PC 1961: A Far Cry from Hollywood

by "Pappadopoulis" Golembeski

In Nineteen Sixty-One, does anyone remember what they were doing in sixty, much less in sixty-two? Does anyone really care?

National media talked the early Sixties as the Kennedy years, the beginning of the New Frontier. People were still people and not some form of bastardized transliterated American Students who were listening to rock music at the time but contrary to popular opinion, it was not the Bill Haley Rock lately come popular, but rather was exemplified by a singer named Cliff Richards. The Beatles were in Hamburg and still using Brylcream. Perhaps what happened in 1961 was the beginning of the Great Nude Awakening commonly referred to at Situationism.

For Providence College, this was making the presence felt at Madison Square Garden with such names as John Egan and Lenny Witten.

It was also the start of student involvement at PC. According to Dave Duffy, President of Dave Duffy Public Relations in Providence, PC "was great—it was intimate. There was a lot of spirit..."

He typified the class of '61 as "having a lot of imagination in doing the things that it did. Things such as a full-pass system, and the challenging of the Administration over disciplinary action and testing procedure were the logical beginnings of student activity that would culminate in the late sixties and otherwise".

Campus notables included John Egan who was selling Bibles and other items out of his Stephens 128 address, and Robert 'Skip' Chernov, a freshman, whose letter to the Editor that year was full of misspellings and other proofreading mistakes that left little doubt as to why he left the music business. A "very conservative" student, Mr. Egan was himself a liberal Kennedy Democrat but in actuality "voted conservative." Students who did criticize the Administration were branded as "Communists or at least Communist dupes" by professors at the College even though pointing out the opinion was probably right of center. "Censorship not only existed on the administration but also on the part of the Student Congress," Mr. Egan continued. "The Congress attempted to force the members of the student body to sign their editorials, but however, it was defeated. It appears that censorship probably existed in the early sixties. Socially, PC was totally different from what it is today. Aside from the obvious lack of women at the College, Bradley's Cafe was just opening and students had to get out of the habit of "sleeping-horsing" when attending the new Dialogue Mass on Sundays. Jazz was the prime musical idiom in colleges at the time (maybe you would have been better off then). Charlie and students were still trying to produce the concert that would be a financial success. WDOM became one of the first college radio stations to become affiliated with NBC Radio but unfortunately was closed down by the end of the year due to poor equipment and inadequate funds. (Sounds a bit familiar doesn't it?)"