



Ask the Archivist: Freshman Week, B. B. King

Questions and answers with Melissa Mead, the John M. and Barbara Keil University Archivist and Rochester Collections Librarian.



THAT SPELLS '68: In fall 1966, the women of the Class of 1968 hosted Frosh Camp for the freshmen of the Class of 1970 in the nearby Bristol Hills, where the juniors posed for a photo.

The picture of the freshman women (“girls” back in those days) getting on the bus brought back fond memories of my orientation in the fall of '64 (Class Notes, July-August). I remember we went to a camp (somewhere in the Finger Lakes I’ve always assumed), and I’ve always wondered what camp it was.—Ann Finger '68

A mere two days after arriving on campus, the women of the Class of 1968 left for the Bristol Hills and Letchworth Camp, run by the 4-H. There they learned University songs and traditions, hiked, and played games, and were back on the River Campus by 11 a.m. the next day for registration.

In 1966, the juniors of the Class of 1968 would host the freshmen of 1970 and pose for the photograph at the top of this page.

Freshman Week dates to 1918, according to a 1926 *Rochester Review*; the tradition of Frosh Camp began in 1924, when 29 freshman men, 11 upper-classmen, and one member of the faculty traveled to the YWCA's Camp Cory on Keuka Lake.

At the same time, women students were attending a three-day “house-party” at Camp Wacona at the Sea Breeze amusement park on Lake Ontario, hosted by members of the junior class. In 1926, one feature of the event was a re-enactment of the history of the University with one junior portraying President Anderson, while another took the role of Azariah Body's cow.

In 1938, the *Democrat and Chronicle* reported that Frosh Camps for the men were to be discontinued, in the belief that the camp experience was unnecessary in light of the facilities available at the River Campus, then eight years old.

Camp continued for the women students, even after the colleges for men and women merged in 1955. The location changed for the women through the years, and included the Rotary's Sunshine Camp and the YWCA's Camp Onanda at Canandaigua Lake. Class of 1954 alumna Carol Cronk Stoesen wrote in her scrapbook, “Frosh Camp was really loads of fun. Really a terrific way to meet the kids who will become one's life-long friends.”

There was a brief return to Camp Cory for the

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men in 1961 and 1962; 1967 saw the last outing to Frosh Camp for women students. A *Campus-Times* editorial reflected on the sobering events of 1968: “The simple, naïve ‘Hi Frosh’ is a meaningless welcome for the Class of 1972. Rather let us raise our hands in the sign of peace and welcome you to the frontier of the concerned.” The activities of the “week” were shortened to four days and the speakers included journalist Russell Baker and, for the convocation address, psychologist Bruno Bettelheim.

While the orientation activities of 2014 have different names, they have the same purpose as those on the schedule for Freshman Week in 1964: convocation, registration, faculty advisor meetings, a bonfire, theater presentations, traditions new and old, and plenty of chances to bond with new classmates. Even Frosh Camp has a modern-day counterpart in FOOT (Freshman Orientation Outing Treks), now celebrating its 10th year.

I remember B. B. King played on campus: can you tell me who opened for him?—Elizabeth Chifari '73

B. B. King was part of the Freshman Week events in 1970. His music was a far cry from the fireside songs of Frosh Camp.

In the *Campus-Times* of September 19, 1970, reviewer Michael Stephens reported that the opening act was Ferguson, Davis, and Jones, and that the playlist was “strictly *Top of the Pops* type numbers with an especially bad rendition of ‘By the Time I Get to Phoenix.’”

By contrast, King, with back-up by Sonny Freeman and the Unusuals, did not disappoint, although the heat in the Palestra caused them to take a break: “... the crowd was still stomping and shaking the floor when the house lights were turned on . . . it was without a doubt the finest major show at the UR in at least two years.”

Tickets for the concert, attended by an estimated crowd of 3,500, were \$3 for upperclassmen, and freshmen got in free with their Frosh Week buttons.

As part of their orientation activities, the Class of 1974 would also hear a debate between William Buckley, editor of the *National Review*, and William Kunstler, the attorney for the Chicago Seven; and a convocation speech by historian Daniel Boorstin, at the time serving as the director of the National Museum of Science and Technology at the Smithsonian Institu-



tion and later Librarian of Congress.

The Palestra and its audiences have welcomed many performers, including Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, the Goo-Goo Dolls, Peter Frampton, the Violent Femmes, They Might Be Giants, and the Grateful Dead. The Kinks played the

Palestra as part of Dandelion Day in 1990, after appearing at several Rochester venues between 1978 and 1985.

FRESHMAN FESTIVITIES: As part of Freshman Week activities in 1970, *National Review* editor William Buckley (above) took part in a debate with attorney William

Kunstler, and blues great B. B. King played the Palestra for a concert that drew an estimated 3,500 people, including freshmen who got in free with their Frosh Week 1970 buttons.



Remembering a Library Patron

Barbara Keil, a longtime supporter of the University's libraries whose contributions were recognized with the naming of the University archivist position, died this summer. She was 93.

Established in 2002 in honor of the generosity of Barbara and her husband, Jack Keil '44, a life trustee of the University, the position was first held by Nancy Martin '65, '94 (MA).

“It is my honor to be the second John M. and Barbara Keil University Archivist and Rochester Collections Librarian,” says Melissa Mead, who was appointed to the position in 2012. “I remember their generosity every day.”