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1942: LIGHTS AND DARKS

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THERE WERE PROTESTS AT BERKELEY before the '60s! I was a sophomore at Cal in 1939, a new transfer from a small town and a smaller college. That fall, the *Daily Cal* advertised a march protesting the illegality of abortions, along the main streets, Shattuck and University, and I happily joined the throng. It was a matter of conscience with me and still is; a goodly crowd stood cheering in mutual approval, and I don't remember any (or many) negative reactions.

The following year I lived in a small apartment with a classmate (female) on Haste Street east of Telegraph, on the third floor. A driveway separated our building from one just beyond us. It soon became apparent to the two of us, and our male and female guests, that we had to keep the window draperies drawn, that there was frequent and promiscuous sex going on in the apartment beyond the driveway, with little regard for their unshuttered windows. (Their Murphy bed was apparently in the down position permanently.) Equal unconcern was shown for the matter of nudity; an uncovered body, of either sex, was no apparent problem.

We could hear through the open window their doorbell ring during the balmy days of early fall, and one of the occupants would call to the caller to come in, or in some cases get up and go to open the door, bare as a baby. It ceased to be embarrassing to us, but still annoying as we didn't enjoy the daytime darkness with our shades drawn, or worse, the lighted show by night.

One day when we were studying with friends, male in this case, a strong wind was blowing outside. We had become aware of the whirring of a machine from time to time, with no clue as to its origin. Suddenly, voices called out in aggravation, and we looked out the window; a large pile of papers had blown out the open window and were scattered along the driveway beneath both apartments. My boy chum, later my husband, dashed down the stairs to recover a handful of the scattered papers, possibly faster than our "neighbors" because he was already dressed! His return enlightened us all: the papers were mimeographed copies of some sort of propaganda, or meeting announcement, or whatever, of Young Communists — not then considered a great national security threat! The whirring noise was identified as a mimeograph machine, and the reason for the "free love" exercises explained.



Graduation morning in front of apartment on Haste, 1942. *Courtesy of author.*

The group of faces became more and more recognizable to my friends and me. At a play at Wheeler Aud[itorium] (the only theater UC Berkeley had at the time), sometime later in that same school year, I chanced to sit next to one of the women from the now-familiar

apartment across the way. As I took my seat, she evidently recognized me as well, and deliberately crossed her arms to display to me a new and shiny wedding ring on her left hand. So much for freedom from convention!

My fiancé and I had decided to be married before he volunteered for service in the military. We chose to have a large church wedding. My mother asked a wedding consultant at Bullocks in Los Angeles how long a big wedding should take to put together. When the woman answered, "twelve weeks," my mother said, "Fine; we will cut that in half." We exchanged postcards daily—we wouldn't think of using the long distance telephone; it was, after all, the Depression—regarding the requirements to pull this off in six weeks. I was in my senior year of school; my fiancé had graduated the year before and was working while awaiting his induction orders. Mom finally decided I had to have a few days off from school or risk total exhaustion, so she encouraged me to petition for a week's leave from the dean, to go south to prepare for the festivities. (We had gone down on a previous weekend for our license and our meeting with the minister.)

Dean [Lucy Ward] Stebbins, the dean of women, circulated a notice to all my professors to encourage them to grant me advance homework assignments, and to prepare them for my change of name. She had told me I was not permitted to graduate with my maiden name if I were married.

When I returned to class after the wedding I was warmly greeted by every teacher, alerting the entire class, and even kissed on both cheeks by Winfield Scott Wellington, a favorite professor. Imagine my surprise when, a few days later, an inspector from the dean's office, complete with official identification, appeared at my door, demanding to see my certificate of marriage! Lest I be living in sin! This was October 1941, at the University of California, Berkeley! And the dean claimed I was the only married coed — at least, known to her.

That same dean of women had introduced to the Berkeley campus an organization for women that had begun at UCLA, known as Phrateres. It became one of the shining lights of my college career. It was a national women's service organization, open to all women, "org" and "non-org," but in the opinion of many of its members the most helpful service was to its own membership. Not only did we meet many other compatible women, but it sponsored wonderful parties and dances. To teach the uninitiated many of the finer social graces, it was customary to have an annual tea, including hats and white gloves, held in the student union, and honored with the presence of the wife of the university president, Mrs. Robert Gordon Sproul. The fact that a married coed was counted among Phrateres's membership was startling enough to encourage the powers that were to ask me to help Mrs. Sproul at the tea table. It was a surprise to read in the *Daily Cal* and the *Berkeley Gazette* that "... Mrs. R. G. Sproul and Mrs. Philip L. Evans poured at tea"! Since I was the only acknowledged married coed at that time, I even had professors dropping by to see "... how you are doing." I could cook, and I did work part-time at I. Magnin, so I wasn't idle.

The first final of our senior fall semester was scheduled for Monday, the eighth of December, 1941. You know what happened, and was reported on the local news programs, that Sunday morning. War or not, I had a final (or two) the next day, and as my husband and a houseful of young men sat glued to the radio, I left to be at the library when it opened at 1:00 p.m. I will never forget the look of the haggard young men who joined me on the library steps that afternoon, each, without exaggeration, with a full growth of beard! I have never been able to research the phenomenon; did they grow an unusual crop of whiskers over night, due to the unexpected trauma, or were they in such shock that they simply didn't have time, or energy, to shave? It was five-o'clock shadow on every chin, before 1:00 p.m.

We had a most understanding faculty after that fateful Sunday. I had one professor,

Dr.[Stephen] Pepper, who insisted that he would fail no one whose grade went down as a result of the final; the shock of expecting to go to war was enough of a blow. Another (a political science professor) offered to pass any woman whose young man had to go to war, if her grades slipped or were incomplete. And an eminent English professor, Dr. [Willard] Durham, announced before his final that, during the First World War, he had thought that teaching English was beneath the dignity of the university, as it was part of a “Nation at War” with much to be done — no concern for the finer arts. On this occasion he was in complete reversal; he had decided that the only way to keep culture alive and waiting in the wings, so to speak, was to keep on teaching to the last breath he had. He did, I am sure.

To end on a lighter note, I should tell you that though we were instantly “black-out” in Berkeley, several of my decorative arts major friends and I were not too inconvenienced by the darkness. Getting black-out curtains up in every apartment and residence took time, and the solution was to forbid the use of any electric light that could be seen from the outside of any building (or candle light, for that matter). We had a Murphy bed in a sizable closet in our connubial apartment. My friends simply came to my house; we let down the bed with all the doors closed, and studied on the bed in the closet. It was crowded but friendly, and no light exited that cell! I never made better grades.



Author and husband, Philip Evans, at Senior Prom at the Palace Hotel in San Francisco, 1942. Note wedding rings on both! *Courtesy of author.*



The Pelican Coed - 1903



The Pelican Coed - 1956

Pelican, November 1956.



Conga line. 1941 *Blue and Gold*.