County Outlook

A Different Standard

by Ron Harper, Jr., *Lancaster Post*



Two Lancaster City police officers discuss the coed's .40 blood alcohol level.

It was 1:15 AM on September 6, 2008 on West James Street in Lancaster, and the coed was almost literally 'dead drunk.'

She and a handful of Franklin and Marshall students were stopped by Lancaster City police because one of them was visibly drunk. By the time I parked and walked the block back to the officers, three F&M public safety officers had joined the city police, and it was they – F&M security – who were clearly calling the shots.

The petite coed was having difficulty standing, and a young man had his arms around her, and kept her from swaying. When the video camera was spotted, the students did not appear concerned about the five uniforms, flashing police lights and spotlights, but indignantly asked, "Is he allowed to film us?", in a tone that implied they expected the police or public safety officer to do something NOW. The city police never looked over, but watched as the older F&M security officer encouraged the drunk coed to blow into the portable breath tester to check the blood alcohol content. "BLOW! BLOW!" her friends cheered. "Don't STOP," the young man that held her yelled.

As the city police huddled around the breath tester, with the F&M security officer holding it, the young lady concerned with the camera turned and said "F _ _ _ You!" toward the camera and turned away.



A drunken coed pleads that she's fine to the F&M public safety officer as two Lancaster City police officers look on.

"Point four-oh!" announced one of the uniforms. They huddled closer and talked about what to do with the F&M student who was five times the limit to be considered legally drunk. The drunk girl wanted to talk, and her friends kept saying, "Allie, sssshhh," until finally she took a step forward with her hands in a begging posture, and insisted she was fine and that they should let her go. Soon an ambulance showed up and took her away. The man that was holding her up feigned as though he was going to come at me while another coed with a "Traveling the Road Less Taken" t-shirt held him back. One of the city police stepped in his way and warned him not to do anything stupid.

Soon everyone scattered as the ambulance left, leaving only F&M security in charge. "Aren't you going to cite her for public drunkenness?" I asked. "I don't think she was disruptive," the soft spoken F&M officer said.

The Public Drunkenness statute includes disruptive behavior, but it also includes "…to the degree that he may endanger himself" Apparently being so drunk with a near toxic amount of alcohol that an ambulance must be called doesn't meet that criterion.

While F&M public safety appears to move quickly to use their police powers on "townies" – they hesitate to use them on students, and instead use the "college system." A few weeks later on September 20, F&M security interrupted two alcohol parties in Thomas Resident Hall on Campus. According to the school's newspaper, The Reporter, 47 students were caught and "cited." Later the story clarifies, writing, "While Public Safety officers have the option to issue legal citations, they did not in this case."

So what does the college do about the drinking? Remember that College Row is built over a bar. In the case of the parties in the dorms, the entire Thomas Hall was subject to a lecture about drinking in the dorms. It's the normal practice for F&M to provide a Mercedes-made shuttle bus to pick up students Thursday through Saturday, 10 p.m. to 3 a.m.. The party route stops at Frat houses and favorite watering holes like Hildy's, The Brickyard, and Brendee's. The college even provides a GPS tracking device on the shuttle so students know exactly where it's located.

In response to the dorm parties – the college banned parties at the "Greek Houses" on the following weekend. Or, did the college ban parties because that weekend was also "Family Weekend"?

This past weekend, a visiting alumnus died at 110 Thomas Hall. F&M students discovered the former swim team star had turned blue. They called 911, and then attempted to perform CPR without success.

Prophetically, The Reporter published an editorial a week before alcohol was involved in the death of the former F&M swim star. (The Lancaster County Coroner has not revealed the toxicity results, but students have confirmed that alcohol was involved). The haunting editorial which is entitled, "Our Drinking Problem," cites student drinking problems and lays the blame as follows: "F&M has a systemic problem with underage drinking. This is the fault of the students, organizations on campus, and the administration itself."

R.X. Hearing Aid Service

Serving Lancaster & Lebanon Counties Since 1962

- Audiometric hearing testing & fitting
- We carry all major brands & styles of hearing aids
- Molds, batteries, and accessories
- Authorized manufacturers' repairs & service
- Special attention to the needs of senior citizens and those confined to home - *We make housecalls!*

Call for FREE hearing analysis! **717-397-2046**

127 College Avenue
Lancaster

HOURS:
Monday - Thursday 9AM - 4PM
Friday 9AM to 1PM, Evenings/Weekends by Appointment