

Trial by Trivia

Bobby Kittredge '75

We were truly clueless. The last day of classes in mid December was just another Friday in our freshmen minds. David Fox '75 and I had just finished laughing and card playing with Connie Rudnick and Cathy Burton (both '73). We were now wandering the campus, very awake, looking for more fun. Yes, it was late ...and cold; nearly midnight and things were quiet ... until we randomly got closer to Spencer. Something was happening there; people, lights, action!

But we were barred at the door! This was a shocking first; every thing had been inclusive at Williams until this. We were not to be turned away easily; I had to know why. The answer was only semi graspable; "a trivia contest was about to begin", and we were not welcome. The "Free Tumblers" had commandeered Spencer House for the contest and clearly clueless freshmen males were encumbrances. "Leave" with no please.

I pushed on however. "I know some trivia".

The Free Tumblers were the nerd team. In addition to our obvious cluelessness, Foxy looked like a linebacker, while I, smaller in stature, have never been confused with a nerd. Behind the bouncer's back we could see rows of phones, piles of reference books, great excitement. We wanted in to this new, mysterious fun, but it looked unlikely.

"OK. Here's a question. Who did Napoleon Solo and Ilya Kuriacan work for?"

"U.N.C.L.E. of course". I loved that show, have a fondness for acronyms, and turned on and up the velocity and certitude of my answer for effect. I knew the stakes.

"What does U.N.C.L.E. stand for?"

"United Network Command for Law Enforcement!" Ditto on all above.

"Who is their arch enemy?"

"THRUSH!" Ditto again. This was going well.

"What does T.H.R.U.S.H. stand for"?

Technological Hierarchy for the Removal of Undesirables and Subjugation of Humanity. OK, I exaggerate knowing the 4th question. But I'll never forget THRUSH, and we got in! We had passed our trial by trivia.

We were ushered past Mt.Trivia (the reference books) to two un-manned phones; we dialed ALL night. We knew some answers, but nothing other team members didn't. And we won! That was a thrill, especially since the contest was close. We submitted what we thought were quality questions all the way to the May contest naturally hosted by "our" winning team. We were granted an hour of mike time, loved the tie leading to overtime, were proud to be the only freshmen on the team, but were saddened that all of our questions were rejected. We needed our own team.

Enter Dick Weinberg '74. To this day a trivia buff (\$50,000 won on "Who wants to be a Millionaire?"), and his Tyler House gang. Foxy, Rudnick, Burton, Jon Nail '75, myself were all soon to be trivia bonded. I had taken over the oldies show on WCFM. Also on Friday nights. Oldies were half the contest. We even had professors on that team – "Whamo". And we won again ... undefeated. My favorite moment from that night was Polly Wood '75 coming back to her Tyler room at 2 AM pausing just long enough to hear the "Moses Supposes" question ... and knowing it. I begged her to stay, but alas, straight to bed. Picture perfect timing.

We won again in December '74 as seniors with Carter House. Zak '75 now a core member. So satisfying. Would my life have been any different if I had cared as much for my studies as I did for those twice a year contests?