

Woman in the Classroom? Ask Helen Walton

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about enrolling, the dean of the School of Horticulture, Dr. Fletcher, asked her, "Are you interested in a man?"

Apparently, a woman who had previously enrolled in a two-year ag program had listed the abun-

dance of men as her reason for entering the college. Dr. Fletcher wanted to make sure Helen was not pursuing similar interests.

But Helen had her mind on receiving that bachelor of science degree in horticulture. She

graduated after only three years thanks to some credits she had taken at what was then the Bloomsburg Normal School, now Bloomsburg State College, and the fact that she "always overscheduled." Penn State was on the semester system at that time.

This is not to imply that Helen did not partake of the social activities, which have always been in abundance at Penn State.

Like the number of women enrolled and the words of the alma mater, the social events and moral norms of the school have changed since Helen's college days.

"All the freshman girls had to wear green ribbons in their hair," Helen remembered.

That was by far not the only dress code.

"You didn't wear slacks," Helen explained, adding you could have been kicked out of school for that.

Not only couldn't you wear slacks, but Friday night was formal night in Mack Hall, Helen's dormitory. That meant you could not come to dinner, unless you were wearing a long dress



Looking through old yearbooks and picture albums brings back many memories of Helen's college days, the days she was helping to open doors for the generations of women who would follow her to Penn State's School of Agriculture.



on, explaining Agriculture. Pictured above, she was the only girl enrolled in 1926. 19-year ag courses in 1926. ate School of

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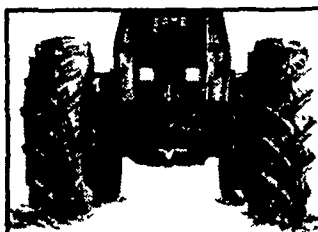
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Some of us just skipped supper that night," Helen laughed.

There were other differences. For instance, when 10 p.m. rolled around on weeknights, it was lights out. On weekends, the curfew was extended to midnight.

Although on many college campuses today men and women live in the same dorm, sometimes even in the same hall, this was not the case in the 1920s.

Men were allowed to be in the living rooms only of the women's dorms.

"You didn't dare take them to the rooms," Helen said.

If a man managed to venture into the hallway, an alarm was sounded. Someone would yell, "Man in the hall. Man in the hall," according to Helen.

Drinking was frowned upon, and students risked expulsion by lighting a cigarette. Marriage was also out of the question. Those who tied the knot found themselves crossed off the enrollment pads.

"It was a product of that day and age," Helen explained to a stunned listener. "When parents sent their children to college, they didn't expect them to get married; they expected them to get an education.

Fraternity parties, then, as now, were a big social event, although, at that time, they were always chaperoned.

"There were really wonderful dances," Helen remembered, explaining how she and her boyfriend, now her husband, would attend six or eight fraternity houses to dance.

"We danced to some pretty good bands in those days," Helen said.

One of those bands was Fred Waring's group.

Helen explained that the dating scene was a bit different then. She said there was not so much emphasis put on "going steady."

"The probability of boys to girls up there was such that there was never a weekend that you couldn't go out," Helen remembered. "You dated different people, and then you made your choice.

Helen made her choice and married Frank Walton in 1929, the same year she graduated.

Frank was in the florist business with his father and brother, and Helen was able to dig right in and put her degree to use. Frank had graduated from Penn State in 1927.

The florist business, E.B. Walton and Sons, located on 926 East, near Kennet Square, is still in the family.

Penn State has also seemed to stay in the family. Helen had a sister who was a doctor on the college staff. The Stephens dormitory is named for her. She also has a brother-in-law and a granddaughter who graduated from Penn State.

Her granddaughter recently received her degree in chemistry,

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