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Grasping for Acceptance

On September 29, 1972, Kathy Huntly wrote to the editors of the Davidsonian an outright remark, critiquing the sexist cartoon in a recent edition of the newspaper. Titled “Coed Dislikes Male Chauvinist Cartoon,” it marks a turning point in the voice women tried to hold at Davidson College. That exact year, earlier in the spring, women were finally allowed to enroll at Davidson College, either as transfer students or applying for their first time. While the administration had officially opened the doors to women, this letter to the editor reveals that female students had to actively fight for social legitimacy. The author’s sharp critique of the sexist cartoon demonstrates that 'voice' was not granted by the institution, but seized by the students who refused to be marginalized.

The cartoon in question resembles a feminine cat, appearing seductive while holding onto a hat with their tail. The caption reads “A Davidson Woman Needs No Introduction,” and it reflects a mixed attitude for the co-ed integration faced at Davidson College. While many did agree women deserved to learn the education many men desired, the students chose not to look past the sexuality of women; and instead caricature a minority seeking liberation. It reads as incredibly objectifying, with no regard for the attempts of the women at Davidson College. During this time period, men were still coming to terms with the idea of the opposite gender contributing to the household as much as they thought they could, so I assume the men struggled to escape the ideas implemented in their heads time and time again. With this context added, the

stance that the purpose of the crude cartoon was to maintain the status quo applied in history, and reinforce the 'traditional' male dominance through humor.

While only contained on the bottom left corner of page 5 of the newsletter, Huntly pointedly observes the poor example of 'male chauvinism' shown throughout many entries in the Davidsonian. A good point Huntly makes is the notion behind Davidson men, and the women on campus. The men are seen as intelligent and their appearance is often overlooked; the women are still sexualized. The fight to be included in the academic life at this campus has been perilous, but it seems the women in the late 70s still had to fight to be respected. The little paragraph exudes witty anger, displaying to me that she wants to feel included, feeling like a pariah in a place she was meant to fit into. As for the angry remarks, such as Huntly asking for respect, it shows that she is not willing to be submissive and conform to nasty remarks. Words like 'degrading' and 'blatant' shows an appeal for outrage, and in a sense chastises the men for being so close minded and immature.

A thing to note is that Kathy Huntly addresses her message to the editor in first person, especially including at the end that 'I, for one, would appreciate being treated as such.' It could highlight a disconnect among the women at this particular college, some more compliant to conform and silence their voice. Huntly has shown us that she is not one of them, and this remark ties into my thoughts of power the Davidson College women had.

My intended question deliberates about when women were exactly able to have a voice, not found willingly, among liberal arts colleges in the south. The archive of the newsletter shows dialogue, not a monologue. The presence of this letter in the newspaper proves that women were beginning to force the campus to listen to them, even if the culture, the cartoon, was still hostile.

This artifact reveals the era and its resistance to changing times. Specifically adhering to the sexist cartoon, and the publicity of a woman writing back to the editor, it shows a crack in the accessibility of women's role on campus. Further research could shed light on the subsequent issues of the newspaper to see if the cartoons changed. I would examine the author's name of each segment in the newspaper to note if there are suddenly any women writers, and how the voice the Davidson College women grasped was more in reach, and the evolution of it. When the voice was most prominent, the timespan, and more quantitative notes dictating the progression of their agency on campus.

Works Cited:

The Davidsonian. : (Davidson, N.C.) -current. *The Davidsonian*, 1972-09-29. Davidson College, 1972.