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In Reply Respond To:

October 26, 1983

President John D. Wilson
Washington & Lee University
Lexington, Virginia 24450

Dear President Wilson:

Rumor among interested alumni here in Dallas is that our School is considering very strongly the possibility of accepting women in the undergraduate school. I cannot tell you what a mistake I think such a move would be in the long run.

I have heard the arguments in favor of coeducation. The one most strongly advanced is that a decline in the college-age population will result in a lower number of excellent candidates for admission. I cannot believe, however, that such a trend will result, even temporarily, in a failure of W & L to be able to attract enough qualified men to fill twelve hundred places. If we need to do more recruiting, so be it. I think that our very strong alumni associations would respond with interest to such challenge. But even if we had to lower the number of acceptances for a few years, it seems to me that the price would be well worth it.

I believe that if W & L "goes co-ed," it will cease to be W & L, and I have heard that sentiment expressed countless times by other alumni. One need only look at the coeducational schools near us to see by comparison the special quality possessed by W & L- a quality unmatched, in my highly biased view, by any other school I have seen. The bond men develop there makes for fast friendships and business associations built on honor which last lifetimes. I do not think the same would be true if we succumbed to a temporary pressure to change one of our essential traditions.

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The Country, after a twenty-odd-year love affair with self-gratification, is turning back to traditional values and the discipline necessary to achieve them. Family, honor, patriotism, productivity, and formality are all "coming back," if the classic indications can be believed. That is not surprising, since the swing of the national mood should fall right about now. What is surprising is that W & L, which has watched with healthy bemusement the antics of the feminists, the communists, the Gurus, and the flower children throughout the Sixties and Seventies now proposes to alter its entire character just as it is about to be in style again! Planning and discipline, they tell us, are the new mood of the young.

I suggest that our new President help to maintain one of the finest educational traditions in Virginia- indeed, in the United States. I also think that the school should keep us alumni advised of the position of the administration on the matter rather than waiting to present the decision to us as a fait accompli. A healthy debate on the subject (there would be one!) might suggest solutions which have not yet been discussed. In any event, it would allow the entire W & L family which gives so much in support to the school to participate in the decision.

And that, of course, is the way W & L should do things anyway.

Rabidly yours,



R. Brooke Lewis
W & L '76; W & L Law '83

RBL:pf

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WASHINGTON AND LEE UNIVERSITY
LEXINGTON, VIRGINIA
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

December 7, 1983

Mr. R. Brooke Lewis
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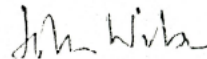
Dear Mr. Lewis:

I so much appreciate your letter and want to thank you for taking time to write. In many ways I regret the way the issue has arisen, but I am deeply grateful for the advantage of hearing from alumni who can articulate what it is about Washington and Lee that binds them so closely.

I know the Board will profit from having your views placed before it when it meets over the winter and spring to give further thought to this matter. And I have profited a good deal in the meantime.

Every best wish.

Most sincerely,



John D. Wilson
President

JDW/bcb