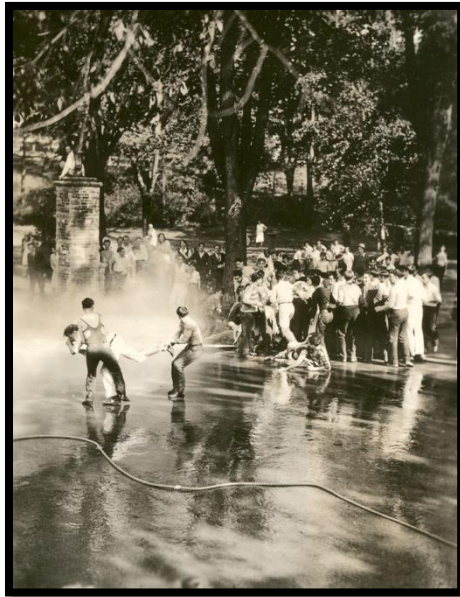


Moving Up Day



Frosh-Soph water fight, 1921

Life as a freshman at Alfred University was not easy at the start of the 20th century. The sophomore class saw to it. After all, the sophomores were best suited to ease the yearlings into campus life, having been the most recent victims of the "procs" and "pranks" of the preceding class.

Once upon a time, freshmen were welcomed to Alfred with proclamations "procs" posted around campus such as:

"Ye green and vainglorious boneheads, listen to the edicts of thy superiors. For though we know how useless it is to pound sense into thy mushy faces, it must be done," or others in the same vein.

"Leave your playthings at home. This is no nursery" or "Remove your thumbs from your drooling mouths, and try to act as nearly like human beings as your stunted minds allow."

It wasn't until the "progressive" Class of 1909, with its high ideals, came along in 1906 and did something to consummate their painful freshman year. Their way of celebrating the end of their freshman year can only be described as "sophomoric."

In *FIAT LUX: The Story of Alfred University* John Nelson Norwood described the first moving-up day:

"The observance of an informal moving-up day which has passed through several phases, wise and otherwise, was originated at Alfred by the class of 1909. At commencement time in 1906,

that group celebrated its demise as a freshman class. A moving-up procession was formed featuring inspiring (?) music, curious costumes, and ludicrous antics which kept spectators in continuous laughter. The effigy of the "dead" class was carried in a cart or baby 'cab' and cremated in front of Ladies Hall (the Brick), after which the class members adjourned to the hall porch and enjoyed refreshments. Alfred had seen its first Moving-Up celebration."

As the freshman-sophomore class rivalry escalated through the years, so did the University's Moving Up Day celebration.

Moving Up Day's humble beginnings were a simple parade by the freshmen in the spring of 1906 with singing and speeches on Main Street. But what became an annual event, fell to its lowest ebb in the 1920s.

Norwood wrote, "The sample to end all such moving up performances was inflicted on town and hillside in the spring of 1925. Regardless of law, property, invalids, and the terrified screams of children awakened by the midnight dynamite blasts, the freshmen had a night of it."

At dawn the campus looked like a city dump, Norwood explained, "A rooster and his wives desecrated the chapel room, trees were festooned with toilet paper, and damage done too extensive to list."

Such "wild monkeyshines" was not peculiar to Alfred. Regardless, the student body voted to abolish such destructive practices and a committee was established to work on a new, more constructive program. It included a special assembly with seniors in academic costume, at which new campus officers and student award recipients were announced and the incoming Senate president installed. The afternoon included a tug of war, various sports, and a block dance in the evening.

Each year, a committee announced the Moving Up Day plans, with review of the activities appearing in the subsequent issue of the *Fiat Lux* student newspaper. "Step Singing" was added in the 1930s, in which seniors sang their swan song and as they finished, they were quietly replaced by the juniors. Likewise, an annual game of "Pushball" provided ample opportunity for freshmen to release their pent-up feelings against the sophomores.



But some years the pushball game wasn't enough. In May 1936, for instance, opened hostilities on Sunday night preceding the Thursday Moving Up Day, setting a roaring bonfire, volleying blank cartridges, and seizing half a dozen sophomores in order to "settle old scores." Wellsville's *Daily Reporter* said, "The sophs retaliated the next day, plucking a freshman here and there, carrying him to some secluded spot and dropping him clad only in shorts.

"Then the sophomores, armed with January eggs, retreated to a high hill and awaited results. They were charged by a larger force of freshmen also with eggs, and custard pies thrown in... The battle was the climax; it left some 150 practically nude undergraduates to find their way home through dark alleys, and made the greased-pole fight game tame by comparison."

Five students were injured in a pushball game in 1940 Moving Up Day. The *Fiat* reported: "Here's one for the books concerning last Thursday's 'safe and sane' Moving-Up Day Frosh-Soph contest: As the pushball scramble progressed, interest was added to the stalemated muddle as battered gladiators were carried from the field of honor. Sore muscles, blackened eyes and bruised limbs were to be found a dime a dozen after the melee but most seriously injured of the lot was Freshman Bill Woods. So far the story is run-of-the-mill. But here's the punch line. Woods, a Rochester boy, is the son of—The Safety Commissioner of Rochester."

Needless to say, further alterations in the Moving Up Day experience were made, with even the pushball game drawing criticism. Eventually, like the beanie and the "procs," Moving Up Day became a thing of the past by the 1970's.