

Throwing Beer on One Another

By Nelson Hendler, June 20, 2020

Cannon Club in the 1960's was notorious for rowdy parties, which did not follow any rules of decorum. While other clubs on the street may have held parties where people arrived dressed in coat and tie and cocktail dresses, the standard dress for Cannon Club parties was a green T shirt, with CANNON emblazoned across the front, (The notorious Green T), jeans, and sockless loafers. There was a reason for such casual dress. As the members got more and more inebriated, they got more and more rowdy and physical.

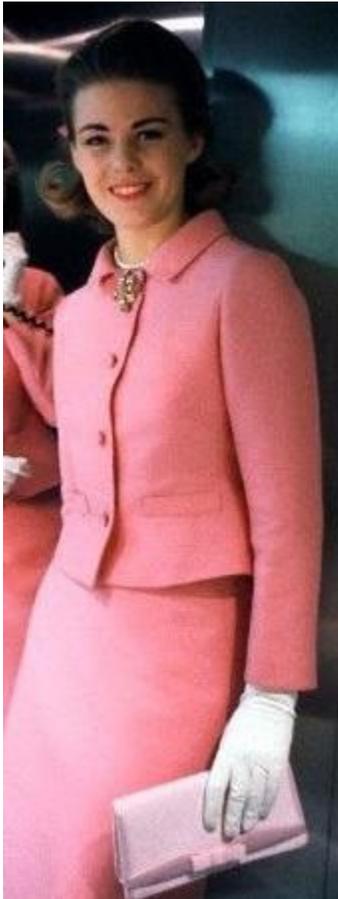
On occasion, the rowdy behavior extended beyond the boundaries of the club. But never did anyone deface property on campus. The closest anyone came to destruction of property was Rick Applequist, '67 who in an inebriated state, while returning from a road trip with a car full of buddies, urinated into the coin collecting device on the New Jersey Turnpike, immediately shorting out said device. Having survived potential electrocution, he was hit with a ticket for "destruction of government property." And I have a vague recollection, on a bet, of putting my head down and butting the first-floor bathroom door, cracking the top panel. My father refreshed my memory when he got a bill of \$167 to replace the panel. But these were aberrant behaviors. The parties were pretty routine.

The party area down-stairs was divided into two drinking areas... the Red Bar and the Green Bar. Occasionally, someone might accidentally bump into someone else, and spill beer on him. This "insult" was met with immediate retaliation in the form of the offending party being doused with beer. This progressed into the Cannon version of a food fight, with beer being liberally thrown on one another. Often, this spilled out into the hallway, both literally and figuratively. The hallway leading from the Red Bar to the Green Bar soon became awash with beer, sometimes an inch or two high from one bar to the other. Of course, this opportunity could not be overlooked. Pretty soon, we were having beer-slide contests, where one member would belly flop at the Red Bar end and see how far he could go on this beer highway towards the Green Bar. Some people even swung on the pipes in the basement and tried to dive into the shallow beer pool. That stupidity was not repeated very often. A few agile members made it all the way down this 50 foot runway, and one guy even did it on his back.

The Green Bar was where the band was located—far enough away from the bars to keep their electronic equipment from being shorted out by beer. "Bend Over And Let Me See You Shake A Tail Feather" was one song which immediately comes to mind, as well as an assortment of songs with repetitive lyrics of that type. There were shoulder dances, where a member would hoist his date on his shoulders and dance "the chicken dance" with another couple so mounted. On a few occasions, the date would face her date for a "blind chicken dance." Then there were circle dances, where a member of the club would "strut his stuff" twirling the Green T over his head, and doing all sorts of fancy dance steps, then select another member to replace him in the center. Occasionally an equally rowdy date would join in. These "circle dances" usually ended with a

classic “flesh pile,” where a member of the club would yell “flesh pile” and we would all jump on the hapless fellow in the middle of the circle.

These events went on in a random fashion, as the evening progressed, until members could no longer stand either due to the slippery condition of the floor, or to blood alcohol levels approaching lethal levels.



The classic story of beer throwing is attributed to one Brian Breuel, '66, guarding the entrance to the stairwell down to the bars. I can verify this story, since I witnessed the entire exchange. One evening, a well coifed young lady, from Bryn Mawr, in her pink dress, pearls, and green shoes, asked to see John Thatcher, who she had known from his days at Haverford School, a well-known prep school in the Philadelphia area. Brian was puzzled. “Who is John Thatcher?” he asked. “Surely you must know John Thatcher from Philadelphia” the young lady chided. “He told me he was in Cannon Club.” Slowly, recognition crept across Brian’s face. “Do you mean ‘Turk,’ from Philadelphia?” he asked.

The young lady disdainfully looked at Brian’s Green T. “Well, if that is what you ruffians call him - yes.”

Brian, a preppie himself from Lawrenceville, ignored that comment, and chivalrously offered to find Turk for her down-stairs, since, as he warned her, if she went down-stairs, someone might throw beer on her.

The young lady brushed Brian aside, disregarding his courteous offer, retorting that “I don’t need you to do that. I am quite capable of finding John by myself.”

Brian reassessed her dress, and again reiterated his warning, almost in a pleading tone “Please miss, do not go down-stairs because someone will throw beer on you for sure.”

Ignoring Brian’s warning the young lady physically pushed past him and went down the stairs. Brian followed her. Now knowing Brian, who was a kind and gentlemanly fellow, I thought he was going downstairs to escort her and perhaps even protect her.

But I imagine the young lady’s offensive and haughty manner had gotten the best of him. Brian did not want to leave justice to chance. He went directly to the Green Bar, got a large plastic cup of beer, found the young lady, who by now had indeed found Turk, and poured the beer all over her head, saying “I told you someone might throw beer on you.” Turk himself emailed me, confirming the event and adding “She was the sister of a good friend and Haverford School Classmate - we had nicknamed her “Fangs.” I was standing right in front of her when Bru poured the beer on her head – aside from the shock on her face, nothing happened for about 5 seconds and then the beer gushed through her hair.”

These stories were amended by Bill Etherington, JD.

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“Actually, both Bru and I dumped our beers on her as soon as her foot hit the basement floor. Her mother wanted a new dress but got \$2.50 for cleaning.”

Pertaining to Rick Applequist, “Quist was arrested by two NJ Troopers, after they stopped laughing. Quist was fined \$150, a lot of money then, and the judge suggested that Quist not run for elective office in Hillsdale, NJ.” Ah, such fond memories.