

**The Spirit of Eureka College: The Social Life**  
Loren Logsdon

**Question for EC Alums: What was your favorite place during your student days at Eureka College? The classroom, the library, the dining room at Lida's Wood or Dickinson Commons, the gymnasium, the chapel, a science lab, a fraternity house, your room, Burgess Theater or Pritchard Theater? Or maybe the greensward west of Jones Hall which is now the Cerf Center? Or the football, baseball, soccer, or softball field? Perchance the student union in Pritchard or the Burgoo, the dean's office? Or maybe your favorite place was off campus at Marge and Joe's, Eureka Lake, Olio Cemetery, the Outpost, the IGA, or perhaps The Tally Ho?**

**For most alums, the following favorite place will surprise you: the furnace room in Magdalene Hall was a favorite trysting place for couples after hours, but it was kept secret from the administration for a few years, as the following story will reveal. Now the secret can be told.**

**Trapped in the Furnace Room**  
**An Abortive Romance**

*Sometimes the social life on a college campus takes strange twists and turns. During his senior year at Heliotrope, Brig Grapnel was given the janitorial job at Maybellene Hall, a women's residence hall. One evening Brig was locked in the furnace room by a female classmate. Thus, the basic situation in the following story is true, but I have used my imagination, constructed the dialogue, and changed the names of the characters to avoid embarrassing the two main participants as well as the other persons mentioned. Only one person's name in the following story is real.*

The time was 1957 and the place Heliotrope University. The World War II years had devastating economic effects on the institution, and Heliotrope had employed students at low wages to do most of the maintenance and janitorial work on campus. For the students, those jobs were beneficial in helping them pay for their college education.

Brig Grapnel, one of the central figures in this story, was given the job as janitor of Maybellene Hall, which housed the Delta Zeta sorority. His job was to fire the coal stoker that provided hot water for the building and take out the trash twice a week. Since the job was a man's work, Brig had to be of good character and meet the approval of the dean of women, a strait-laced, humorless woman named Flo Little. It was an easy job in that it required only a few minutes every day, and Brig was not permitted to have access to the girls' living quarters; he was limited to the basement.

It was Brig's habit to tend the stoker after the evening meal in Nell's Wood Hall, which stood next door to Maybellene. One Friday evening, toward the close of his senior year, Brig came to do his work. As he went down the steps of Maybellene Hall whistling *Clair de Lune*, he noticed that a classmate named Jessbelle Worthy followed him to the basement. He thought nothing of it because the DZ chapter room was in the basement, so she might be going there to prepare for a meeting or just to tidy up the place.

Brig opened the door to the furnace room and went to check on the coal in the hopper. The first time he had come to do his work, he was puzzled by the heavy iron bolt on the outside of the furnace room door. The bolts for most doors are on the inside, not the outside. When he remarked about that oddity to Dinkus McTavish, the big Scotsman laughed and said, "Dean Little discovered that guys were coming in through the coal chute in the wee hours to see their girls. Dean Little stopped those trysts with the bolt on the outside of the furnace room door."

As Brig started to shovel some coal into the hopper, he heard a noise by the door. He looked up just in time to see Jessbelle Worthy, bright-eyed and smiling. Without a word, she pulled the door closed and slammed the bolt home, trapping Brig in the furnace room.

Thinking she was just playing a trick, Brig finished filling the hopper. Then he went to the door, laughed, and yelled. “Ok, Jessbelle! Now let me out.”

On the other side of the door, Jessbelle said, “No, you’re not getting out. I’m keeping you here all weekend.”

“But why? What have I done to you? Whatever it is, I apologize.”

“It’s not anything you’ve done. It’s what you haven’t done.”

“Jessbelle, be reasonable. Unbolt this door and we can talk face-to-face.”

“No, if I did that you would run away.”

“All right, I give up. What is it I haven’t done?”

“You haven’t paid any attention to me. Now I have your attention, and I intend to keep it for the whole weekend.”

“That’s nonsense. I pay attention to you. I always speak to you when we meet. I treat you with respect the same way I treat other girls. Now this has gone far enough. Let me out.”

“Don’t you realize I love you?” Jessbelle yelled at the top of her voice.

“I can’t hear you. Open the door so we can talk”

“I’m not falling for that trick. I said I love you. Now what do you say to that?”

“Jessbelle, I had no idea you felt that way. Why didn’t you say something before now?”

“So, you had no idea? I gave you signs and vibes. Remember the day in the library when I was always getting in your way when you were doing the bibliography on the Civil War? What about the All School Christmas party when I kissed you under the mistletoe? Couldn’t you tell from my kiss that I cared deeply about you?” the excited coed was getting a bit crispy.

“I was listening to Dinkus McTavish tell one of his jokes about the traveling salesman and the farmer’s daughter. I thought he was playing a trick on me by luring me under the mistletoe so you could kiss me.”

Then the desperate young woman completely lost her cool. “To hell with Dinkus McTavish. I wish he would do us all a favor and transfer to the University of Forgottonia, or Arkham College or, better yet, San Andreas Fault State University.”

“Now, now, don’t blame Dinkus McTavish. It’s not his fault. I wasn’t looking for love. I don’t have the

time for a romantic relationship. I have to get good grades to prove myself, and I have to pay my own way for my college education. I have nothing to offer a girl at this stage of my life. Romance and love will have to come later. As they say, a man travels faster who travels alone.”

“So, you don’t have time for love, but you did take Gladys Ikenbee to the Delta Zeta Winter Formal, and you took Ima Goodun to the Delta Pi Spring Formal. What do you mean; you didn’t have time for girls?”

“Jessbelle, those girls asked me to escort them. I didn’t ask them. They told me their sorority sisters were putting pressure on them and threatening them if they didn’t attend those events with a date, and I was the safest guy they could find. They told me they weren’t interested in a relationship, and I would be doing them a big favor by escorting them. Why didn’t you ask me to be your date? I would have taken you.”

“I was going to, but Gladys asked you first, and I waited too long, and then before I knew it Ima had asked you.” I didn’t know what else to do except trap you here in the basement and tell you that I love you and want to be your main squeeze.”

“You want to be my what? I’m sorry. I’m having trouble hearing you. Why don’t you stop this nonsense and open the door so we can converse like civilized people?”

“Not until you ask me for a date.”

“Jessbelle, I can’t do it”.

“Why not?”

“Because if Dean Little got word I was dating you, I would lose this job. One of the reasons I got the job in the first place was that I wasn’t dating a Delta Zeta. Dean Little would panic and think we were washing our underwear together.”

“Well, we will keep our love a secret until it’s safe to confess it openly. Remember David and Bathsheba, Antony and Cleopatra, Romeo and Juliet, Abelard and Heloise? If they can love secretly, then why not we?”

“Jessbelle, their circumstances were different. Besides, the couples you mentioned are examples of forbidden, ill-fated, or immoral love. Those people should never have gotten together because their lives ended in tragedy. In addition, there are two good reasons why secrecy will not work for us.”

“Oh, ye of little faith! Why won’t secrecy work?”

“For one thing, you can’t possibly keep a secret on this campus. You might talk in your sleep, and the word would get back to Dean Little and I could lose this job.”

“I see your point about the impossibility of keeping a secret on this campus. What’s the second reason?”

“The second reason has to do with me, with the person I am. If I loved you, I would want to shout it from the highest mountain top; I’d want to tell it to the possum up a gum tree and the raccoon on the

ground, and tell every creature in the universe of the happiness I'd found. I couldn't help myself. I would go around all day singing

*When I fall in love,  
It will be forever  
For I'll never fall in love  
In a restless world as this is  
Love is ended before it's begun  
And a million moonlight kisses  
Cool in the warmth of the sun.*

"Oh, Brig, now I'm sure I love you. Won't you give me a chance to prove it? Just a chance. That's all I ask. If I let you out, can we go on a date this evening?"

"It just depends on what you want to do. Don't you realize there's nothing to do on this campus on weekends? This is the worst possible time for a date. Do you have any suggestions?"

Sensing that her victim was beginning to weaken, Jessbelle said, "Well, I know you don't have much money to go to fancy places, so we could go to the IGA and watch the fruit flies fight over the bananas, or we could attend the closing of the public library or we could go to the Sinclair station and watch the motorists fill their gas tanks and check the air in their tires. Or we could do something really romantic and watch the moon rise over the Bide A Wee Memory Gardens."

Brig was horrified. "No, you don't. I'm not going near a graveyard at night. Wait a minute. Can Dinkus McTavish come along? That big Scotsman isn't afraid of anything. He could protect us from those creatures of the night."

Jessbelle realized that she had gotten her beans burned on that suggestion. She thought a moment and then said, "Why don't we go to the student union and play cards or something?"

"Jessbelle, I have another suggestion. Would you help me catch night crawlers on back campus? Dinkus McTavish and I are going fishing tomorrow in the Big Sleazy River."

Jessbelle clasped her hands and jumped up and down, "Oh Yes! Yes! A Thousand times, Yes! What a unique way to put a top on the evening."

Brig was resigned to defeat, but then something suddenly occurred to him. "The coal chute! The coal chute! If guys can come in through the coal chute, then I should be able to leave by the coal chute. "

On the other side of the door, Jessbelle exclaimed, "Here I come, ready or not." And she unbolted the door and opened it, just in time to see Brig crawling out the coal chute and leaving the building.

**Postscript: The coal chute in Magdalene Hall was used by EC men whose girls lived in that dorm. If that revelation strains your credulity and you are tempted to accuse me of fabrication, then I will give you the name of an alum from the class of 1965 who will confirm my story.**