact that only one side, "NO," was being heard on campus. I took the position that we had to have some clarification emerge from the debate because there had to be something worthwhile in the proposal to merge, or our decent citizens would not have put the idea forward. Some other people on campus felt the same way, and so the students got very much involved. It was a heated and very lively debate. A significant number of people wanted the University to assume the responsibilities of the College. I’d say maybe a third of the faculty wanted to affiliate with URI. At that time the College was trying to upgrade the faculty by bringing in some scholars from outside of the discipline of education, and some of them would have liked to have been members of the URI faculty. Many students favored an affiliation, and some even said that they preferred to have a URI diploma.

Mary Davey:
Then there was the “siege of Troy.” George Troy, whose mother graduated from the College, was commissioned to write a series of articles in the Providence Journal on how terrible RICE was.

John Nazarian:
That happened during my junior year. Troy kept up his fight to have Rhode Island College become part of the University of Rhode Island. The student body objected to the merger. We marched across the street to the State House. We went and sat up in the Senate balcony, where the angle is more than forty-five degrees and, if you are afraid of heights, you are terrified. But it was worth it; that proposal did not get passed.
**College Issues**

**Don Driscoll:**
On reflection, I think it was painful to some people, but it was something that was really good for both the state and the citizens. It did get very nasty sometimes, but, overall, it was a frank, open discussion. Anyway, the issue was put to bed in late 1952 or early 1953 by the Board of Trustees. They settled it, and then they and the state made the commitment to the College.

**Everett Maxwell:**
We students were told that if the bond issue didn’t go through, we never would get a new campus. Other than meeting my wife, the bond issue of 1956 was the most exciting time.

**Don Driscoll:**
I was involved in almost all of the bond issues, first as a student and later as an alumnus. The bond issue for this campus was put in while I was in the army; the year I came out, it was voted on.

**Everett Maxwell:**
Mary Davey became a political force and put together a program where she had flyers and bumper stickers. Very few students were able to leave the building without Mary shoving some of these into their hands each night as we left. She would say, “Get your parents, get your uncles, your neighbors to put these on their bumpers, give them out at your churches, put them in stores, put them on windshields.”

Mary Davey (holding sign), as President Gaige (center) and Marion Wright (standing) look on with others.

“They brought one huge sign up onto the roof of the College and slid it down over the front of the building, so you could see it all over downtown Providence.”

“Mary Davey (holding sign), as President Gaige (center) and Marion Wright (standing) look on with others.”

“They brought one huge sign up onto the roof of the College and slid it down over the front of the building, so you could see it all over downtown Providence.”
Mary Davey:
I do remember a group of students, especially a person called “Pinky,” who were very enthusiastic about what they could do for me to promote the bond issue. They wrote boards that said “Remember RICE when you vote,” and toted them all over town. They brought one huge sign up onto the roof of the College and slid it down over the front of the building, so you could see it all over downtown Providence. We were so worried because all those kids needed was a gust of wind and they would have fallen.

Everett Maxwell:
Under Mary’s direction the students put together a motorcade. Dick Brochu ’57 and I pretty much organized it. We got a truck and several cars and put signs all over them and went out into Arctic, Bristol, Warren, Newport, and Woonsocket during the rush hour, waved to people, and over a speaker said, “Just get out and vote for the Rhode Island College of Education bond issue.” Mary Davey should have been a political operative because she really had a great campaign.

Hank Guillotte:
We had rallies for the bond issue. We felt that we had to fight to keep RICE separate from URI.

Everett Maxwell:
A major event occurred just a week or so before the election. We all went downtown that morning with flyers, and we had a huge bond issue rally on the esplanade of the old school facing downtown. Because of our efforts the day before and that morning, many people walked up from downtown and many state employees came from the State House. We had a wonderful bond rally, with music, singing, and speakers.

Joan Murphy Casement:
I do remember the rally on the steps, very well.

Everett Maxwell:
I was the president of the Student Council at that time, and I was the emcee. The highlight was the presence of Senator John Pastore. In his speech this little man, who was such a great orator, demanded that this College get a new campus. His half-hour speech was interrupted several times with applause. That was probably the highlight of my senior year.
Don Driscoll:
Some good young Democrats were very influential in keeping Governor Roberts focused on this matter.

Ridgway Shinn:
Dennis J. Roberts was extremely influential in the final decision to maintain this College as a stand-alone institution. Eventually, of course, it moved to the new campus.

Don Driscoll:
Governor Roberts was not really excited about having a central administration at URI in Kingston. He was not big on having subsets, and thought institutions ought to be strong and able to stand on their own. He also recognized that things were happening in our society that would require us to strengthen our delivery of education.

Everett Maxwell:
Michael Walsh, the commissioner of education, worked tirelessly and was a dynamic force in getting this campus here.

Don Driscoll:
We had good political support.

Everett Maxwell:
Dr. Gaige himself worked hard and got involved personally. He went out to places like the Kiwanis and Lions Clubs and gave many, many speeches.

Ridgway Shinn:
Bill Gaige was a very, very shrewd politician to get all of the support to get the bond issue to build this campus.

Everett Maxwell:
I do not remember any faculty members being involved in the bond issue, but they were enthusiastic about the move.

Chet Smolski:
Actually, President Gaige asked Marion Wright to help. She became kind of a PR person, if you will, for the new campus. So he pulled her out of the classroom and asked me if I could come and substitute for her. I did, and that’s how, during my second year, I ended up leaving the Barnard School and coming to the College.
Don Driscoll:
At that time, too, we were beginning to see an alumni group that was getting involved in town and city politics, and they did have a role in pushing this issue. Teachers talked to teachers. On bond issue day we had people at every voting place, all day long, passing out copies of the bill and talking to people.

Everett Maxwell:
So we got the 1956 bond issue through, and during the week between Christmas and New Year’s Day they broke ground for the new campus. Representing the Board of Trustees was James P. Adams, for whom they later named the library; representing the faculty was Fred Donovan, and we now have Donovan Dining Center; and representing the Henry Barnard School was Mary Tucker Thorp, in whose honor they named the first residential hall. Representing the student body was one Everett Maxwell. Naturally, I did not expect to have a building named after me.
Dorothy Pieniadz:
Halfway through the planning process, they realized that the move had to be delayed. The College had to deal with pressures that were coming from all directions. The concern was that we were not taking in enough students. We were turning down more and more people. Rhode Island’s high school graduation rate was growing, and graduates had no place to go.

Everett Maxwell:
The faculty were enthusiastic about the possibility of moving. Everybody wanted this new campus to happen. There were many things about the old campus that we loved, but we needed a new one.

Mary Davey:
We had to move and that was all there was to it. I think everybody was delighted at the prospect of new buildings, new furniture, new situations, and new opportunities.

Don Driscoll:
In 1958, as always, classes began in September because the College followed the public school calendar, and there was no joking about that. You started after Labor Day and you got out when the public schools did in June.

Larrie Lindquist:
My first experience at RICE was on the new campus. I saw these buildings, quite lovely buildings, really. One thing that impressed me was that it was so big and airy. There were fields around, and you could understand that there would be growth as time went on.
Rhode Island College: On the Move

_Ridgway Shinn:_
It was bright and clean. There was a freshness, an eagerness. In Alger, where I did most of my teaching, the classrooms were wonderful because you had these walls of windows. They were just lovely.

_Chet Smolski:_
Both the faculty members and the students were very excited.

_Ridgway Shinn:_
Of course, when the College opened, it was really very raw. There were no shrubs. There was mud everyplace, and the sidewalks had not been finished. An accreditation visit was slated to happen, so they wanted to be on the new campus to demonstrate to the voters of the state and to Governor Roberts that RICE was worthy of accreditation.

_Larrie Lindquist:_
Yes, there was work to be done. I recall very well that, in order to get from one building to another, we had to walk on boards that had been placed on the ground so that we wouldn’t sink into the mud. But that was all right, and I think everybody accepted whatever small discomforts there were with the idea that this was going to be a lovely campus when it was done.

_Ridgway Shinn:_
There were six buildings on the new campus. The administrative center of the College was Dennis J. Roberts Hall. Its 1,000 seat auditorium was originally designed to fit the entire student body. Moreover, when one assumed that half the enrollment would always be out doing student teaching, it even provided room for expansion.

_Dorothy Pieniadz:_
Initially we had been planning a campus for 500 to 600 students. Instead we ended up with an entering class of nearly 1,000.

_Ridgway Shinn:_
The Lucius A. Whipple Gymnasium housed a double gymnasium, two classrooms, exercise rooms, and facilities for visiting teams. Science and mathematics classrooms occupied the first floor of John Lincoln Alger Hall, and art and the social sciences were located on the second. The fourth structure was the original Craig-Lee building, named for Clara Craig and Mary Lee. Located there were English and foreign language classrooms.
The Transition

and professional studies. The Student Center, which we now call the Art Center, housed the library, cafeteria, bookstore, and lounges. The sixth structure, the Henry Barnard School, had primary and elementary wings equipped with observation rooms and joined together by a junior high school area. This modern school building was placed at the end of the new campus, and there was nothing beyond it. The road to Fruit Hill Avenue did not yet exist.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
Moving from one small building to a new campus, and having an entering class that was larger than the total student population had been the semester before, was a significant development.

Walter Crocker:
We lost our cozy relationships with faculty and each other.

Joe Menard:
There was a closeness on the old campus that you did not get on the new one.

Walter Crocker:
There was a spirit of companionship that was never replicated at the Mount Pleasant location. Faculty members spoke at fraternity meetings, and many from the faculty attended our informal discussions. We even had a faculty-student bowling league! To most of us students who spent a couple of years at the old site, the move was not an improvement.

Joe Menard:
You lose a little, but you gain some when you go like that from one situation to another. I remember walking around on the third floor of the
old building, and being able to see down to the first floor. You'd walk by, and there was President Gaige sitting in his office. You could just sit there, or go in and talk with him, or just wave. You could do it then. Everybody was so easily accessible. I do not know if I ever saw Bill Gaige in the two years when I was on the Mount Pleasant campus.

_Mary Davey:_
I do not think that any of the staff really regretted the move. Maybe there was a little sentimental attachment to where we were, but I don't think anybody cared. You just packed a little bag and took it with you to the new desk.

_Larrie Lindquist:_
It seemed to me that the students accepted this new campus very easily. I didn't hear any complaints. And those who came from the old campus kept with them their regular associations.

_Dorothy Pieniadz:_
People do not like to talk about it, but everything on the old campus was tightly controlled. Once you left that little nest downtown, however, you could see that there were advantages. It was as if you came from a rural environment and suddenly found yourself in the big city. It provoked variety in faculty, outlook, and programs.

_Walter Crocker:_
The new campus changed everything.

_Dorothy Pieniadz:_
As I reflect on what happened, it seemed that there was a definite break from downtown to Mount Pleasant. Circumstances were so different because it had always been a “selected” student body. Those were the days when every single applicant was interviewed, not just by me but also by other people. Students seemed to come from the same background. The emphasis of staff was on teaching, and there was not much else happening. Our hours were strictly 8 to 4.

_Ridgway Shinn:_
The College had always been a single-purpose institution. Then suddenly it found itself with a lot more students and a sharp increase in faculty.
The Transition

Marianne Needham:
More people, who were not necessarily Rhode Islanders, were being hired on the new campus. We were getting a broader perspective.

Larrie Lindquist:
Nonetheless, when you look at the faculty as a whole, the ones who came up from Providence were “top flight.” They were A-1 people, and we should never lose sight of that. It wasn't only the newcomers who contributed. Those who came up from the old campus were terrific people. John Nazarian was one of them.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
Our sheer size, though, promoted something different in people, and we began to have real problems explaining who and what we were.

Hank Guillotte:
We were becoming a college, with a real campus.

Joe Menard:
So that was a great, great big difference. I would like to make two comparisons. What we used to call the Dramatic Society down in Providence became a theater course up here. We went from a little shack in which you couldn't do too much acting, to this huge, magnificent space in Roberts where you had a stage to walk on.

Pat Maciel:
On the old campus drama meant a club, and music was really for teachers to learn how to teach music. It sounds as though there was a major shift, and the College really began getting into the arts. The introduction of dance was a milestone in the College’s history.
Rhode Island College: On the Move

Marianne Needham:
And a lot of it had to do with the fact that on the new campus we had a proper stage, and of course we now have much more.

Joe Menard:
Sports changed, too. During my first year we used to practice soccer out in front of the old building; in the second year we got to use Triggs; and then, when we moved up to Mount Pleasant, we had a whole field in the back. We also played basketball. At the old gym there was a track up around the side, so sometimes you would shoot the basket and hit that; whereas on the new campus we had a gym with real baskets and more of them.

Ridgway Shinn:
The year 1958 brought not only a new campus, but also an attempt to move in some substantive new directions.

Larrie Lindquist:
We faculty, both old and new, were inducted into all kinds of committees because there was a lot of work to be done. We had to build up the academic side. I was involved with so many committees at the time – the Faculty Council, the committee on graduate studies, the committee on social sciences, and so on. When you multiplied all of those by the time that it took to meet, you didn’t have much time for “club activities” and such.

Chet Smolski:
It was a big change, and expansion was rapid. With the new buildings came new programs and a new attitude.

Joan Murphy Casement:
It was suddenly on our minds that there was going to be a bigger, better, RICE. We had never envisioned that before. We had no idea how smooth and beautiful the transition would be.

Walter Crocker:
Of course change happens, but not all of it is always good, even if it’s called for. The old site was outdated and probably unsafe. People who were not at the old campus may not understand this, but, as the lucky few to have gone to both sites, my classmates and I are better people for having experienced the closeness and caring place that was RICE.
The Transition

Dorothy Pieniadz:
When I first arrived in 1956, students were educated for free. That injected a lot of loyalty because they considered it a great privilege to come to RICE.

Mary Davey:
That’s one reason why we took care to introduce the new campus to the alumni as something good. It worked because it gave them a feeling of a mission.

Ridgway Shinn:
In 1958 all you had to pay was a modest student activity fee, plus the cost of books.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
As I told the president, however, when you pay a little bit for something, you value it more. So, within a year or two, we began to charge tuition for the first time.

Joe Menard:
It was still inexpensive to come here. My wife and I argue whether it was twenty-five dollars a semester or twenty-five dollars a year.

Marianne Needham:
I think we paid twenty-five dollars per year for the first three years downtown and then twenty-five dollars per semester at the new campus.

Ridgway Shinn:
Of course, once they began to introduce tuition, it became a critical part in financing the College.
Chapter 5

The New Campus

Chet Smolski:
As I understand it, the reason that the state relocated the College to Mount Pleasant was that it had fifty acres there of available land.

Ridgway Shinn:
The state already owned the Children’s Center and some property beyond it. There was also an old farm in that area. So they used that land to build the new campus.

Don Driscoll:
It was obvious at the time that this Mount Pleasant site presented a good build-out opportunity. From Chalkstone Avenue down to the high school it was very thickly populated, as it was along Mount Pleasant Avenue and all the streets going down. This farm land was just sitting there. I do not think it was being used then as a farm.

John Nazarian:
I was present at the groundbreaking ceremony in 1956. By then I was a young faculty member.
“There were plenty of parking spaces back in those days. Few students had cars.”

Mary Davey:
While construction was still going on I organized alumni tours of the new campus. You might have seen old pictures in the archives of ladies wearing hats and high heeled shoes as they climbed over piles of dirt and mud. That is exactly how it was; those women would never have gone out unless they had their hats and gloves. Those were the days!

John Nazarian:
We came up early, before some areas of the campus were completed, so that we could start the academic year on time. Construction sites tend to look like war zones, and it takes time to make them attractive. Back in those days people did not even think of using sod; they just spread grass seed.

Chet Smolski:
When the College opened its doors the grass was not yet in.

Pat Maciel:
There was mud every place you stepped. It was the topic of conversation.

Hank Guillotte:
Mud.
Rhode Island College: On the Move

_Mary Davey:_
Conditions were rough, and getting around was kind of difficult.

_Billie Burrill:_
Mud.

_Mary Davey:_
One of the teachers at Henry Barnard School broke her foot while she was plowing through the mud. It was sort of traumatic for everybody.

_John Nazarian:_
You know, people did not have to travel very far to get from one building to another because the buildings were all near one another.

_Mary Davey:_
And gradually the ground hardened and we settled down to work.

_Billie Burrill:_
It was rustic to say the least. I do not think we had electricity until November.

_John Nazarian:_
The architect had drawn up a design for how the campus would be landscaped, and a variety of trees had been planted. Of course, the rest of the land was all wilderness. As with any new facility, it takes a couple of seasons for the grass to grow and take root; if you step on something you destroy it. Personally, I do not remember mud. Maybe because I drove to the College and could use the faculty and staff parking lot that was right behind Craig-Lee. There were plenty of parking spaces back in those days. Few students had cars.

_Larrie Lindquist:_
We should also remember that with the Henry Barnard School there was always a stream of cars in the early morning and late afternoon as families came to pick up their children.

_Chet Smolski:_
For quite a period of time we had a terrible traffic problem at the Barnard School. It is hard to visualize now but the school had been placed at the end of the campus specifically so that it would be isolated. The turn was too tight, and the traffic jams were horrendous until they finally ironed it out.
Dorothy Pieniadz:
My office was in Roberts Hall. You entered the side door, and I was at the end of the hallway. The president’s office was at the opposite end. I walked in and saw that half of the office was filled with piles of building tiles. They had not managed to finish the work. My secretary was down the corridor. My office was here and the secretaries, Helen McCarthy for the vice president and Mrs. Williams for me, were over there! Talk about communications! Here was your office and your staff was way down the hall. This was especially troubling because I was very particular about my secretary. I thought that it was most important for this person to be the type who could be disturbed, who would be kind and pleasing, and who would welcome faculty and students, and yet get all my work done for me. It was a tough job because there would be lots of interruptions. In other words, if you were thinking you were going to be just an ordinary secretary who sits there and types, forget that.

Mary Davey:
I was in Roberts, too. I had a nice spacious and comfortable office. It adjoined the Alumni Lounge, so that if we had activities there, as we often did in those days, we could provide service from my office. Although the furniture was new and the accommodations were good, we had gotten so used to things at the old campus that I was not conscious of any great change. Things went pretty smoothly because they had been planned out carefully. It worked.

Chet Smolski:
Those six brand new buildings were fantastic, and finally I had an office. I was so pleased.

Billie Burrill:
I remember feeling very frustrated because of the way the building contractors interpreted the Whipple Gymnasium blueprints. They put speakers very high on the ceiling, and I said that this just would not do. It simply would not be appropriate for our dance classes. We wanted to have the speakers lowered because we wanted to be able to hear the beat. That was most important. We did not want the beat to be swallowed up. The contractor said, “Well, I cannot help that; this is what is on the contract. I have to put them up there.” “You know it is wrong, though, don’t you?” I retorted. “Yes,” he replied, “but I cannot do anything.” “Well, who
can change that?” I asked. He told me that I should talk to the resident architect, so I did. Finally the speakers were lowered. Then they put the control for the speakers on the men’s side of the gymnasium. These kinds of stupid mistakes were really annoying, and they made teaching that much more difficult. Getting the bleachers in and out was another tremendous problem. When Mr. Lamborghini and Mr. Pipka, the architects, gave us the blueprints, we re-did them, and returned them in about two weeks. I had drafting equipment and knew about lighting design. They were kind of amazed at our knowledge. We survived.

Chet Smolski:
Originally Roberts Hall was the only air conditioned building on campus. I taught in Alger at that time on the south side of the building. We had those International Style windows, the Mies van der Rohe style. Well one day I brought a thermometer into the office to prove how hot it was. The temperature reached 110 degrees! In the summer, without air conditioning, we still taught classes. It was really, really tough. Eventually, air conditioning was installed. Of course, with the recent renovation, that building is now very nice.

Pat Maciel:
I have very fond memories of the Student Center.

Marianne Needham:
I remember the dining area and everything.

Pat Maciel:
That was the fun place to be, the in-place. That was where everybody met.

Marianne Needham:
It was the only place like that.

Pat Maciel:
Social events were held there, too. They cleared out the cafeteria and had dances and other events. I remember going to all the dances with my future husband, and it was like he was going to college, too. We always went together with a whole cadre of friends from my class. It was really fun, and I remember it well.
The number of students at the College grew so quickly! Believe it or not, we soon outgrew the facilities of the new Whipple Gymnasium, and I had to teach folk dance in its foyer.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
I remember so vividly the pride and joy of Bill Gaige who said, when we first moved up to the new campus, that this was the most economical campus in the country. It had cost only $15.50 per square foot!
Marianne Needham:
We are talking about the new campus and everything, but the fact remains that the faculty made the difference in our lives.

Pat Maciel:
Mary Thorp was just an icon. I used to just sit – and I remember other kids next to me – just sit and watch her mesmerize those children. She had such a presence.

Chet Smolski:
Mary Tucker Thorp was a great lady. Even though she sometimes ruled with an iron fist, she still had a very gentle character. I still remember vividly the first day I brought my oldest daughter to start at the old Henry Barnard School. As I was leading her up the steps she was crying. Mary Tucker Thorp came down, took her by the hand, and in a very gentle voice said, “You do not need to cry.” She stopped crying, and they walked into school together. That is what Mary Tucker Thorp was all about.

Mary Davey:
There were several very good teachers, but Mary Lee and Mary Thorp are the ones that I think of immediately. Everybody knew what they stood for, and they really ran the institution. They were the most influential people on campus when I came.

Chet Smolski:
I had a great deal of respect for Mary Tucker Thorp, but at the same time she was a bit intimidating. I remember an incident when we were talking about plans for the new campus and the design of the new Barnard School. Miss Thorp talked about the building and then asked, “Is that adequate? What
do you think about it?” Nobody else said anything. However, I was new so I piped up and said a few things. Afterwards one of the guys came to me and said, “Oh, you spoke up to Mary Thorp?” That was the attitude then.

**Pat Maciel:**
She was an absolute presence. Talk about setting an appropriate example for future teachers! She was impeccable every day, with a business suit, appropriate blouse, the right jewelry. I was always in awe of her, too, but she was wonderful.

**Marianne Needham:**
S. Elizabeth Campbell and Dr. Thorp always dressed in business suits.

**Chet Smolski:**
Oh, yes, dress was very formal. We men wore suits and ties all the time, and that continued well into the time when we moved to the new campus. Following national trends, we loosened up over a period of time. I remember once that I bought a new suit and wore it to class the first day. A student made a comment, and I said, “What are you talking about? You shouldn’t be talking about my new suit.”

**Ridgway Shinn:**
I do not think I ever taught in those years without a shirt, jacket, and tie.

**Dorothy Pieniadz:**
I myself wore high heel pumps, a suit, etc.

**Ridgway Shinn:**
The expectation when I came was that all women would wear hose, heels, skirts, no slacks, and certainly no shorts.

**Don Driscoll:**
What you did at the College had to reflect what you were going to do in the elementary, junior, and senior high schools and vice versa. The expectation to wear the right clothes and have the right demeanor worked both ways. Of course, some traditions and requirements can hang on long after they should be changed.

**Larrie Lindquist:**
In the early years on the new campus, most students were preparing for the teaching profession, and therefore education components were
of primary concern. Dr. Thorp and Dr. Campbell had responsibility for
the professional education emphasis and were involved in integrating
the social sciences into the Education program. Courses that would help
student teachers understand the cultures in which they were involved
were encouraged. I was impressed that the discussions with both “old” and
“new” faculty were quite collegial, with input welcomed from everyone. I
did not feel that any “old-timers” insisted on preset ideas.

_Marianne Needham:_
Billie Burrill became one of my dearest friends. She was responsible for
getting me a scholarship to Connecticut College School of Dance for
the summer after my junior year. When I was a sophomore we started a
modern dance club. Our first performance was in Roberts Auditorium,
and, God help me, I wore pink tights. Billie did the whole thing then.

_Pat Maciel:_
I had Renato Leonelli for physical science. He was exciting. He could
take a car apart and put it back together.
Memorable People

**Everett Maxwell:**
The other day there was an article in the *Providence Journal* regarding URI receiving a grant to teach elementary teachers how to teach science without using a textbook. If we could find Renato Leonelli’s lesson plans and publish them, the federal government could save $30 million. My wife, who did not like science but was into language arts and music, had to teach science. She said that Leonelli taught her so much about instruments, weights and measures, and simple chemistry experiments. Using models that he had made, he taught people how to teach earth science and oceanography on an elementary level. Leonelli used devices and not a textbook, so whatever they are going to do at URI has already been done by the teachers who graduated in my era. That man was a genius.

**Joan Murphy Casement:**
He was a fascinating man.

**John Nazarian:**
I took that course, and I am glad I did. Herbie Ward, a dear friend of mine, and I were both seniors when we sat in on this class intended for sophomores. It was delightful. I learned a lot of physics, chemistry, and what not that I had not been taught before. Ren Leonelli at that time also had a Saturday TV program called *Small Fry Science*, and he would try out on us whatever he was going to do on television. Many times it did not work. We used to say, “You know, Dr. Leonelli, I think you ought to try this or that” and so on, and then it would work. Subsequently I always reminded him that he never gave Herbie and me the credit that we deserved for making his program so popular.
Rhode Island College: On the Move

Pat Maciel: I have fond memories of the ski club. John Nazarian was our advisor, and he was unbelievable. One time the ski club went up to Stowe, Vermont, and visited the Baroness von Trapp. That was exciting. We were advised not to ski anything but the novice slopes if we had never skied before. Of course, some of us did not listen. That led to one day of skiing, and then off to the emergency room with a broken ankle or sprain. I do not remember what the curfew was, but, in any case, John Nazarian tried to make sure that everybody was in at such and such a time. We had so much fun!

Joe Menard: John was also known for having a math/science party at the end of every year. He would make sure to wine and dine the math/science group.

Marianne Needham: John Nazarian was very close to those of us in the math area. He is the reason I went into math. I was going to be a kindergarten teacher, God help me.

Pat Maciel: One of my all time favorites, who was brilliant and a fabulous teacher who taught me to absolutely love Shakespeare – without a word of doubt – was Dr. Robert Comery. He was a beautiful man. It was always “Miss Ross”; there were no first names. He was truly formal, Ivy League, just wonderful. I cherish what I learned from him.

Everett Maxwell: I went into business after college, and whenever I wrote a proposal I always had with me a little handbook that Amy Thompson gave me. She was the finest teacher of English grammar. I wish she could go down and teach

Mary M. Keefe: “She frequently sent our daughters out to collect frogs for her biology class.”
some of the people at the Journal today. In the history department Martin Horan probably had more command of a classroom than any person I have ever known, and Dr. Nelson was a very fine professor. Bob Brown, after whom we named the medical facility in the Murray Center, was our athletic director and coach; he probably had more influence on the men at that time than anyone else. Chris Mitchell was probably the best teacher at RICE. Mary M. Keefe was a fine biology teacher, a real tough woman but, boy, a great teacher.

**Larrie Lindquist:**
Mary Keefe took a shine to our two young daughters, Valerie and Wendy. Whenever they came to Alger Hall, they would go to her office. She always had something nice to talk about, and the kids delighted in seeing her dog, a lovely red setter. They offered to do little tasks for her, so Mary frequently sent them out to the nearby field and stream to catch frogs and other “livestock” for her biology classes. They still remember these experiences, and often remark on them. Mary impressed them so much!

**Marianne Needham:**
I had Chet Smolski for geography, and I love him so much.

**Joan Murphy Casement:**
I wanted to mention a teacher that I don’t think a lot of people liked as well as I did – Mr. Allison. I took electives just to have him. I loved the way he taught. He was ironic; he was tough. Once somebody said to him, “You give us so much homework; this is only an elective and we have other things we have to do.” He responded, “I am here to make you work so hard that that is the way you feel. This is what you are supposed to be doing.” I liked that.

**Everett Maxwell:**
He taught creative writing.
Joan Murphy Casement:
He also taught us American lit. Another thing that I liked about Ernest Allison was that when it was his turn to do Chapel, he read a poem, one that was spiritual rather than religious in tone. It was beautiful and related to everyone.

Everett Maxwell:
Grace Healey taught us how to get up and organize a presentation.

Joan Murphy Casement:
She did. I was in the Dramatic League, and she was a wonderful teacher and director. I know that not everybody appreciates these particular people, but there were those of us who loved them, and she really gave me a lot.

John Nazarian:
Mary Weber, who was my math teacher, was a very interesting person, to say the least. One day, as I was walking into class, she said, “I want to talk to you.” I was a freshman then. “I want to tell you a story,” she said. By now the whole class was inside, and I was still in the corridor next to one of the statues. She continued, “I want to tell you about this family that had invited some guests to their home. They had children, and they told the children, ‘We will be offering some snacks and goodies and so on and so forth and you are not to take any. It is for the guests.’” I asked myself where she was going with this. “If you do,” Miss Weber went on, “we are going to say FHB.” “FHB?” “Family Hold Back,” she explained. I really did not know what to do. Then she added, “And that goes for you when you are in class. I do not want you to raise your hand to answer any questions; I want other people to answer.” I said, okay, fine, and thank you. I walked into the classroom, and took my seat. She started teaching, and when she asked questions I just sat there while others raised their hands and responded. There came a point, however, when she asked a question and nobody’s hand went up. I sat there. I waited for what seemed like an eternity, but was more likely a minute, while she kept on looking at people. Finally, I reluctantly raised my hand, and guess what? She said, “FHB.” I turned bright red and immediately dreaded the thought of facing my classmates in the corridor where I knew that they were going to ask what this was all about. Well, I did go out, and I had to tell them. She was a great teacher.
Memorable People

Ridgway Shinn:
Marion Wright is one of the great figures of this College. A graduate of the College, she was one of the brightest people I'd ever met and had ideas bubbling faster than you could respond to them. She was an extraordinary person.

Larrie Lindquist:
Marion was a super chairperson of the social sciences who gave good counsel and inspiration to all of us. She maintained excellence throughout her tenure. Her major consideration was always the College and the place of the social sciences in the total program. She traveled throughout the world and spoke to many groups concerning the cultures she had observed and the geography of their regions. She was committed to the College.

Chet Smolski:
James P. Adams was chairman of the Board of Trustees when we made the move. “Gladly would he teach” was his favorite saying. He was truly inspirational. He would address us at the beginning of every school year, and after he got through talking you felt proud to be a teacher.

Don Driscoll:
He was also a very clever politician who defused that entire antagonism between URI and RICE. He did that by making RICE more expansive and more particular at the same time. He was a master.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
We once had a faculty revue, an event that has never been repeated. I proposed it because I felt that our morale needed to be beefed up. We did not let people know beforehand who was doing what. Ray Picozzi and Joe Graham chaired the event for the evening. Annette Ducey wore a Mary Jane outfit while she recited and crossed her little legs. Another person sang. Then I did Marlene Dietrich. My Indian student had made me this black, slinky gown with glitz and a blond wig, and I had a cigarette holder and a red kerchief. I got out there, put my foot on a table top, leaned down towards the president and the vice president, and declared that certain men had been keeping me very busy lately. At that point I thought that the two of them would drop! It was a wonderful night. We had a good time.
Billie Burrill:
The campus was so small that we knew everybody, and I remember them. I know that Marion Wright was very active in recreational activities. Mary Keefe was particularly interested in camping.

Everett Maxwell:
The head janitor of the school was a fellow named Abe Cohen. His son ended up being a great trumpet player, even playing with the Dorsey brothers. He was a great guy. So from Bill Gaige to Abe Cohen, we knew everybody.
Chapter 7

Academic Programs

Ridgway Shinn:
When I arrived in 1958 there weren’t any departments. The College had been organized fairly recently into four divisions. Geography, history, and social sciences were grouped together into my division, Social Sciences, which was chaired by Marion Wright. As I recall, we had eight faculty members. Chet Smolski and Marion were the geographers. Larrie Lindquist, who came when I did, was the first person with a doctorate from a foreign university, Oxford, and he was also the first anthropologist. Marty Horan taught economics. Evelyn Walsh, Catherine Connor, Kitty Rodman, and I were the history people. Mary Loughrey chaired the Division of Humanities, which included art, music, English, modern languages, and speech. Russ Meinhold led the Division of Mathematics and Science, which integrated math, biology, physical science, and physical education. A newly arrived Charles Willard was appointed chair of the Division of Professional Studies, which consisted of education, philosophy, psychology, and industrial arts.

John Nazarian:
Within those divisions students knew exactly what they were going to have. You had a class of math, English, history, and so on and so forth, so everything was planned. The freedom of choice that we have today did not exist then.

Ridgway Shinn:
Bill Flanagan was brought in to create a fifth division, Graduate Studies. Sid Rollins and Harry Novack joined him, so there were three people in this brand new division. That was really funny because part of the work in those early years was to move from that concept of a division to one of
a graduate faculty. After an initial period, graduate studies were no longer restricted to the few people in that division, and, eventually, the graduate faculty included professors from all across the College. There was no academic dean or academic administrative officer. The chief officer was the president.

*Mary Davey:*
Bill Gaige was the president with whom I had the most experience. I think that he made a tremendous contribution. Whether it was him or history, I do not know, but during his tenure everything kind of exploded. He was a very strong leader, not afraid to assert the College's position and to tackle the “powers that be.”

*John Nazarian:*
When he became president in 1952 he did not live on campus because there was no campus house then; he lived on Brown Street. I got to know him because I became the tutor for the Gaige children. All three needed tutoring in mathematics. There was a set of twins and a boy. Incidentally, Fred went on to become a college president or dean and has recently retired. Until his death four years or so ago, I always kept in contact with President Gaige.

*Chet Smolski:*
He got his Ph.D. from Harvard while he was here. I remember that I had just gotten my master’s degree, and needed a master’s hood, so he actually sold his to me.

*Ridgway Shinn:*
As had all of the presidents through him, Bill Gaige had come out of the public schools. In fact, Gaige had been both a school principal and a superintendent. It took some real struggling to move him beyond that concept. Everything went across his desk.

*Marianne Needham:*
I remember Dr. Gaige calling people in and asking about different instructors, you know, doing evaluations. I think John Nazarian gave him my name to ask about him, and then he asked me about other people and I did not like that. I forget what I said.
Academic Programs

Chet Smolski:
I think that in some respects he did run the College as though he still were a school superintendent. Faculty had to check in with the secretary in the president’s office, and there would be notices about what was to take place that day. That is how we found out what was happening on campus. We did not have anything like the Briefs.

Ridgway Shinn:
Class size was twenty-five to thirty. Each faculty member had a twelve-hour teaching load, although you might sometimes teach an extra course. In those days faculty actually advised students directly, so each had a group of students to work with. Some of us were able to do it, and some of us did not have a clue. It was not very complicated. Probably 95 percent of the curriculum was required: there was early childhood/elementary or elementary/early childhood, and then there was junior high school math/science or science/math or social studies/English or English/social studies. In addition, after the first year, students had only one elective choice per semester. So the advising was not very strenuous.
Chet Smolski:
There were classes five days a week, of course, and we taught five days a week.

Ridgway Shinn:
Of course, the College leaders before Gaige predominantly were women, because of the Henry Barnard School. The entire College faculty was not much larger than that of the Barnard School. Mary Tucker Thorp had been here for many years and was kind of the doyenne of the school, as well as a prominent figure in the community. She was a very strong woman, and that was not at all atypical for teacher training schools.

Mary Davey:
Mary Lee and Mary Thorp were the most influential people on campus when I came in 1937. There were several other very good teachers, but they were the ones that I think of immediately. Everybody knew what they stood for, and they really ran the institution. I think Mary Lee was head of the whole education program.

Larrie Lindquist:
I was once asked to speak to a group put together by Mary Thorp and Elizabeth Campbell. They were going to consider what teachers needed in the social sciences for their teaching requirements. It was quite a large group that met me in one of the classrooms. I spoke with them for the best part of the hour. Just a few days later, I received the most gracious note from the two of them, thanking me for taking the time to come and speak to them, and assuring me that the ideas I had presented would become a kind of template for programs that they were developing. I recall coming home and saying, “Now that’s gentility. Someone took the time to thank you.” It was just typical of that period of grace and gentility that was part of the campus.

Chet Smolski:
The World War I generation faculty, I call them. They were mostly women, usually single, and money was no object. Having arrived at the College with a couple of kids, however, I was quite different. I needed to pay bills and support my family, so I raised the compensation question. That was not the kind of thing you talked about to some of these folks who had been here for a long time. I guess I was kind of self-absorbed at that time, with a young family and working toward a degree. That
generation was all older people, so it was difficult for me coming in. There were no other faculty members like me. I was part of the World War II generation, that group of faculty, not students, who had been in the Second World War, had gone to school, and in the 1950s had started coming out to teach. The World War I generation had attended a teachers college. There was no emphasis on research, writing books, and that sort of thing in the way that there is today; nor did they have the competitiveness that was characteristic of my generation. I knew Catherine Connor, Marion Wright, and Edith Becker. All of them were single and representative of that generation of teachers. There were very few people with Ph.D.s on the staff at that time. Most had worked their way up as teachers and had gotten master’s degrees and lots of experience at the College.

**Ridgway Shinn:**
Concurrently with the new campus, we had another study commission on the organization of higher education. Eleanor Slater, who was then a very prominent senator, was on this commission. Chet Smolski and Jim White, another member of the faculty, worked as staffers and did the study, and I can remember testifying. The commission saw the University and the College as distinctively different institutions. The College served a commuting population. It should change its name and its mission, and move away from the role of single-purpose institution. The study commission recommended that RICE expand gradually, first into the arts and sciences and then into other areas.

**Don Driscoll:**
The academic program was strengthened tremendously during my four years. The whole sense of a liberal arts education was installed. The College began to build its history, math, and science sections up from the basics. Every teacher who was going to teach junior or senior high school and wanted to have a mathematics or science major took a combination of classes. You were able to mix and match. If you wanted to have more math, for example, then a path was created for you. It worked. Gradually they began to split education into subject majors. The College maintained its integrity but expanded its horizon.

**Ridgway Shinn:**
Even after they changed the name from Rhode Island College of Education to Rhode Island College, however, it took several years before
any appreciable number of students were looking to major in anything other than education.

*Don Driscoll:*
One of the things that made this shift possible was a change in the population. Suddenly it was okay to be both a teacher and something else. So, some guys, who were on the GI Bill and could not afford anything else, attended the College and got their teaching credentials. They then taught at Hope, Mt. Pleasant, and Classical and, because administrators like me gave them the sixth period free every day, they could leave at one o’clock, drive to Boston, and take their law courses. Four or five would go up together. Some pioneering gals did the same thing. Teachers were beginning to say, “Gee, maybe I could be a lawyer, maybe I could do this, maybe I could do that.” The College was very careful to nurture that kind of thing. It gave you choices.

*Larrie Lindquist:*
We had no trouble getting my new course, Introduction to Social Anthropology, off the ground, and that was pleasant for me. It was well attended from the very first class. In fact, it was oversubscribed. Those of us in social sciences set up these courses that fit in with a major in social science.

*Chet Smolski:*
We were then the Department of Social Sciences, and Marion Wright was in charge. Over time, changes slowly took place. The department expanded as the student enrollment grew, as we took on more faculty, and as the number of programs increased.

*Larrie Lindquist:*
Eventually, there was a determination that disciplines should split off, and so we all split, at the same time, I think. Herb Winter established the Department of Political Science; Kenneth Lundberg, the Department of Economics; I did the anthropology department; and Ridgway Shinn did history. Marion Wright remained with social science, but anthropology became the Department of Anthropology and Geography, so we had a double responsibility. At first I taught in Alger Hall, and then we went to Gaige Hall where we had plenty of room. The department set up a little library there, so it was a good facility for us.
Mary Davey:
I do not think the change from education to liberal arts was a serious problem. We could not avoid it with the changes that were happening all over the place, and I think the College just latched on and moved with the times. I do not think there was any great internal problem with it.

Ridgway Shinn:
In those days there was no faculty academic structure, and initially there was no action that the faculty could take as a corporate body.

Chet Smolski:
Department chairs would meet with Gaige periodically, but beyond that there was nothing, as I recall, where faculty were involved in any kind of departmental representation. There were just periodical meetings of department chairs with the College. It was an administrative kind of thing.

Ridgway Shinn:
The whole building of a Faculty Council, which eventually came into effect sometime in the early 1960s, is another whole story, a very complicated one. It came about the way it did because some of us insisted that there had to be an arena where the president of the College would have to sit with some faculty and talk. Bill Gaige’s whole view was that he was the one in charge and that he alone made the decisions. Many of us who were involved in the creation of Council argued that we had to have a way to communicate with the president. There was one faction however, who said that they did not want to have any administrators present in a faculty body. Fine, we countered, but then what opportunity will you have to discuss, explain, or converse with the president? Eventually, we prevailed.
Don Driscoll:  
Forces converged when the men returned home from World War II. The whole marriage business was accelerated, and, the next thing you know, we were confronted with a tidal wave of babies. Then those children needed schools. In the early 1950s we were opening one elementary school a week, and those schools needed teachers.

Pat Maciel:  
We were all studying to be teachers.

Joan Murphy Casement:  
You could say that we had four tracks to choose from: kindergarten, elementary, secondary math/science, and secondary social studies/English. Within those groupings, we got to know each other even better, which was a fun thing that happened.

Joe Menard:  
The College, though, set your curriculum. When I started in 1956, my four years were laid out for me. Certainly, if you were going to be a math teacher, you chose electives in that field. In those days they told you what to do, and you just did it. Those who didn’t did not come back.
**Teachers**

*Joan Murphy Casement*
I remember the music classes when we each had our pitch pipes, and we were shown how to teach songs in an elementary classroom. I thought that everybody else was off key; I was always in hysterics at how funny they were. Then when I got up to blow my pitch pipe, nothing came out.

*Ray Anderson:*
Imagine getting up in front of your own classmates to teach them how to sing! In front of the kids I could teach and never have any problems, but in front of my peers it was so tough to have to teach some “Little Red Wagon” song. That was tough!

*Joan Murphy Casement:*
What a time!

*Pat Maciel:*
Do you think it made better teachers that way, being very strict in the requirements and the course work? I mean do you think being steered along a very straight path led to being a better teacher?

*Joe Menard:*
I did not know any other way at the time, but now I would think not. I like what is happening today. College students make their own choices in accordance with their own interests.

*Joan Murphy Casement:*
There were other rules in terms of student teaching. We used to have two student teachers to one supervisor. We weren’t allowed to eat our lunch with the teachers, so we had to find another place within the building. We ate in our classrooms and, sometimes, in the ladies room. We were very, very closely supervised and not given a lot of freedom of choice in our thinking. When we did our student teaching we were seniors, and I felt so ready to teach. The lucky thing for me was that the other student was not a very good disciplinarian and I was, so I got left alone a lot. I did not have an easy time of it. I found it very difficult. Because of the strictness of my critic teacher, I did not want to be a teacher.

*Everett Maxwell:*
I remember that when Helen Scott came to observe me it was worse than stealing a chocolate bar at the store around the corner. I think that she
was director of student teaching, and she would come out and visit you once a year. Your critic teacher would be advised that she would be there on the next Wednesday, and, if you had a good critic, she would pump you up and get a good lesson ready. I had a good critic. She was a wonderful woman. Even so, when Dr. Scott came I was perspiring and shaking. It felt like this was it; I was going to perform my first heart operation! She was scary, but we got through it.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
The faculty along with Mary Lee pretty much decided where you would teach. In 1957 when Mary Lee died, I created chaos when I responded to several students who had approached me and said that they really did not want to take certain jobs. All I said was, “It’s a two way street. You take a job because of what you can do, but you also look at what it can do for you. Therefore, if another situation is better, you take it.” The word kind of got around, and, as a consequence, a number of contracts were broken and students began to go wherever they wanted. Other graduates had trouble finding jobs because they had no connections to help them. As one superintendent who came to campus told the students, when it came to jobs, sometimes it’s not what but who you know that counts!

Chet Smolski:
For my first year and a half at the College I taught in the Henry Barnard School. At that time Barnard was K to 9, with at least two of each grade. There were only four men on the faculty, including me, and we were all in the junior high school. They taught social studies at the school, but geography was something new, and I was the first geographer. This was in 1954. An interesting thing we did was to have a panel discussion about the situation in Vietnam. It was held in the school’s small auditorium, and all of the students from one of my classes served on the panel. We went back and forth as we put on this production for the rest of the school. The French had been defeated in Dien Bien Phu that year, so it was the French involvement that we examined. We had a discussion that covered Vietnam in 1954, the presence of the French there, and the history of Vietnam. “What’s Vietnam?” was the first question. So we talked about the North and the South and that kind of thing. My experience with getting a whole class involved with that kind of discussion on Vietnam was the highlight of my time at the Henry Barnard School.
Chapter 9

The Commute

Joan Murphy Casement:
On the old campus we were all commuters. I lived in Edgewood, and most of the time I had to take two buses. Sometimes when I got off the bus downtown, I would walk through the tunnel of the railroad station and then up the hill. The Heslin brothers lived near me, and sometimes they would drive me to school.

Everett Maxwell:
During our freshman year, we would all put on our little beanies as soon as we got off the bus in Providence. We had to have them on before we got inside the campus or there would be some kind of punishment.

John Nazarian:
Very few people had cars, so we had to take buses and then walk through a series of parking lots to the College.

Joe Menard:
Our time on campus was affected by commuting, plus work; some of us had to work.
Don Driscoll:
You could work for the Outlet in between classes. They would make your schedule up so you could be gone for two hours and come back. At Christmas you could get extra time. They were accommodating because the College was so close.

Everett Maxwell:
I have to make a comment about commuting. I lived on North Main Street near Miriam Hospital and what was the old Rhode Island Auditorium. Mine was the last stop for a whole group of students coming in from Pawtucket and Central Falls. During my freshman year one of them was John Nazarian who was three years ahead of me. As soon as I got on the bus I would take out a pad and say, “Okay, I am going to take attendance now. Is Nazarian here?”

John Nazarian:
I had a classmate named Allison Irons. One beautiful spring day we decided that, instead of taking buses, we would walk back to Pawtucket. We did that. Now every time she calls me she asks whether I remember those days.

Pat Maciel:
We used to share rides. Some people had cars, and we would come up that way, kind of taking turns. I remember wanting to stay because I was involved in something or other. You just checked around to find someone else who was still around and would give you a ride.

Marianne Needham:
I had a big old wooden station wagon; it was my family car. My father would always complain because my friends would leave their dirty coffee cups in the car. I had five people who rode with me to campus, but I always told them that I would not return home at any specific time. I would leave when I finished doing what I wanted to do. My dream had been to go away to school, so I wanted to stay on campus as much as I could. If they left when I did, then they had a ride; otherwise, they took the bus.

Ray Anderson:
Transportation was not usually a problem when you were doing your student teaching. I think that the professors were cognizant of the issue and gave you assignments closest to your own community.
The Commute

Joan Murphy Casement:
I took the bus across Cranston to go to do my student teaching.

Ridgway Shinn:
I think that most of the students on the new campus carpooled.

Larrie Lindquist:
As time went on and the number of students increased, there were more and more cars on campus. There was also an influx of classes after four o’clock when the schools were let out and teachers were able to come. This eventually put pressure on the parking at the College.

Billie Burrill:
When the College was downtown I lived in Pawtucket. If we did not drive, then we had to take three different buses. I remember a couple of times when I walked from the campus to Pawtucket. I think it took about an hour. I did not do that too often. When we moved up to Mount Pleasant we bought a house nearby on Farnum Avenue. The students knew where we lived, and the front door was like a revolving door because they used to come over quite frequently. Except when it was a little bit too icy, I rode back and forth on my bicycle.

Mary Davey:
I have always lived in Providence, close enough so that actually I could walk to campus. I did not walk very often, though. I had bought a house right here at the foot of the hill, so there was no distance at all once the College moved to Mount Pleasant. The commute to downtown Providence was longer.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
I lived one street over from Mary. I took that flat when I first arrived and kept it for five years. During my first winter the commute to the downtown campus was absolutely traumatic for me because I found that nobody in Rhode Island seemed to know how to drive in snow. I would be on my way home and these wonderful people, thinking that they were not going to make the hill, would start to turn around. I remember being stopped by a policeman one night when I had gone for a special mail delivery, and, I guess because of how I was driving, he suspected that maybe I was under the influence of alcohol. He came and sat in my car, and you know that wouldn’t happen today. Finally I said, “I am the dean of students at the
College. I cannot afford to have the wrong kind of reputation. This is so
difficult.” He told me not to pay attention to any of these drivers. I should
just do what was right, and they should do what was right for them.

*Chet Smolski:*
At first we had a starter house in Warwick right next to the airport. My starting salary was $3,300 per year. Now that sounds terrible, but I could afford to buy a house. My first house cost $11,000. It was 676 square feet, and that was enough for my wife, two kids, and me. Young people today expect to have houses that are 4,000 square feet and have two acres of ground around them. So for five years I drove to the old campus and brought my kids to the Barnard School. I still remember someone commenting on one of the first days of school, “All the way from Warwick!” It was all of fifteen miles. When the College moved in 1958 we bought a house in Johnston.

*Larrie Lindquist:*
We lived first in Cranston and then Warwick and I usually used public transportation. It was very easy because the bus would stop right on the campus.
Mary Davey:
Most of the student organizations were single purpose clubs, such as the French or biology club. It was quite a while before what you would think of as fraternity or sorority types of things came about. Some people, however, were not active in any particular campus study group and wanted to get together just to have fun. I think that is how the social clubs came about.

“...The gym had a balcony that ran all the way across it. You couldn't see the game if you didn't have a front row seat.”
**Dorothy Pieniadz:**
In those days there had to be a faculty chaperone at every student activity. I can remember sitting with Ray Picozzi one Sunday, when we were here all day long simply because the students were in the auditorium. I shouldn't say this, but every once in a while at an event we chaperones might have for ourselves a little bit of wine.

**Ray Anderson:**
At least from the male perspective, I think that the intramural basketball competition that we had between classes contributed to the camaraderie and added to the class spirit.

**Everett Maxwell:**
Bob Brown put that together. I was a linebacker in high school so I played basketball the same way that I played linebacker. I should be in the Hall of Fame because I hold the record for handling the ball least of any player. They would never pass it to me because they knew I would lose it. The intramural program was good, and we got better attendance at that than we did for the conference games. Because the gym had a balcony that ran all the way across it, you couldn't see the game if you did not have a front row seat. We only had about fifteen fans. I remember Doug Pinto, who was a veteran of the Korean War and a wonderful guy. He was a pretty good basketball player, and I remember one time when his wife and little boy came to the game and sat up with the fans. Every time Doug scored a basket and was running back, a little voice would say, “That’s my daddy who scored that basket.”

**Walter Crocker:**
Soccer and basketball, for men only, were the two sports that we had in my student years, 1955 to 1959. RICE was a member of the New England Teachers College Conference. We traveled by bus and played all over New England. Women had intramural field hockey teams that played each other but no one outside of RICE that I can recall.

**Billie Burrill:**
One day I went down to AAA to talk to somebody there about arranging a trip to Bermuda during spring break. That was then a very popular destination for college students, more so than Ft. Lauderdale. With the program that I worked out it would cost the students $200 for airfare, three meals a day, and a one week stay at Harmony Hall, a very nice
place right near Elbow Beach. I had to get permission from Mary Lee to take the students. So I asked her and she replied, “Those students don't have that kind of money.” I said, “Well, if they do, is it okay?” “Yes, she answered, “but don't count on it.” These students had never even been on an airplane before. The day after I made the announcement the first one came in with a wad of money, all five-dollar bills. I think that this was the first time that the College had sponsored that kind of a trip.

Joe Menard:
I have done an awful lot of traveling since retiring, and I have always said that I wish I could have done this traveling when we were in the classroom learning about the places.

Billie Burrill:
When I took that first group of ten people to Bermuda, I tried to make sure that I was not designated the chaperone. I did not want that responsibility. I had made the arrangements for the trip and I would go along with them, but I was not chaperoning. These were adults. When I got into Harmony Hall, however, the manager said, “Oh yes, you are the chaperone.” I said, “No, I am not.” He then accused me of being very naïve. At the end of the session, though, he apologized. He said that he had never seen a more exemplary group. Well, they did not know how to drink, so they couldn't get into much trouble. Besides, if visitors got out of hand in Bermuda, the authorities took control, put them on an airplane, and sent them home. It was not like in Ft. Lauderdale. Then, too, these students weren't as sophisticated as some of these other people so the risk was absolutely minimal. In the second year the number of participants doubled. There were thirty people when I did it for a third year.

Mary Davey:
In the earlier days we had what was called Chapel. The whole student body would get together to hear a speaker or to be brought up to date on what was going on.

Chet Smolski:
It was held once a week, on Thursday, in an auditorium that had a kind of balcony.
Rhode Island College: On the Move

*Everett Maxwell:*
We had this big auditorium but no stage. I remember going on Wednesday afternoons, and there would be some readings. On occasion, we would hear John Nazarian play the violin or someone would play the piano. We would be there for an hour of meditation and thinking. They should try that now on campus and see how it works. Will anyone send a note to the parents if students do not show up? Chapel was not a big event; it was just something we went to.

*Ridgway Shinn:*
There was Chapel every week, and a student assembly every week.

*Walter Crocker:*
Chapel was mandatory at RICE.

*Marianne Needham:*
They used to take attendance.

*Mary Davey:*
Every student was assigned a seat, and someone would stand up in the gallery with a big chart on which she could mark off who was present and who was not. Those were the days!

*Walter Crocker:*
Attendance was high, except for the Korean War veterans, most of whom played hi-lo-jack in the Charles Carroll Room during the Chapel period. Armed with lookouts, they would exit via the windows when Fred Donovan and his minions made a sweep. One time a number of the vets attended Chapel because a military person was the speaker. After he finished all the vets started clapping – something that was NOT DONE AT CHAPEL.

*Everett Maxwell:*
Chapel was kind of mixed. I think maybe Dean Connor or Dr. Donovan organized it.

*Joan Murphy Casement:*
Dean Connor was the organizer, and, I think, faculty took turns presenting. Sometimes it would just be music, sometimes a reading, and it
was very non-denominational. The readings, though, were probably more of Christian orientation.

_Hank Guillotte:_
Assigned seats, reflection, and/or music performance is what I recall; religion once in a while.

_Mary Davey:_
Faculty and staff were kind of expected to attend. No one was tracking us down, but it was just sort of taken for granted.

_Chet Smolski:_
It was not popular among newer faculty coming in. Students generally accepted it and there was not any major protest.

_Joan Murphy Casement:_
I have a great story about Chapel; it’s about one of the two times when I got into serious trouble. I was a rebel. My best friend, who was Jewish, said to me one day, “You know, there is never anything about Jews in Chapel, and we all have to go. I think I am not going to go.” “Good for you,” I said, “I will not go either.” There was one other Jewish person in
our class, and the three of us decided not to go to Chapel. I got called into Dean Connor’s office, and she said, “I can understand why these two girls said no, but your name is Joan Murphy. Why aren’t you going to Chapel?” I responded, “Because I was standing up for them.” She then said, “Well, you know it is against the rules, and you have to go. And I will tell you something else; if you don’t go, your parents are going to hear about it.” This was so typical of those days! Well, I mean, it was still a big deal.

**Dorothy Pieniadz:**
In that old building, during my very first year, I had a situation in which we were having an event and students were beginning to protest about Chapel. I was afraid that Bill Gaige would shut down my campus on me. The students sat down with me, and I said, “Look, I am sorry, but he is the man who has control over everything, and, yes, if he wants to he can deny us the use of the facilities. You go into Chapel as you should and you sit. You do not have to pay attention to what is going on but at least you are attending. Then I warned the president. I said, “This is going on, and I am not sure what is going to happen.” They sat and then they walked out when it was all over. So the following week the president got up and said to them, “You know, the dean of students warned me, but, I am the president!”

**Walter Crocker:**
At the time not many of us thought Chapel was useful. Today, looking back, I still don’t think it was useful. It was about thirty years out of date in 1955!

**Dorothy Pieniadz:**
When we moved to the new campus President Gaige instituted punch cards which people would have to submit as they walked in. When I, as dean of students, was asked to help, I said, “Sorry, Bill, this is your problem. I was not hired to police this. This is not how I believe we develop religious values. If you want this, you get your staff to do it.” I said this because I knew what was happening. The cards were coming in at the back of the room and the students were walking out the other door, which was fine with me.

**Ridgway Shinn:**
Fred Donovan and his office spent a lot of time tracking students and trying to figure out how to take attendance. We brought in priests, rabbis, or other clergy, or faculty members to participate. There was also
a Hammond organ in Roberts Auditorium. We could be shown a play, listen to or deliver a speech, or read some scripture. It did not last more than forty minutes.

**Chet Smolski:**
I think that it was not too long after the move when Chapel eventually ended. A new campus can generate new ideas and new functions and enable a lot of change to take place. Chapel was an outdated kind of function, and I am not quite sure what the rationale was behind it.

**Larrie Lindquist:**
Bill Small established a group that met at noontime. Quite a number of us were invited to come. We talked together, ate together, and then had a prayer time, but that was all done on a voluntary basis. Nobody put any pressures on us.

**Everett Maxwell:**
We students had to go to Chapel. There weren’t an awful lot of hard rules, but Chapel was one. The Dew Drop Inn, they did not know about.
Rhode Island College: On the Move

Ridgway Shinn:
Early on there used to be, I would say, four to five convocations during the course of the year.

Larrie Lindquist:
The Cap and Gown Convocation was very important to the students. Many of them were the very first in their family to attend a school of higher education, and, when they capped each other, there was real pride. I remember some students who came to class after being capped who said that they wanted to wear their gowns as well. They wore them throughout the day just because it felt good.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
I have memories of Commencement downtown and those early years when we had to pay ten dollars a head to musicians so that they would play music for us while we marched. It was kind of regal and very nice. We assembled first on campus and then marched together to Veterans Memorial Auditorium. We had some tremendous speakers, even some television personalities.

Chet Smolski:
I do not recall a lot of national figures coming to the old campus, though there may have been. Honorary degrees were primarily given at Commencements, although they might also be awarded at special convocations. Usually the recipients were local people who were active in education.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
At my first RICE Commencement I had a very embarrassing moment. The president had asked me to assist as he presented the hood to one of the honorary degree recipients. Well, I only got a glimpse of this woman, and all I knew was that she had gray hair. Lo and behold, I fell asleep, which, as the students in those days knew, happened from time to time. I worked in this place seven days a week and twenty-four hours a day, and I was always tired. I kind of dozed. Then I heard someone call her name. I immediately stood up and saw two gray-haired women. I did not know which to approach! When we got up to the new campus, one of the first classes offered to buy me a pair of dark glasses so that, when people saw me sitting down, they wouldn't know if I was really asleep.
Chet Smolski:
During the inaugural academic year on the new campus the College did a whole series of convocations, and, for whatever reasons, it was able to attract some distinguished speakers. One of the people brought in was the sociologist David Riesman who received an honorary degree at the Dedication Year Convocation on April 4, 1959. President Gaige had been much impressed by his latest book. He asked me to write the honorary degree citation. Riesman's speech was very good, and the citation was brilliant! It is not easy to write citations; they should be very brief and ought to focus on why in this particular year this person should be honored. In that year we also celebrated Brown University’s bicentennial with a big convocation at which its president, Barnaby Keeney, received an honorary doctorate. Norman Cousins, the famous historian, journalist, and author, had been the recipient of an honorary doctor of letters degree at the College’s previous undergraduate Commencement.

Billie Burrill:
We had May Day every year at the old campus when we would do our performances on the State House lawn. The students would make their own costumes. The first year that I was there, we performed folk dances that represented various countries. For accompaniment we would rent a piano from Avery Piano Company. They would drive it up on a truck and Rita Bicho would crawl onto the back of the truck and accompany the dancers.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
The May Pole Celebration was all a new thing to me when I came to Rhode Island. During my first year I learned that all of the freshman women had to participate, no matter how skinny, fat, tall, or short they might be. They also had to figure out who was going to be a tree and all of those other things.

Ray Anderson:
Women wore three quarter length gowns for the May dance and one year I crowned the May Queen. Her picture was in the Providence Journal.

Everett Maxwell:
This may sound corny, but at the time it was really fun to run across the street and get all excited about watching these beautiful girls in their white dresses as they were getting crowned and running around maypoles. Other
than the fact that the girls were all gorgeous, there was no motivation for us to do it. But we loved it. We just loved it.

**Pat Maciel:**
I remember, as a freshman, being quite impressed with May Day. Celebrations took place down in that lower grassy area by the State House.

**Marianne Needham:**
I was involved in the one that you saw. We had carved animals, and we were all dressed up.

**Billie Burrill:**
That was the second one we did, Ogden Nash’s *Animale Carnivale*. Each group of students dressed in costumes appropriate for all the animals. I remember President Gaige coming to that performance in his red academic gown. There was also quite a bit of participation from the public. The third one was *April in Paris* for which we built book and flower stalls and had outdoor cafes with tables and red and white checkered tablecloths. During the celebration this very inebriated man arrived and decided that he would like to order a drink, so he sat at one of the tables and became
quite obnoxious. Finally, we had to resort to police removal. That was the extent of the May Day as far as I remember.

Marianne Needham:
Actually, May Day ended because of me. I was chair of the celebration, and I decided that we should not have one. The dean of students agreed with me. She said, “After all, the May Pole was supposed to be the dance of the virgins and I don’t think there are any left.”

Dorothy Pieniadz:
Suddenly, when we moved up to the new campus, there was not going to be a May Pole! When the students discussed this with me I said that there had been certain changes. I told them that I did not know much about this tradition and that the only association I had was that in May the Catholic Church celebrates the virginity of women and the blessed Mary. Suddenly the students came out with a statement that the dean of students said conditions had changed since virginity did not exist. People got angry! I made a quick move to the president’s office and told him that this was kind of taken out of context!

Chet Smolski:
We still had a May dance every June. The ladies got dressed up and the students went out there with the flowers.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
The junior and senior proms were real traditions. I remember, too, that when I came here they had this thing called Stunt Night.

Joan Murphy Casement:
Stunt Night was a competitive stage play that each class did at the end of the year, and points were awarded not only for being creative and so forth, but also, and most importantly, for the number of class members you could get on the stage.

Everett Maxwell:
We had to do it at Henry Barnard because that was the only stage we had then.

Pat Maciel:
It was a big thing.
Rhode Island College: On the Move

“Stunt Night was really wonderful; it was great fun.”

**Ridgway Shinn:**
Stunt Night was really wonderful; it was great fun. There was always this great competition to see which class would be the best.

**Hank Guillotte:**
My sophomore class was a winner! Stunt Night was very important on the old campus.

**Dorothy Pieniadz:**
What I saw was an intense competition between classes; every class wanted to win. I told the students that it was time to stop thinking this way and to become a campus, to be one college.

**Marianne Needham:**
I do not remember the year that it stopped, but I know that it continued to take place for a while even after I graduated.

**Joan Murphy Casement:**
Everett and I were on the committee that wrote for Stunt Night. We thought that what we wrote was hysterically funny.

**Everett Maxwell:**
It was!
Joan Murphy Casement:
One of my best memories is that we wrote about the College move for Stunt Night. We never envisioned the new courses and programs that would be offered at RICE. One of the things that we wrote about was what the new buildings would look like. We painted an exotic picture. It was incredible. I think we did it during our senior year or maybe the one before it.

Everett Maxwell:
A real fantasy world. Maybe some of you have fulfilled that fantasy. If you get the yearbook and take a look at the pictures, you'll be amazed at what you see.

Joan Murphy Casement:
We just thought we were so funny.

Everett Maxwell:
We were. I remember that I always looked for a response from Grace Healey. She would sit in the third row, and when she laughed, I knew we had gotten across to the audience. She was a genius at taking things the right way. That long face of hers would go into great contortions as she laughed her head off. We got points for the comedy, and the winning class won a picnic. We won the year that we did the Greek goddess thing.

Joan Murphy Casement:
And we had everybody on stage.

Everett Maxwell:
Do you remember when that gorgeous girl, in some degree of undress, broke through the cigarette machine and walked across the stage and another guy and I, in our Greek goddess outfits, followed her? I think that scene worked well. Do you remember Abe Cohen, the janitor at the downtown campus?

Ray Anderson:
I used to drive him to work.
Rhode Island College: On the Move

*Everett Maxwell:*
Everybody knew Abe Cohen, and everybody loved him. Well, he agreed to perform in our Greek goddess skit. We had just about trashed the stage when, in the final scene, Abe came out with a big broom and swept all the stuff away. The audience went crazy when they saw Abe on stage. He was a great guy.

*Joan Murphy Casement:*
We did one Stunt Night production called *This Is Your Life*, and everything went wrong. It was deliberate and written into the script. Every person who was brought to *This Is Your Life* had a terrible story to tell. It was very funny. I think we got the idea from a Carol Burnett skit.

*Everett Maxwell:*
Some time ago when I spoke at a retirement dinner I mentioned Stunt Night. Dr. Nazarian was sitting a couple of tables back, and I saw him lean back and laugh. Stunt Night stood out over the years because each class worked on it for hours upon hours. We would put together the ideas, and then we would get the brightest of us to do the writing. Obviously I did not do it, but Joan probably did.

*Joe Menard:*
Every once in a while we would have a class meeting. That’s when we would try to get everyone involved in Stunt Night, or talk about an upcoming dance, or plan graduation activities.

*Pat Maciel:*
Unfortunately, they were not very well attended. It is like everything else. There was always a group who was willing to put in the time and the effort, and then there were those who were on the periphery. Nothing has changed.

*Joe Menard:*
Well, student government was different. I remember that on the old campus one of our duties was monitoring the cafeteria and making certain that there was no smoking going on there. One time we were in the cafeteria and far in the corner someone was smoking. It happened to be one of the professors, Miss Perry, I think. My group was saying, “Look, Joe, you are the president and you’ve got to go tell her.” I was a veteran and I was older. I didn’t have her in class, but I had heard of her, and I
was afraid to approach her. After all, she was a professor and this was the 1950s. Still, I knew that I had to do it. What was her reaction? She said, “Oh, it’s very good of you to ask me, thank you.”

Pat Maciel:
She was very stern.

Joe Menard:
Yes, but she probably understood the situation.

Everett Maxwell:
In those days room 102 was our student center. It was a long room, facing the city, where we played cards, smoked, and drank. If we wanted coffee, we went down to the coffee machine in the cafeteria and then came back up. Keeping it neat was the responsibility of student government. Room 102 may have cost me an election. One morning around the Thanksgiving or Christmas holidays, I came in and Abe Cohen grabbed me. “Everett,” he said, “I want you to look at this room.” I went in and saw scattered cigarette butts and coffee cups spilled on the floor. There was trash all over the place. So, being student government president and the independent mind that I was, I went up to Dr. Gaige’s office and asked to see him. I said that I wanted his permission to close the student center, and he said, “If you want to do it, you can do it.”

Joan Murphy Casement:
Oh, that was you!

Everett Maxwell:
I put a note on the door that said, “This room is so filthy that I am closing it for the day,” and I signed my name. I became a very, very unpopular guy, except to Abe Cohen.

Ray Anderson:
There is a funny thing about the difference between the old and new campuses that I came to realize. Both my kids graduated from the Mount Pleasant campus and never became the slightest bit involved. My daughter followed in my footsteps and went into vocational education. My son did some teaching, but then went on to do other things with a much better income. They never got involved in campus activities. I had thought that they were going to enjoy and love being at the College, but they
didn’t. Maybe because of the uniqueness, I couldn’t wait to get out of the house when I was a student, and I saturated myself with College life. The camaraderie was so great that I could have cared less if the world were falling down around me. I was having such a wonderful time at school.
In many ways Henry P. Guillotte exemplified the diversity and change that spurred the growth and development of the College. He arrived as an older student who had left high school after one year, the possessor of a GED, not a traditional diploma, and a veteran who had served in the Navy from 1951 to 1954. With a double major in French and math, Hank was the first student to cross academic disciplines. He took part in rallies for the bond issue that financed the new campus and shared the determination to keep RIC separate from URI. He joined the Charles Carroll Club, an unofficial men-only organization to whom Fred Donovan gave a weekly talk. He took his assigned seat at Chapel, shared the victory of his sophomore class on Stunt Night, and received points for participation in Anchor Class. After graduation he began his teaching career at Cranston West (which opened the same year as the move). Awarded a National Science Foundation grant, he attended the University of Illinois and then taught for a year at Portsmouth High School before joining the faculty of Rhode Island College. In 1994 Hank Guillotte retired and was named Professor Emeritus of Mathematics and Secondary Education.
Rhode Island College: On the Move

*Don Driscoll:*
In my freshman class of 114, there were about twenty-four men. It was heaven. There was no shortage of dates. At that time, too, dating was usually a group activity because people tended to interact socially in groups rather than in pairs. We ended up with ninety-nine graduates. Because the class of 1954 was the centennial class, we asked Fred Donovan, dean of men, to be our 100th class member.

*Mary Davey:*
There was a time on the old campus when there was only one male student left, and everyone else was in the service. Fred Donovan joked about having been a “dean of man.” As the boys began to come back, however, they started to move into power positions. That had the girls worried.

*Don Driscoll:*
We had our own organization, the Charles Carroll Club, named for a former faculty member. The only qualification for getting in was that you were a male student. We had a room where the guys hung out and smoked. It was a quiet place, somewhere to be away from the constant chirping of “the birds.” There were so damn few of us!

*Hank Guillotte:*
On the downtown campus our room was in the basement. At the Mount Pleasant campus the Charles Carroll Room was located in the Student Center. Fred Donovan gave a weekly talk. We also had Kappa Delta Phi fraternity.

*Larrie Lindquist:*
Without a doubt, there were more females than males. However, more male students came in as time went on.

*John Nazarian:*
I think the GI Bill was responsible for an increasingly large proportion of male members. It really didn’t make a difference in what people did, although they did try to find enough men to make up a basketball team. Bob Brown, who was a classmate of mine, knew that I was a violinist, and he would say to me, “John, you stay out of basketball because I don’t want you to get injured. You sprain your finger, and you’re all done.” Well, he did not have to tell me. I knew that I couldn’t play very well, anyway.
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Joe Menard:
There was a pretty big group of men in my class. Many were veterans, mostly from the Korean conflict, and several were married. I met my wife here. For a long time she would not go out with me because she assumed that I was married.

Don Driscoll:
We called some of the guys who came to RICE “specials.” These were people who had had an association with another institution before they left for the military. I had a friend, for example, who went to Brown. Later he came to the College for a year in which he took some courses and did his student teaching. Then he got a job. That was a very common option, but it does not exist anymore. There might be ten to fifteen people in a class. Other guys who had the war experience would choose to go somewhere else, graduate, and then come to RICE for a year. They would go to Brown, URI, Bryant, or maybe the University of Connecticut. That kind of mix and match was very much available. Some people had to take a year off to work to earn enough money to go another year. The College has been, and still is, an extremely flexible institution in terms of accepting people, accommodating their needs, and letting people take time off when necessary.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
Inevitably, the age of consent and alcohol became an issue, so we had to create those kinds of policies where before we had had none in place. At graduation, for example, someone over twenty-one might like to celebrate with a little something to drink.

Everett Maxwell:
There is one aspect of the camaraderie on the old campus that I thought about just now. We all focused on education, and everyone was planning to be a school teacher. That was the underlying spirit that we had.

Ridgway Shinn:
I think that the most compelling thing about those days was the cohesion. You had a clear sense of “your” class; you knew who was in it, its relative size, and the year of graduation. I think that was the most distinctive thing; the earlier classes had a sense of cohesion that the later ones do not. As we evolved, the sense of “class” disappeared.
Don Driscoll:
Also, many of us had been born in the Depression, and, although most of us came from families that had jobs, we still carried the memory of deprivation, and it did not leave you.

Mary Davey:
Because of their financial situation during the Depression many students regarded this College as the only one that they could go to. It was not exactly the place of last resort, but it was pretty close. It was a really good school, and they were glad to have it. They were not ashamed of it in any way. At the old campus I do not think we were trying to expand the student body so much as we were just accepting the graduates coming out of the high schools. Those who wanted to become teachers came to us. They knew, however, that there was something else out there, so when other opportunities opened up, some were happy to be able to move on to other fields.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
Among the changes I saw after the move was the gradual buildup of diversity. Bill Gaige prided himself on that. He made quite an issue when we hired the first Mormon, Dr. Rice, who later went on to become a college president. Of course, as time moved on, we began to have a more diverse student body.

Mary Davey:
I couldn’t tell you when I became aware that the student body was beginning to change. It was a very gradual change. The College began to expand its mission somewhat even before moving to the Mount Pleasant campus. It was all part of the times. I think that as we began to go out recruiting we brought the College to the attention of a greater variety of students, and that helped bring in other students.

Of course on the new campus, when the curriculum was expanded to take in people who had no intention of becoming teachers, we had to go out and make that clear to the public. We tried more aggressively to get other people, those who would not normally think about attending this College. As we reached out for students, we tried to get rid of the idea that only future teachers could come here. When we finally managed to convey that concept, we began to get a much more diversified student body. We related success stories that were not teacher-oriented and tried
to point out the variety of opportunities available. High school seniors were looking for opportunities, and that caught their interest. We hired a recent graduate and sent her out into the schools to spread the word. She was very impressive and did a great job of recruiting.

**Dorothy Pieniadz:**
When I arrived in 1956 I was told that the two state institutions were under criticism. URI was too Protestant, and RICE was too Catholic. We had to do something about this. Until the early 1960s when ecumenism came in and there were some changes, 70 percent of our student body had never had any experience with public education whatsoever. They were all graduates from the parochial system. Seventy percent!

**Marianne Needham:**
I came from a Catholic school that did not even have a gym, so I was hopeless in physical education classes at the College. Does anyone remember those little bloomer things we had to wear?

**Dorothy Pieniadz:**
Even before I came to the College, I welcomed diversity. I grew up in a very diverse family and neighborhood. When I moved up on Chalkstone, I told the landlord first of all, “Before you give me the final say so, I want you to know that I will have people of all kinds and colors coming in. I want you to know this so that neither you nor I have a problem.” I wanted things to be clear because I knew that there were some problems.

**John Nazarian:**
Quite honestly, there were not too many minorities at the old campus.

**Don Driscoll:**
There were a couple of African American male students when I first started in 1950.

**Walter Crocker:**
There were less than ten minority students from 1955 to ’59. I believe all of them graduated and taught public school.

**John Nazarian:**
In 1956 when we were still downtown, Robert Amos, psychology professor and chair of the department, came on board.
Dorothy Pieniadz:
I was not in Rhode Island then, but my future husband was. He worked at the Journal. He told me that Bob Amos absolutely would not have gotten a place to live had not a Journal employee helped him to find a place where he would be welcomed as a tenant. That man was an alumnus of one of the schools that Bob had gone to. He, also, was an African American. He took him over to the home of an Armenian family who lived on the East Side, off of North Main. That was the “breaking point” in those days, and “unusual” people could live there. A few years later when we had the next black person, who came to teach English in the summer school, we absolutely had to have him live in the dorms because there was no other place.

Larrie Lindquist:
With the new campus, there were increased possibilities in the course offerings. And one of the increased possibilities was for students with disabilities. That was not foremost at the beginning of the move, but the new buildings did lend themselves to this kind of adaptation. For instance, the elevator in our building made it possible for people in wheelchairs to travel from one floor to the other without any problem.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
During the first years I was here, there was a student in a wheelchair who had a problem in her student teaching. This was someone whose husband had died tragically early so she had to go back to school. A survivor of cancer, she had had a leg amputated. Now she was asking whether it was possible for her teaching placement to be somewhere where there would not be too many stairs. Mary Thorp and I had a big conference about this. I pointed out that this woman had already had to demonstrate to the College that not only could she manage herself but she could manage a classroom. She had had some experience already in high school. When
Mary Thorp said there was something about the building, I asked her whether the real issue was that the children in Henry Barnard had never seen somebody in a wheel chair enter that building. I said, “If you turn it around, it could be the best thing in the world for those children because, who knows, we do not know their backgrounds, they may know someone who is disabled and it would be wonderful for them to see a disabled person doing these things.” We had to convene a huge committee to talk about this!

**Larrie Lindquist:**
I had one blind student who asked to come into my course, Introduction to Anthropology, and I was concerned because I wanted to make sure that he would meet all the requirements for the course. He agreed to this condition, even though there were many audiovisuals. We arranged to have some of the sighted students sit with him during presentations and tell him what was going on. Things worked out well, and what made it so great was the fact that there was no shortage of regular sighted students who were willing to take on this responsibility. Since then I have had classes where there were two or even three blind students, one of them with a lead dog, and one girl with quite severe physical disabilities who sat in a special wheelchair and had an aide with her to explain things, to adjust her chair, and even to take her to the washroom. On their evaluation sheets at the end of the year, many students said that it had been a terrific experience to have blind and disabled students in the classroom. That had never happened before.

**Dorothy Pieniadz:**
We used to have a very rigid curriculum. All students had to take physical education, and during this class everyone had to wear certain shorts. One incident was a great embarrassment to me. A young woman showed up in slacks, and, in front of the whole class, the physical education professor chewed her out and demanded to know where her proper uniform was. At that point this poor thing explained that she had not wanted everyone to see her prosthesis! This is how rigid we were.

Several older people also had a problem with the physical education requirement. In one case, a forty-seven-year-old mother of nine children had decided to come back to school. This woman had a trick knee and something else that precluded her running around a gymnasium and chasing a basketball. Who could organize a family of nine children and a
husband, get to school, and then come and take this physical education? A retired naval man of about the same age, also with a family, said that he could not afford to get out on that basketball court and throw his back out of place! Well, he had served his country, but now he had this disability.

_**Don Driscoll:**_
We always had a couple of guys and gals around who were older.

_**Larrie Lindquist:**_
When we got to the new campus, there were also some state certification regulations that had changed. Teachers needed to have more than a Normal School certificate. They were required to have a proper degree from a school of education. Eventually teachers would need a degree from an accredited institution that provided a liberal arts education as well. Many who were already teaching would then come to the College to fulfill their requirements.

_**Dorothy Pieniadz:**_
Pregnancy was another unanticipated issue. I can remember this lovely girl coming to me. She did not know what to do. She was a senior and pregnant. Of course, she had a raincoat on. All of a sudden, it seemed, we had quite a few girls walking around in raincoats. I told her, “You are married, and pregnancy is a normal part of life; some aren’t that fortunate, some are. What the College will require is permission from your medical doctor because we are not equipped to take care of you in the event that something happens.” Shortly after that, in fact, one of those students graduated, and within hours delivered her baby. She left Commencement and had her child! Once we were on this campus the issue of multiple buildings, separated by walks that could become icy in winter, became an area of concern. If a pregnant woman slipped and fell we would have a problem. Among the people who did not like these pregnant women were some of my dear men friends, professors, who made it clear that they would be the first ones out the door if, while in class, any of these pregnant students went into labor. To me it was always a matter of getting a doctor’s approval because our concern was whether or not we could deal with a given medical situation. I would always ask about things like diabetes and epilepsy and so forth because I wanted to make sure that we always knew the circumstances and could deal with the possibilities. They
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were our students, and we needed to know who they were and what was going on in their lives.

Larrie Lindquist:
According to my recollection, people got along very, very well on the RICE campus.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
Yet, when I arrived, I think that for some people the very fact that I was not from the area was enough to make them fearful. I had a horrible name to pronounce, and it was not Irish or French. One person with a Slavic name like mine came to me and told me how happy she and others felt when they saw my name associated with the College. “Now we feel that we can send our kids there,” she said, “because someone is at the College who will understand them.” It kind of hit me. Today, when some kids will speak up because there is somebody who is non-white or has a Latino background, this is still important.
Chapter 12

Physical Education and the Performing Arts

Marianne Needham:
Do you remember physical education? We all had to take it.

Billie Burrill:
With our old teacher education program, physical education was part of the mandated curriculum needed to get a teaching certificate. I think that for all students it was a two year requirement. When I arrived in the summer of 1954 there was not much of a physical education program. We did not have a facility, we did not have the equipment, we did not have the staff, and we did not have the money. I think our budget was something like $295. Our gymnasium was very small. It had a regulation basketball court. There was a men’s basketball team and a soccer team, but I do not know where they practiced. We did not have an outdoor recreation area, either. We had a parking lot and sometimes we would impose upon people to park their cars away from the place so we could establish a softball diamond. They played badminton, and I am not quite sure what else. Little by little I introduced new activities. For instance, I started golf, but the students had to bring their own equipment. Although we really couldn’t do much on the downtown campus we did have one student who eventually got to the Olympics. I think her activity was shot put. She had to go to Providence College to get coaching and adequate facilities. When we got up to the new campus we did not have all these facility problems, not for a couple of years anyway.

At that time, young women wanted to be feminine. When we came up with the name Women’s Athletic Association for our sports group, they
had a problem with that, so we renamed it the Women’s Recreational Association. There was also an unfortunate incident when we had a faculty member whom they wanted as a speaker at an annual banquet who started his speech with some phrase that related to the word “Amazons.” I could just feel them shut him out completely. That was the emotional sense at that time. I suppose that is why I had such success with dance instead of baseball. While still at the downtown campus, we started offering both folk and modern dance as part of the Women’s Recreational Association. Modern dance, then, was a club, not a company. Carolyn Zoglio was the first president, and Marianne Maynard was in the group. First, of course, I had to get permission from Dr. Mary Lee for the girls to wear leotards in class. She would turn over in her grave if she saw the exposed navels now on campus. One of my classes took place downstairs in the faculty lunchroom and we had to wait until after they had eaten and the tables had been cleared. We were teaching dance on a cement floor. Needless to say, that was a very restrictive environment.

*Marianne Needham:*
When Billie came, she gave us choices, and I did anything to avoid anything sporty, so I took folk dance. You could choose four different segments.

*Billie Burrill:*
We would have four seasons of activities, spring, fall, winter I, and winter II. Students would register, get their programs, and make their choices. We would get a copy of their program and explain what the choices were all about. Then the faculty would spread all these cards out and try to give everybody their first choice. Each student would have three choices. Some classes were limited because of things they required such as equipment, size, or space. Then we would make the assignments. This was all done by hand because there were no computers then, and it used to take hours for four or five of us to get it all done. I do not remember when the requirement was dropped, but we always had a lot of people in our physical education classes. Of course, when the more exotic sports like golf and fencing came along, they were very popular because they were kind of different. Unlike softball and basketball, they were individual not team sports.

*Pat Maciel:*
When I was a sophomore I chose fencing as an elective. It just sounded very interesting.
Marianne Needham:
Well, it was something that you didn’t get at St. Raymond’s! It was wonderful exercise, and it was discipline, very definite discipline. It was good, too, for your posture. Billie was the instructor, and she was great. I never had so much fun in my entire life, and I was really good. On the other hand, I have never been terribly interested in golf because it moves far too slowly for me.

Billie Burrill:
Right from the start, despite obstacles, the modern dance class was very popular. When I offered the course for the second year, two men signed up. Most of the student body became so curious that they began to use the rather large windows on the double doors at the entrance to the gymnasium as a peep show. I finally had to paint them. Prior to coming to RICE I had taught at Connecticut College, a pioneer of modern dance in connection with the college experience. Marianne Maynard became the first student from RICE to receive a scholarship for the American Dance Festival School of Dance at Connecticut College.

Marianne Needham:
Well, it was amazing. This festival of modern dance was the dance place in the summer. Martha Graham taught there, and Doris Humphrey. They were all there. I hadn’t known anything about it, but Billie knew. She got me $100 from student government and Connecticut College had a matching thing so they gave me $100, and then I had to come up with $220 of my own. I convinced my parents to cash in my life insurance policy because I was not planning to die anytime soon. I think it was worth about $300. Then, off I went, and Billie went as well. It was at that time that she and I both took a course in stagecraft. They held a lottery for which the prize was the opportunity to work on stagecraft with Tom Skelton, the big lighting guy, and Billie won. That is how she started working with him, and lighting became her forte.

Billie Burrill:
For seven years I had been production stage manager for the American Dance Festival at Connecticut College, so I knew all the dance companies. When the National Endowment for the Arts was formed, it began to give grants to colleges which would bring in dance companies. The NEA stipulated that the colleges would have to engage two companies per year,
and then, in response, it would award grants that included workshops in addition to the dance performance. I remember that when the Paul Winter Consort came, the cello player went over to the dance studio and accompanied the dance class. When Bella Lewitzky was on campus, she went downtown to a senior residence and gave a lecture on modern dance. We had workshops on makeup and costume design and so forth. So, you see, I had knowledge of what dance companies do.

Angelo Rosati designed the costumes and sets for our productions. He also helped make some of the costumes and paint some of the sets. I remember Angelo coming over to the rehearsal and sitting there. Sometimes rehearsals wouldn’t be over until 11:00 p.m., but he was interested in not only what program was being done, but also my lighting and how I arrived at what I did. Bob Currier helped with any musical problems that we had.

When Fannie H. Melcer came in 1960 she came on as a tenured full professor. Dr. Gaige appointed her head of physical education, recreation, and men’s athletics. She was the first and only woman in the country with this title.

Marianne Needham:
Fannie Melcer took over the dance program, but I would not have been in it except for Billie. Billie’s physical education program included a little bit of dance, and we had a modern dance club. It grew from there. Then Fannie came and did more with it. It really got to be quite good. Now there is a major.

Billie Burrill:
We had a lot of men in the dance company. At one time, we had more men than women. Fannie had a way of getting them in the door and not letting them out. One day a track star named Rick Mancuso was walking by the gymnasium while Fannie was there, and she called to him, “I have a problem in here. Will you come in and help me?” He said, “Yes, okay.” “Will you lift this woman?” asked Fannie. “Now can you lift her and do this and that?” He said, “Well sure.” So that started it. Then the dance company went on a local tour, and at one of the junior high schools there was somebody who waited at the exit and asked for his autograph. So he was hooked! We had a lot of good male dancers.

Actually, we had an extraordinarily good dance company. There were three dance companies in the U.S. One was Ohio State, one was UCLA
and one was RICE. We were invited to national conventions to give lecture demonstrations. Fannie was one of the first ones to bring professionals from New York companies up here. Our students had exposure to some of the best and most prominent teachers of dance.

Dorothy Pieniadz:
Students with specialized backgrounds from the New York area began to come here for the modern dance program. We were able to give scholarships to some of the excellent students whose parents either would not or could not pay in order to give them an opportunity to come to the College. Once we began to develop our music, art, and theater programs I got the student government to give their approval for Fannie Melcer to charge admission for performances. Gradually the performing arts program began to grow.

Billie Burrill:
The performing arts series started at the old campus when we brought a group of dancers from Bennington, Vermont. We did not have much money and our only stage was the one at Henry Barnard School. The students were so enthusiastic about this and they knew what our budget
was, so they volunteered to house performers. So the dancers went out to the homes of various families, and that made it more affordable.

**Dorothy Pieniadz:**
We brought in Carlos Montoya for one of our Assembly Tuesdays. Billy Burrill found out that he was between concerts in New York and Boston. We got him for $600. I said, “I do not know where I will get the $600 from, but I know that Bill Gaige has money. You meet Montoya.” This is where the Rosatis came in. I called Antoinette and said, “Get dinner ready. I will be right there to help you.” To this day I remember the shrimp and olives and rice that we fixed.

Providence is about halfway between New York and Boston, which gave us a terrific advantage. On the new campus we had a marvelous stage. It was ideal. I remember having the Preservation Hall Jazz Band here. They came from their performance in New York, played at the College, and then had an engagement the next day in Boston. That was the case for many of the performing arts shows. We had an exceptional program.

We followed this up with the students by telling them that they could develop something if they wanted this kind of programming and were willing to do away with afternoon Assembly. Overnight, we moved from that to setting up a committee; we went from a few hundred dollars to $10,000 for our first budget. The *Journal* declared that there was no other institution in the state that was doing what the College was doing for the performing arts. We were in our very early years, but already we were getting some big names. I remember when Odetta came and I met her at the airport in New York. We had all of these things.

**Billie Burrill:**
They have a showcase in New York, usually in December, where all of these companies are booked. I had a great advantage over many because I had money at hand and would not have to depend on the income generated by gate receipts. I went down there with money because the student government had budgeted me enough money to establish my fine arts program, plus we had the grants. We were favored by the companies because it was less complicated to deal with us than with somebody else who would try to negotiate a contract that required a guaranteed ticket sale or that a percentage of the gate had to go to the company.

That this was a non-union house also helped make it easier to negotiate contracts. This could also cause some difficulty. I got the Shakespeare
Rhode Island College: On the Move

Company from England to the College for Thanksgiving weekend. The manager came up to me and asked the whereabouts of our costume person, where was this, and where was that. I told her that we were non-union. She said that I must be mistaken. I said, “Read your contract.” The next thing I knew, she was in a telephone booth calling New York. Being non-union and having to do so much ourselves, our students learned more about what went on backstage than you would expect. They all knew the difference between a bull plug and a pin connector. We used to rent the equipment we needed from Capron in Newton, Massachusetts. One time, when a show finished down at Veterans Memorial Auditorium, Capron told us that all the equipment we wanted was there and that it would save us money and time if we just went down to Veterans, got it, and brought it to the campus. Of course, I went, but they wouldn’t let me in the back door because I was not in the union. I was not very popular with the local union. What more can I say?

We had a lot of freedom in the earlier days. I do not remember such a thing as a work order. If something did not work, we’d go and get the plumber or whoever was available to get the job done. As far as I was concerned, it was virgin territory. I could do almost anything I wanted. I was only restricted by my own capabilities.
Mary Davey:
The change in the status of the College is something about which I am really pleased. I am very happy to have had a hand in it. This has made a big difference not only in the public perception but also in the willingness of students to commit themselves to the College and to support its goals.

Ridgway Shinn:
I was very vocal in creating Council. Because I believed that faculty should be able to have in writing what was said about them and ought, as well, to have an opportunity to respond, I also cooked up the faculty evaluation forms that are still in use today.

Chet Smolski:
Overall, my experiences at the College have been good. I very much appreciated working with some very fine people, and I was always impressed with the students. Teaching is the greatest occupation because you are always with people who are eighteen years of age. We get old, but they are always eighteen, and they kind of make you think that you, too, are young. Today I see students who have a full-time job and three kids at home, and they are taking a full course load. These students are truly amazing, and I have the greatest respect for them.

Marianne Needham:
I remember Russ Meinhold, Billie Burrill, and all these people who made a difference.

Everett Maxwell:
The best thing that happened to me here was that I met my wife, which was very nice.
Joe Menard:
This College was the first chance at college for many families. I think it was one of the greatest things that ever came along.

Don Driscoll:
I am proud to be a member of this institution. The people of this state have a real value in the public education system, including this College. I think we have a tremendously strong institution. We had some great people in the 1950s and early 1960s who were willing to support the College. The College had nurtured them.

Larrie Lindquist:
At the downtown campus my first contract was for one year. I told Dr. Gaige I wanted to be free to leave after that year. “That’s all right; you can do that,” he agreed. When I was offered a contract for a second year, I gladly took it. I stayed on and on and had no regrets at all. Not a bit.

Joan Murphy Casement:
I have two sisters who went to Pembroke, so obviously I knew that there was not the same prestige, but I loved going to school during those days. My mother graduated from here before me, I think in 1927, and my daughter got her degree in 1984. So, you see, the College became a very important place in our lives and our family.

Joe Menard:
I don’t think I could have gotten a better education anywhere else. I always believed that you get out of something what you put into it. That was the same with this College then, and it is the same today.

Marianne Needham:
I came from a family of teachers and had a mother and an aunt who had come to the Normal School in 1926 and 1928. My sisters followed me here. I was glad that I came.

Joan Murphy Casement:
We felt very close to one another, and we had a wonderful time.

Ridgway Shinn:
I spent a third of my career at the College teaching full time, a third as an administrator, dean, and vice president; and another third on a reduced
teaching schedule. As I look back at them, my twenty-nine years were really quite wonderful. I helped to build the Department of History, and I helped to shape the institution.

*John Nazarian:*
People knew one another then. It was like a family. For me that relationship became a guiding principle.

Class Day procession, 1959.
Appendices
Eulogy to a Used Building

*A farewell address written by Kathleen Ball ’53 on the occasion of the symbolic departure of the alumni from the old campus on Alumni Day, May 24, 1958, and adapted here from the version printed, by popular request, in the May/June 1958 Issue of Alumni News.*

Through the years, this building has been the scene of many events – amusing, happy, and proud. Sixty years ago, this building stood new and shining. It boasted two wide iron stairways with marble treads and landings of easy ascent. Best of all, the new College was only a three minute walk from the railway station. Two curving walks once led through a small park with formal gardens. Linden trees bordered the grounds and climbing yellow roses greeted the malingering student on that last minute dash to class.

Until 1928 the practice school occupied the first floor. The Kindergarten Room which once echoed to the innocent chant of “We’re all in our places with bright shiny faces,” later became the scene of involved political chicanery at class meetings as well as those memorable formal teas. On certain occasions the room was transformed for the student dances into a Southern plantation or a Paris street scene. The cooking school on the passageway to the gymnasium also deserves mention, both delightful and tragic. The gymnasium had its share of wildly cheered sports events, rope climbing, and even story plays.

The second floor is notable for the stage which opened into both the library and assembly hall – a thoughtful arrangement which meant the stage itself had to straddle the corridor. This gave RICE the dubious distinction of having a corridor where one had to go up a flight of stairs and down a flight of stairs to get from one end to the other. The Assembly
Hall itself is remembered for song contests, Stunt Nights, chapel exercises, endless speakers, and examination time. Its entrances were guarded by two faithful sentries: Diana with her arrows ready and Apollo who managed to look dignified even with a freshman beanie perched on his noble brow. The library was the scene of the 9:29 scramble when books, carefully wrapped in the previous night’s Providence Journal, were surrendered. The students’ mail board was always a popular spot.

The third floor was distinctive in many ways. The Art Room swarmed with students trying to make an abstract giraffe look less like a duck. The Laboratories buzzed with swamis muttering incantations. The Music Room rocked with the efforts of terrified apprentices striving to teach classmates the immortal “Little Red Wagon.”

Each alumnus has his own particular associations with this building. We are about to see a new RICE building – a building, new and shining, awaiting the onslaught of thousands of students – as this one was sixty years ago. This building served us well. We were happy here. We loved it. One can not ask more of a building than this.
“I Saw the College Built”

The following is excerpted and compiled from e-mails and letters sent to the oral history committee by Elaine Bentley ’69. Ms. Bentley has been living in the Chicago area for the last thirty years. For the last twenty of those, she has worked in the education department at the Chicago Children’s Museum. She claims that she has never stopped playing!

I grew up on the grounds of Rhode Island College, on what is now the western soccer goal inside the track. Mine was one of six houses that spilled into the rather broad rectangle of land that had been chosen as the site of the new campus. We were simply in the way. My mother, Virginia Bentley DeRise, who worked thirty-five years for College Dining Services, was born in that house. She was probably the only person who worked at RIC to have been physically born on the campus. All six displaced homes still stand, peppered throughout the neighborhood at the ends of Homewood and Belcourt Avenues.

Elaine Bentley (second from right) with the Chalktones, (from left) Julie Boyajian, Marcia Weeden, Lydia Roche, Janet Gustafson, Ann Julick, Margaret Cookson, Bentley, and Margaret Lynch.
The state confiscated our property and gave us very little for it, not enough for any of the families to rebuild. We took what they gave us, bought back the houses at auction, purchased a lot, and then moved. Years later I found a slip of paper on which my Dad had recorded the transactions. According to his list, the state gave us $13,000 and allowed us to buy the house back for $500. Wreckers bid, too, because someone would have had to demolish it, but the state allowed us to out-bid the wreckers. From the $12,500 left, the mortgage was paid. Of course, this was a nice perk for the future; we now owned the house, free and clear. That left us with $7,828 to accomplish all the rest, and we did.

For my parents it was a real mess, but for me, a nine-year-old, it seemed a rollicking adventure. Since it would have been just too enormously expensive, we couldn’t insure the house during the move. (Insurance companies tend to frown on houses that have gone gallivanting off their foundations.) To protect it we had to live in the house all the while it was being moved. The threshold and landing to the cellar stairs came with the house. During the entire trip Cindy, our sixteen-year-old cat, stuck like glue to that landing. The move really took a toll on Dad, a very handy guy, who tried to recoup what we had had. He built stairs, poured concrete, planted trees, and wore himself out.

A bond issue for the new campus had passed in 1954. To my family, at first, it probably meant nothing more than a check mark on a ballot and a notice in the paper. We had no inkling of the impending impact. We had no idea, that is, until mysterious men started showing up in our yard. No kidding! I remember two guys in suits and ties who just walked into our yards and started measuring. They were followed by crews of surveyors. The state told us nothing about what was going on.

Then, in the cow pasture which also served as our kite flying area, there appeared a large, rusty, red tripod. I heard Dad say to Mom, “They set up their sounding equipment in Hennessey’s field. He didn’t know what they were doing, so ole man Hennessey marched over there and ran them off with his shotgun.” I don’t know whether that was an exaggeration, but the story seemed consistent with what we saw and felt. Shotgun or no shotgun, the neighbors were becoming angry. By late 1955 or early 1956 all six households were trying to figure out what to do. There was no fighting the state.
I saw the College built from the ground up. During the summer of 1957, my friends and I played together on the piles of dirt and partial buildings of the emerging campus. Every day we scoured the site for the pop bottles left by workers. The brown bottles fetched two cents each, and the green ones, a penny. Thus I was able to amass the staggering sum of about four dollars a week. One rather unique benefit of the College’s arrival was the fact that we now had paved roads on which to ride our bikes. That was fantastic! After about three o’clock the College builders left for the day and we could ride with little worry about traffic.

When the campus was finished, I remember thinking how bare it looked, as far as trees were concerned. I watched the young sycamore trees being planted in front of Roberts Hall and around the parking lots there, as well as the evergreens. They looked so small and spindly.

The building of the College certainly worked out nicely for both Mom and me. RIC became her livelihood and my alma mater. In 1960, long before Donovan was built, Mom rented out two rooms to Mrs. Edith Lewis who had come to head food services at the College. She needed a cashier for the snack bar, and Mom took the position. I was in the eighth grade at the time. Through the job, Mom came to know everyone, professors and students. She enjoyed working there so much that she stayed until she was seventy-two. During all that time she walked back and forth to work, part of the reason, I feel, she enjoyed such good health for so long. We attended many of the plays and performances on campus.

My choice to attend RIC in 1965 certainly had a great deal to do with our proximity, as well as our financial situation. I could roll out of bed for an 8 o’clock class at about 7:50 and still make it with two minutes to spare. The College was affordable. My parents had spent more per year to send me to Classical High than they did for all of my college courses, tuition, and books.

I had four full years right next door at RIC. I sang in the Chalktones with Miss Bicho and in the choir with Mr. Kent; I took fencing with Miss Burrill and Miss Champion. I took part in Vietnam War protests in front of the library and attended great performances by Martha Graham, Buffy Sainte-Marie, the Paul Taylor Dance Company, and Theodore Bikel. I was left with lots of memories and a solid education.

So, when all is said and done, the advent of Rhode Island College and the opportunities it brought certainly compensated for the inconveniences of 1956.
Recollections of Peach Woods

Louis A. Marciano earned his master’s degree from Rhode Island College in 1960. His career in education spanned thirty-two years as a science teacher, coach, and administrator. He also served as chief of health promotion for the state. A trustee for thirty-six years, he, with his wife Gloria, established a scholarship fund within the Rhode Island College Foundation. Their daughters are graduates of the College.

Peach Woods is the area behind what is now Mount Pleasant High School. Bordered on one side by Triggs golf course, these very dense woods extended from Mount Pleasant Avenue all the way to Fruit Hill Avenue. The adjacent property was owned by the Fruit Hill dairy farm, and my cousin Stella Marciano was married to the owner, Frank Hennessey. During the past few years the RIC Foundation has purchased the last remaining parcels of that farm.

During the mid 1930s I was a Boy Scout and one of my first camping experiences was in Peach Woods. For many years children played in Peach Woods, especially those who lived at the Children’s Center which also abutted the woods. When the high school opened its doors to students

Lou Marciano with wife, Gloria, and daughters Joanne Crossman ’80, M ’84, C.A.G.S. ’96, and Deborah Marciano ’76, M ’88.
in the fall of 1938, many of the students were transfers from Central and Hope high schools. The president elected for the senior class that year was Don Taylor, a student who lived at the Children’s Center. He was the fullback on the first Mount Pleasant football team. He was also the only African American in the class.

Until 1940, there were no athletic fields on the high school campus. Merino Park served as the original football practice field. In 1941 coach Charles McCormick decided that the field behind Peach Woods would be a better venue, so every day he had the players go under and along the current fence to the area where Thorp Hall now stands. The players would then turn left and walk through the woods to the field which is now in front of Pleasant View Elementary School.

As an adjunct to this story I recall many visits to the home of Frank and Lillian Spinelli and their five children who lived in a section of what is now called the Forman building. For many years Frank was the superintendent of the Children’s Center. On the day that the original gates of the center were reopened on Mount Pleasant Avenue many of the former residents, including Don Taylor, were on site.
Dorothy Pieniadz, the First Dean of Students

I was brought in just after the re-accreditation of the College, and among the items on the agenda for the institution was the development of a student personnel program. It was hard work to develop just what the dean of students does and what a student personnel program ultimately would evolve into. Every step of the way there were challenges to be met because new concepts were not always acceptable. When I began to speak about counseling, for example, and mentioned that we should have at least a referral service for psychological and psychiatric consultation, I was just blown away by those who said that that would only make people think that we had sick people here.

Many of the students and even some in the general community said they did not want to come here because it was just like a high school. We had to get people acquainted with the idea that this was no longer a five-days-a-week, eight-to-four school. We had to break long established patterns. Among those units we dealt with was the library because no one there wanted to work beyond those hours. So finally, the first year on the new campus, Bill Gaige said that if in one month there were ten students in the library at 4:00 p.m. then we would change our policies and stay open later. We had to move gradually, adding hours before adding the weekends.

We set up a number of events for the entire campus and during one of them, student performances of some kind, Roberts Hall was jammed. Well, I got drowned out by Bill Gaige who said, “If the Fire Department came in here today they would close down our campus.” He was right, yes, but I was so excited to see so many students being excited. I waited a
moment and then I said, “You know, Bill, I would have loved it if you had said ‘Gee isn’t this wonderful, Dorothy, just look at all these students. I realize that we will have to do something, but no one even dreamed that we would have every seat filled let alone have people standing.’”

At first we had no staff in my office. In 1960 the very first position opened. It was only half-time. I wanted to demonstrate that we needed more people. I chose Annette Ducey because she had the credentials, and I also knew she would never want to stay in the position for long, and, yet, we would not put her out into the world jobless because she also had the credentials to be a fine professor of English. My little committee monitored conditions on campus and checked whether they were properly maintained. We wouldn’t let people know when, but very regularly, we went around and inspected stair wells for dust (which we often found much of).

It was very much a learning process. During the first five years in the deanship I studied the freshman classes so that we could see who these students were. I was always hearing thus and thus, and I would say, “Well, you say so,” but really I felt that we needed objective data to find out where the students came from and what they’d been doing so that when the English professors and the history professors complained about them not doing terribly well we would know the reason. From this study we saw, for example, that *Life* and *Reader’s Digest* were the two most commonly read publications. How would we get these young people to go beyond these magazines? Ultimately we came up with a reading list composed by faculty and sent out to incoming freshmen. Then in the fall we had an orientation program that included follow-up discussions so that the students would begin to see how faculty questioned, how these kinds of things were done in college classes.

Down the road I introduced the fact that we had to begin to change our admissions policies and take some risks. That took a lot of battling. Some things are not obvious. We might not attract many of those students who scored highest on tests and so forth, but often those in the lower half will succeed. They are not the most brilliant, but they couldn’t even get to college if they did not work as hard as they did.

The students saw that I promoted experimental programs. Back in 1958 or 1959 I took a group of students to Poland. Seventy per cent of them were not Polish and most had never been away from home. But the price was right ($625), and you could get six credits plus a month’s experience in another country. I told them that if they just had $100–$150
in spending money then they would more than make it because of the money situation there. For almost ten years I led that summer program. Each year I managed to get a scholarship for one of our students. If you keep your networking going, a lot of things can happen.

I think that the key to success in student life is that you have to be available. This can be difficult. During my first few years I would meet with every freshman during the first semester. This took up three to four nights per week, and then, of course, I also would meet with student leaders. You wore yourself to a frazzle. I remember how I had to struggle with the Student Government to get them to develop a budget. Our students did not even know how to do a budget. They would take the student fee and subtract five cents for this and ten cents for that, so it took a long time. We would start right after school, work half the night, get a bite to eat, and then come back. I was coming and going, meeting with people at all kinds of hours.

This is what made me approach certain faculty, like Shirley Mulligan who had a good background in group dynamics, and ask for help. We began to run leadership programs off campus where for two to three days certain faculty who liked to do this sort of thing would meet with students. One year I even convinced the Student Government to send a group to the Bethel Group Dynamics Laboratory to learn about the group process.

I tried to let students see the benefit of doing things a certain way. I got money set aside so that they could go to national events and regional conferences where they could mingle with others and learn how they were doing things. The first time they went to a national conference, they got so depressed, but I said, “Now you know you have something to work for.” This is how the debate society and the modern dance group developed, and theater students began to participate in the regionals.

I will admit that I pushed the students. Maybe today you couldn’t do this. Each time I began something it opened a door. Today some of what we did sounds so antiquated and ordinary. But these were divisive issues in our time and we had to be ready to do something about them. When we moved to the new campus, this became very important for me to stress. Time and again I used to say to the president, “Let’s look at the rules in terms of their being a learning experience. We should be prepared to adjust.”
William C. Gaige was president of the College from 1952 to 1966. His term bridged the move from the old to the new campus. In 1983, on the occasion of the College's twenty-fifth anniversary on Mount Pleasant Avenue, What's News asked Dr. Gaige to respond to a series of questions about his presidency. What follows are excerpts from his comments.

My greatest challenge, and that for which I should most like to be remembered, was the transformation of the College from a teacher training institution to that of a general purpose state college, and the moving of the College to a new and adequate campus. Perhaps under these two major headings is the building of a well educated and excellent faculty and the developing of that faculty into one that took unto itself a rapidly increasing share of the governance of the College, particularly in academic matters.

I was fortunate to be president of the College during an exciting and dynamic period in American higher education. I presided over the moving of the College from its old, limited and outmoded campus in the center of Providence to the splendid new campus on Mount Pleasant Avenue. I located the land and helped to persuade the board, the governor, and the legislature to initiate the move and to put before the people the bond issues necessary to support it. I played a principal role in planning, not only the original campus, but also its transformation with its many additional buildings.

The history of American education reveals several periods of high tension between those working in the colleges and universities and schools and those reacting to the forces of change and growth. The time following the Second World War was one such period, particularly as it
encompassed Russia’s “Sputnik” accomplishments. The programs of the schools, particularly, and the colleges too, came under attack and reaction. There was a resurgence of support and growth. Institutions such as the National Science Foundation and the National Defense Education Acts were created to aid and finance institutions and individual students.

The surge in the number of students graduating from high schools and attending colleges took a rapid leap forward. Fortunately, it was a period of growth in the gross national product and rise in the standard of living. Mathematics and the sciences were dominant subject areas for criticism and change. Rhode Island College, like other teachers colleges, underwent a marked change in its nature and programs. The liberal arts underwent great expansion, and there was a considerable reduction in the so called methodology subjects. The curriculum underwent radical change, and the arts and sciences majors developed. The development of other professional programs was just beginning as I left the presidency.

Of course, many shared with me in this remarkable transformation of the College on its splendid new campus. I think the time of my tenure and the unique quality of Rhode Island made possible the development of near consensus in the planning and daily operation of the College. Those decisions must be construed to mean leadership which I shared with many. The developments were almost always largely the consensus of the governance of the state, including the board and the administration and faculty of the College.

I had the support of President Keeney of Brown. Even more importantly I had the wonderful help, cooperation and administrative skill of Dr. Charles Willard, whom I brought to the College. He was my right hand and my dear friend.

As far as I am able to judge, the College has grown and evolved much as I hoped it would. An examination of my annual reports shows them to be indicative of much that has happened. Some of the professional courses and programs were not envisioned, but the idea of a general state college developing programs to meet the needs of the state, with following master’s programs, is clearly stated. The organization and administration are virtually unchanged, though they have expanded and changed terminology as required. I had hoped that the College might develop a doctoral program in education. It seemed appropriate to me in view of the unique history of the College, and because the College’s resources in education were at least equal in quality to any others in Rhode Island and equal in quantity and extent to all others combined.
We were able to attract an excellent faculty in relation to other state colleges around us, some of which had greater financial resources, because we were not part of a bureaucracy, we had almost complete freedom to use the funds we had, and I was able to persuade our faculty to “hang onto the university’s coat tails” where salary schedule was concerned. My impression is that the present faculty has continued to be excellent and to improve.

Roberts Hall, named after Governor Dennis J. Roberts, was not so named simply as a political gesture or reward. Governor Roberts was, to a large extent, responsible for the decision to move the campus, and then he did everything possible to support the project. He never asked for anything in return. He played a real, early, and effective role in the development of the new campus.

The members of the Board of Trustees of State Colleges honored me with their choice, and while not originally favoring a new campus, did everything possible to support the move once the governor announced his support. They were an effective board, requiring full understanding, but unanimously supporting all of the policies and projects recommended.

Support for the College was remarkable at all levels. I have never talked with another college president who could say that his institution received from the board, governor, and legislature all that it requested for ten consecutive years. Rhode Island College achieved that remarkable accomplishment.
On the Move
Rhode Island College of Education Timeline

1952–1960

1952
William Clement Gaige named College’s third president by Board of Trustees of State Colleges. (September 10)

At his first meeting with the board, President Gaige requests improvements to the downtown campus, but also asks that the board consider constructing a new campus elsewhere in Providence. At this point, the board does not favor a new campus. (November 12)

1953
Formal inauguration of President Gaige. (March 19)

President Gaige again approaches the trustees to support construction of a new campus; this time, the board is somewhat more receptive. (April 8)

Professor Louis Wetmore of MIT, retained by Governor Roberts to study a potential new campus, reports “no insurmountable obstacles to the building of a new Rhode Island College of Education.” (July 14)

Governor Roberts issues statement favoring a new campus for RICE. Renovation work then underway on the downtown campus is halted. (September)

Joint accreditation visit by the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) and the New England Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. (November 4)

Replication of the downtown campus facilities in a new location estimated to cost up to $2.5 million, but President Gaige suggests a larger facility to accommodate growing enrollment and “new functions” at a cost approaching $3.5 million. (November 13)

Howe, Prout & Ekman designated by the state to develop plans for new campus. (November 18)

New England Association rejects College’s application for accreditation based primarily on the inadequate physical plant and campus. (December 4)
Governor Roberts announces support for a $3.5 million new campus for RICE; facility to be built on twenty-five acre parcel of state owned land in Mt. Pleasant section of Providence. (January)

President Gaige anticipates favorable accreditation report from AACTE. (February 19)

Initial architectural renderings of the new campus depict a sprawling double-quadrangled unistructure designed to accommodate 500 students. (February)

President Gaige and others make first visit to proposed site for the new campus. It is discovered that the massive footprint of the Prout-designed unistructure will not fit on the fourteen buildable acres adjacent to the Children's Center. (June)

Due to concerns about ledge at the proposed construction site, architects begin considering a multi-building campus. (October 8)

Following a spirited campaign, voters support $3.5 million bond issue for new campus with 73 percent in favor. (November 2)

New plans for a multi-building campus unveiled, but additional land acquisition and rising costs will require more funds than the amount already approved. (December)

Engineers discover considerable water under the surface of the proposed site for the new campus. (January 7)

State Highway Planning Department requires a new, dedicated campus entrance directly from Mt. Pleasant Avenue, rather than from Homewood Avenue as first envisioned. (February 4)

Eight acres transferred to Board of Trustees from the Department of Social Welfare. (March 15)

Dr. James P. Adams succeeds A. Livingston Kelley as chair of the Board of Trustees. (July 11)

Trustees request an additional $1.6 million bond referendum to be placed before voters in November 1956. (December 14)
State Board of Education unveils a proposal to locate the state’s planned educational television station on the new campus. (September 5)

Voters approve additional $1.6 million for the new campus, 76 percent voting in favor. (November 6)

E. Turgeon Construction Co. is the low bidder for the new campus at $3.2 million. (November)

Groundbreaking ceremony held for the new campus. Some fifty spectators gather at the former Hennessey Farm to see Dr. Adams, wielding a gold and white spade, turn the first shovel of earth “in the name of all the young people of the state who will be educated here….” (December 27)

Contractors find little ledge on site but many unexpected boulders; ultimately, cost for removal of boulders would amount to half of $200,000 contingency fund. (February 28)

A strike by unionized carpenters brings work at the Mt. Pleasant site to a near standstill for five weeks. (April 29)

Governor Roberts appoints eleven-member Commission to Study Higher Education 1959–1980. (May)

Interior work is hampered by lack of heat in buildings; boiler is first fired on January 24; it explodes two days later, further slowing construction. (January)

Thick mud at the construction site causes delays as trucks carrying heating and electrical components are unable to negotiate the saturated surface. (March 8)

On Alumni Day, President Gaige confirms plans for residence halls at the new campus. Also on this day, ivy is transplanted from the old campus to the new. (May 22)

Trustees announce names of new buildings: Roberts Hall (administration building), Alger Hall (classroom building), Whipple Hall (gymnasium), Craig-Lee Hall (classroom building), the Henry Barnard School (laboratory school), and the Student Center (library and student services). (May 23)

Buildings not fully completed, but certificate of occupancy allows move to new campus just two weeks before start of classes. (August 25)

First classes held: 800 students enrolled, including 260 freshmen; with 65 faculty. (September 8)

Formal dedication ceremony; U.S. commissioner of education is principal speaker. (October 26)

New England Association revisits the College in November and grants accreditation on the basis of its findings. RICE becomes fifteenth teachers college to gain accreditation by the association. (December 5)
The Commission to Study Higher Education reports: “That the Rhode Island College of Education develop as a general college continuing the preparation of teachers and also providing degree programs in the liberal arts and sciences for a broad range of students.” It also calls for renaming the institution “Rhode Island College” and recommends that the College plan for enrollments of 2,000 in 1965, 3,000 in 1970, and 4,000 in 1980, and further, that it should develop plans for on-campus housing for a limited number of students. (February 12)

Board announces lease of 16 Gardner Avenue, North Providence, to serve as official president’s residence until a suitable house could be built on campus. (March 17)

Governor DelSesto signs legislation implementing the recommendations of the Commission to Study Higher Education; changes to be effective July 1, 1960. (April 27)

Campus is landscaped with new trees and shrubs. (May)

At first Commencement on the new campus, Governor DelSesto presents a bronze replica of the Independent Man so that the College could continue to hold its academic convocations under the watchful gaze of the iconic state symbol. This gift would later be incorporated into the DelSesto Mace. (June 6)

Hollis P. Holbrook completes murals in lobby of Roberts Hall. The work features a flame symbolizing the energy of life. This would later be adopted as the central element in the new College seal. (August)

President Gaige throws in the first basketball at the inaugural intercollegiate sports event at Whipple Gym. (December 1)

Ground broken for the College’s first residence hall on a newly-acquired 2.13 acre parcel. (June 21)

Institution’s name officially becomes “Rhode Island College.” (July 1)
Rhode Island College: On the Move

has been published in a limited edition of 1,000 copies.

The book is set in Adobe Caslon, an updated digital version of the typeface designed by William Caslon and used widely in early American printing.

The book was designed by Paul J. Silva and printed by Meridian Printing, East Greenwich, Rhode Island.