

The Doffing of Trousers

by tb mcglone

The Dean of Students at a small yet prominent east coast independent school addressed the student body at the start of the spring term in a proactive attempt to stifle efforts by certain underclassmen to test boundaries where the issue of dress code is concerned. Here is the copy.

As the warm weather returns to the Hilltop, thoughts naturally turn to those special events that herald the coming of spring, traditions that we at Huxley have long honored since our founding in 1896. Before our thoughts turn to prize day and graduation, before we justly focus on the accomplishments of this remarkable senior class, it is imperative we not neglect the seasonal highlights that compel celebration, events that we all look forward to as much as the blooming of the dogwood and the return of Johnson's Warbler. Of course I am referring to such traditions as the running of the hamsters, the egg and jelly jamboree, Marmite Mondays, and the Huxley Hoedown. And yes, it goes without saying, that no spring at Huxley Hall would be complete without the sight of bare legs and boxers smartening up these halls of ivy.

The "Doffing of Trousers" has been among our most cherished traditions, as you know, dating back to our first Headmaster. Sadly, I stand here this morning to tell you that this time honored institution is now in jeopardy of disappearing forever.

A moment of digression for the benefit of our under formers, and no harm to the rest of us, to be reminded of how this tradition began.

The convention of going trouser-less in the spring can be traced back to the early days of our school and the much beloved Reverend Arthur Huxley the Third, who, legend has it, arrived at the culmination ceremonies in a state of non-trousers. The stoic and venerable man, so far above the nonplussed faces of his charges, approached the dais to deliver a 90-minute dissertation on Calvinist ideologies in the new century, wearing only his starched white chemise, tri-color school tie, navy blazer and girdle. So the story goes, he ended with inspirational words from Oliver Wendell Holmes, saying, "What lies behind us, and what lies before us, are tiny matters compared to what lies within." Taking him literally at his word, the students, amidst turbulent applause, removed their long pants en masse. Instead of graduation caps flung skyward, it was their britches that took flight, symbolizing the graduates' bold release into a brave new world.

Not long after, Reverend Huxley found his greater reward and, upon his passing, the board of trustees instituted the tradition as we know it today, allowing those students who have earned the requisite grade point average during the fall semester to divest

themselves of their bottom layers in the spring and, joining the faculty, walk in the manner of the school's illustrious founder.

As in years past, on the first of April, students will gather just a few steps behind us at the base of "The Hux" for the awarding of certificates and the formal doffing ceremony. This spot, commemorated by the statue of our founder as it is imagined he appeared on that great day more than a century ago, marks the center of Knickerbocker Square, and has become the spiritual hub of student life here at Huxley.

Erected during the depression era when our school was in danger of closing its doors forever, this statue commemorates not only the tradition of pantlessness, but the determination of a few to keep the spirit and intellectual ideals of Reverend Huxley alive. Indeed, it has historical significance as well, since it was here, in the shadow of those august gams that, after becoming co-ed in 1972, ours became the first school in the nation to extend the pantless privilege to women. Indeed, full-length skirts joined bell-bottoms in the jetstream the day Huxley made history. To see the old gentleman standing there still, from dawn to dusk, watching with bandy-legged sobriety, reminds us all why we are here and the difference we can make, and are making, every day as a Huckster.

Now you might assume that convention demands we carry on with these inviolable observances willy-nilly, and automatically reward those deserving with a relaxation of the dress code quid pro quo. I'm here today to tell you to think again, and be warned! For there are those among you who would risk losing it for everyone.

To explain. Real concern has arisen on the part of the faculty over the recent flurry of activity on the student trade and other social media websites regarding the attempts of some of our upper classmen and women to encourage the purchase and promulgation of blatantly crude or otherwise inappropriate undergarments. Every year the faculty must address this issue with one or two members of the student body who deign to push the limits of tolerance and decency. As such, we ask you to be smart, police yourselves, and keep in mind that this is a privilege, not a right, and thus can be revoked at any moment. Since expectations are clearly outlined in the student handbook, there is no need to waste too much time going over them here, but I would remind all of you that the moratorium will continue to include such items as banana hammocks, grape smugglers, and for the women the French farthingale, candy pants, and what can only be described as "cackles."

As in years past, the embroidered codpiece emblazoned with the Huxley Hall crest will be for sale in the school store, or on line at the school's website. I'll use this opportunity to remind our seniors that your class photo will take place this Saturday morning at eight AM. This is a mandatory meeting. Extra codpieces will be on hand at that time should you need to grab one. All proceeds go towards the senior class gift,

which this year is a fully endowed SPF 50 sun block dispenser to be installed in the Petticoat Pavilion just off the student union; something, incidentally, that in my view is one of the more thoughtful gifts we've seen in many years.

Please tell your friends and family about the items for sale on our website, including our new academic year calendar featuring our tenured faculty in a series of photos entitled, "Prominent Calves on Campus." As always, we appreciate all your support.

Let us enter the spring term by being cognizant of what is modest and appropriate, by embracing the spirit as well as the letter of the law, and in doing so, honoring the memory of "The Hux"; keeping in mind always our school motto: *Nuda veritas fert onus*, or, *Bare truth bears all*. It is in managing the minor components dutifully that you show yourselves to be cultivated men and women of Huxley, truly the best and the brightest, and deserving of the leg up we have given you.

Go Hucksters!

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