

COLLEGE

In 2009 it will be 60 years since I graduated from City College. Over these six decades, I have bored countless friends and family expressing my debt to my college. As a student and as an alumnus, I have spoken with pride about the school, which we used to call the poor man's Harvard. We bragged about the many awards won by CCNY graduates, and how many went on to remarkable careers. I still believe I would not have had the life I had without "City." Thank you.

My four wonderful children had the good fortune to have had parents who encouraged them to go to the college of their choice. (The only stipulation that I made was that the school should be east of the Mississippi.) Carol chose Oberlin, Lewis--Wesleyan, Martha—Barnard, and David—Columbia. Their junior and senior years of high school were spent trying to figure out the "right" school, filling out applications, and waiting for the acceptances, rejections or wait-listings.

Fortunately (or unfortunately) I had none of that. Most of my friends in our senior year at Stuyvesant, automatically applied to, and were accepted by CCNY. A few went into the armed forces, but when they returned, they joined us at City. Stuyvesant had a fairly large middle class student body, and though about 20% of my graduating class chose City (according to our Yearbook) another 20% chose NYU, and 10% Columbia. A third expected to enter the military and the rest: MIT, Brooklyn Poly, Cornell, Syracuse, Michigan, Penn, Cooper Union etc.

Going on to City from Stuyvesant, wasn't much different from going on to Stuyvesant from Junior High School. In fact, from junior high to high school was a much greater transition. We no longer walked to school; we took public transportation. The classes at City that first year were an extension of my last year of high school: English, French, math, history. I found a part-time job. I had a part-time job during high school. I spent my free time with the same friends I had the year before. During our first Freshman Assembly, the Dean told us that college will have been a failure if we left college with the same friends we entered. I had no objection to making new friends, but I certainly didn't want to lose my old ones. The first week I did make a new friend because we found ourselves in three of the same classes. We were seated alphabetically, and in front of me sat Lennie Rubin, my new friend. But my buddies from JHS 52 and Stuyvesant continued to be my closest friends.

My undergraduate years at City were clearly the most formative, but other forces were at work. Entering college in the fall of 1945, America (and the world) had just come through World War II, the Holocaust and the slaughter of a third of the Jewish people. I had lost my cousin Gabie in the war, and knew that many of my relatives in Europe must have been murdered by Hitler as well. My mother anguished over the killings, and though she hated war, was totally committed to America's victory. Every one of my previous 12 years of school was shaped by depression and war. Now we were entering college at a time when there was no longer a depression, and no war.

I took the trolley each day from Longwood Avenue and Southern Blvd. to 145th Street and Convent Avenue (changing at 149th Street and Southern Blvd for the crosstown trolley) and walked down Convent Avenue to the gate at 138th Street marking the entrance to the Campus. When I walked through the gate and saw the stone Gothic buildings of City College, I was transformed. This wasn't a crumbling brick building on east 15th street