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“Lax on Jaxon Slacks:” The Abolition of Dress Codes at Jackson College

On a Wednesday evening, Mary stood before the Jackson College Judiciary Council and was reprimanded for repeatedly wearing slacks on the Hill. Since it was not her first offense, she lost her extended curfew privileges for three weeks.<sup>1</sup> That was March of 1962. By walking around the Tufts campus during that period however, one would never have known it was a time of free love, free dress, and women’s liberation. Under the firm thumb of the administration, the women of Jackson College, the all female college at Tufts University, wore skirts and stockings up until 1968. The fight by Jackson students to wear Bermuda shorts and slacks was more than just an argument over clothes. It was representative of a larger struggle with the administration for the responsibilities and freedoms the women felt they deserved, and for equality with their male peers. The Jackson women of that period were tired of being treated like children and told they could not be trusted to dress themselves in a way that properly represented the college. They believed it was especially unfair that their male colleagues at Tufts College were deemed responsible enough to have that freedom. The fight between the administration, the Jackson Student Council, and the student body to eliminate dress codes was one characterized by mistrust, open resentment, and borderline rebellion. However, the students were ultimately successful not just in gaining the right to dress how they wanted, but in pushing out the members of the administration who were stalwarts of the old order, and bringing in

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<sup>1</sup> Jackson College 1903~78. Jackson Organizations and Events 1916~89. Student Government Judiciary Council 1961-68. Minutes from March 21, 1962. UA033.001.002.00011. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

new leaders who understood their position and responded to it. The rising popularity of slacks on the Tufts University campus in the 1960s was representative of social progression on the campus. The push by the student government against the dress code was just the beginning of a larger conflict involving the Jackson Student Council demanding recognition and respect from the administration. By calling for an end to dress codes, Jackson students were asserting their freedom to make their own decisions, but more than that they were asking for equality and attention. They did not want to be treated as children or incidental students. They wanted to have the influence they deserved as a significant part of the Tufts campus community.

When Jackson College was initially founded in 1910 as the all women's compliment to Tufts College, there were very limited social regulations. More were developed as the school grew and women started to live on-campus. However, by the 1950s many administrations across the country had taken on an *in loco parentis*<sup>2</sup> role, and circumstances led to many new regulations. Schools created stricter rules in order to convince middle class families that they could send their daughters to college without risking their femininity.<sup>3</sup> These rules initially focused on curfews and calling hours. So long as women were safely contained in their dorms, they generally studied hard and were considered good students. This worked against them, however, because most female students became so focused on school work that they were deemed "unattractive" and "unfashionable," classifications college administrators then had to fight against.<sup>4</sup> During World War II women had free reign of college campuses and were able to do what they wanted and dress as they wanted. With

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<sup>2</sup> Latin for "In the place of a parent," applied to rules put in place by colleges to govern the social lives of students.

<sup>3</sup> Helen Lefkowitz Horowitz, *Campus Life: Undergraduate Cultures from the End of the Eighteenth Century to the Present* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1987), 201.

<sup>4</sup> Deirdre Clemente, "Prettier Than They Used to Be?: Femininity, Fashion, and the Recasting of Radcliffe's Reputation, 1900–1950," *The New England Quarterly* 82, no. 4 (2009): 644.

the men gone, they were not concerned with being feminine and well liked. However, when the war ended and the G.I. Bill flooded colleges with veterans, women again had to fight for their right to be on campus. This was a time when society once again forced women into the domestic sphere, but they still joined the workforce and attended college in growing numbers.<sup>5</sup> This was the campus climate that led to the creation of the first dress codes, made to help female students seem less like outsiders and bring them into the campus culture. In the 1950s, women students actually took this task on themselves. It was very common for students to create their own dress regulations that followed “social dictates about femininity.”<sup>6</sup> These student created codes fit women into societal ideals of the period, and in turn allowed them to maintain their place on the college campus.



*Jackson women working on a theatre set wearing dungarees in 1954.<sup>1</sup>*

It was in this climate that the first Jackson College dress regulations were created. From its inception in 1910, Jackson College had a number of regulations regarding curfews and calling hours. However, dress went unregulated until the 1950s, after World War II popularized dungarees<sup>7</sup> for women. In 1950, the Jackson Student Council made a formal recommendation

about when it was appropriate for female students to wear pants around campus.<sup>8</sup> This was not an actual rule, however. The non-binding nature of this suggestion was reinforced when Dean Bush,

<sup>5</sup> Linda Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America, 1945-1965* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>6</sup> Clemente, “Prettier Than They Used to Be,” 656.

<sup>7</sup> Denim work pants

<sup>8</sup> Jackson College, 1963~78. Jackson Student Council Minutes, 1935~57. Student Council Minutes, 1950-54. Minutes from October 9th, 1950. UA033.001.004.00002. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

the dean of Jackson College, stated in 1952 that she would not create a formal administrative policy about dress, but requested that students consider “suitability of costume,” as dungarees and slacks were not “feminine.”<sup>9</sup> The argument that dress rules and regulations were to maintain “suitability” and “feminine” looks was one that would be used until dress regulations were abolished. The Jackson administration, along with the administrations of many other women’s colleges, felt that dress codes were needed to maintain the standards of the college. When official dress codes were implemented at women’s colleges, it was argued that they were there to ensure “respectable womanhood.”<sup>10</sup> This was the justification given for the expansion of dress codes throughout the 1950s.

Due to the growing popularity of Bermuda shorts, the Jackson Student Council continued to refine their dress recommendations. In 1955, the Jackson Student Council created more detailed rules about when slacks and Bermuda shorts could be worn during finals week.<sup>11</sup> Dean Bush approved their regulations. This set the precedent for administrative oversight for Council regulations. That administrative control would become extremely controversial in later years. In May of 1955 the Council created its first official dress code, which was added to the Jackson College Handbook the following year. The 1956 handbook had a section titled Administration Rules, where it outlined that Bermuda shorts could only be worn to breakfast on Sundays and holidays, and at

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<sup>9</sup> Jackson College, 1963~78. Jackson Student Council Minutes, 1935~57. Student Council Minutes, 1950-54. Minutes from October 6th, 1952. UA033.001.004.00002. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

<sup>10</sup> Renee Lansley, “College Women or College Girls? Gender, Sexuality, and *In Loco Parentis* On Campus” (PhD diss., The Ohio State University, 2004), 20.

<sup>11</sup> Jackson College, 1963~78. Jackson Student Council Minutes, 1935~57. Student Council Minutes, 1954-57. Minutes from January 17th, 1955. UA033.001.004.00004. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

certain times during the final examination period.<sup>12</sup> The council had to constantly remind students about these regulations. These rules were so often disregarded that the council made them substantially more strict in 1957. However, these rules still only referenced Bermuda shorts. In the 1958 Jackson College Handbook, the administration rules still existed, but there was an additional section of the restrictions regarding what could be worn in the dining halls, including weather restrictions for slacks and allowances for pin curls.<sup>13</sup> At this point, the regulations on dress were so plentiful that a Rules Committee was created as part of the Jackson Student Council, and it began to develop a formal dress policy. This was finished in March and added to the 1959-1960 Jackson College Handbook. It stated:

*Skirts must be worn* at all times except for Sunday breakfasts and suppers, and holiday breakfasts and lunches and breakfasts and lunches during final examination period.

*Slippers are never* allowed in the dining room.

*Girls may come* to Friday and Saturday night suppers with their hair set, provided they wear a scarf or some other covering over their hair.

*On faculty night* girls are expected to wear stockings to dinner.<sup>14</sup>

There was also a provision about slacks being allowed during periods of inclement weather. This dress policy existed, almost entirely unchanged, until 1968. Over the next decade Jackson women would be required to follow these rules or face the consequences. However, they would also spend the next ten years fighting for their right to wear what they wanted.

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<sup>12</sup> Jackson College Handbook, 1911~70. Jackson College Regulations, 1911~64. Jackson College Handbook 1956-1957. Administrative Rules. UP076.001.001.00003. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

<sup>13</sup> Jackson College Handbook, 1911~70. Jackson College Regulations, 1911~64. Jackson College Handbook 1958-1959. Cafeteria Rules. UP076.001.001.00004. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

<sup>14</sup> Jackson College Handbook, 1911~70. Jackson College Regulations, 1911~64. Jackson College Handbook 1959-1960. Cafeteria Rules. UP076.001.001.00004. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

While the Jackson Student Council was allowed to implement this dress policy without administrative approval, under the new Dean of Jackson, Myra Herrick, who became dean in 1959, they were not able to make any changes to it on their own. Almost from the beginning Jackson women pushed back against dress regulations. The rules were put into place to enforce values of a previous generation. In the 1940s and '50s, dress codes were created to make women students appear more attractive and feminine.<sup>15</sup> Since the students no longer supported the motivation behind the rules, they often resisted actually following them. This was what led to the nearly page long collection of rules in the Jackson College Handbook starting in 1959. As historian Beth Bailey argued however, the increasingly complicated system of administrative rules just served to emphasize the point that the old values were no longer relevant to students.<sup>16</sup> In 1960, requests to amend the Jackson dress policy began, and in this initial phase of dissent the women went through proper institutional channels in the hopes of making the rules more amenable to the student body.

The first few years of the 1960s saw a number of clashes between Dean Herrick and the Jackson students over the enforcement of parietal rules, “many of which had become obsolete.”<sup>17</sup> In October of 1960, the students simply wanted to be allowed to wear slacks in the dining halls on Saturdays.<sup>18</sup> This was denied by Dean Herrick because there were too many guests on campus on Saturdays. In 1961 the Jackson women made the same request, which was again rejected because

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<sup>15</sup> Clemente, “‘Prettier Than They Used to Be,’” 644.

<sup>16</sup> Beth Bailey, *From Front Porch to Back Seat: Courtship in Twentieth-Century America* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 85.

<sup>17</sup> Russell Miller, *The Light on the Hill Volume Two, A History of Tufts University Since 1952* (Cambridge: MassMarkey Books, 1986), 97.

<sup>18</sup> Jackson College 1903~78. Jackson Student Council Minutes, 1957~69. Student Council Minutes 1957-61. Minutes From October 3, 1960. UA033.001.005.00001. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

there were too visitors on Saturdays.<sup>19</sup> College dress codes during this time were meant to ensure that students were presenting an appropriate image of the schools they attended. According to administrators, slacks were evidence of “bad manners” and “disrespect.”<sup>20</sup> Students did not agree with this, however. They saw slacks as being practical.

Most of the calls for change in dress codes focused on restrictions in the dining halls. As historian Deirdre Clemente explained, the most strict rules were focused on what could be worn to meals, so the cafeteria became the focus of students’ fights to be allowed to wear jeans, shorts, and headscarves.<sup>21</sup> The Jackson women were trying to change dress codes in other areas as well. In the winter of 1962, a movement was started to clarify the language regarding rules for wearing slacks during cold weather. The Jackson Student Council passed a motion with more specific language, but Dean Herrick denied the change.<sup>22</sup> During this same time, another attempt was made to allow slacks at meals on Saturdays. This was also denied. The repeated rejection of the students’ requests for dress code reform led some students at this point to openly defy the rules. College women in this period wore jeans and slacks with “a quiet contempt.”<sup>23</sup> However after having their formal petitions for change repeatedly denied, they started to wear their slacks as a form of protest. This was when Mary was reported to the Jackson Judiciary Council for repeatedly wearing slacks and she lost her

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<sup>19</sup> Jackson College 1903~78. Jackson Student Council Minutes, 1957~69. Student Council Minutes 1957-61. Minutes From October 23, 1961. UA033.001.005.00001. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

<sup>20</sup> Lynn Peril, *College Girls: Bluestockings, Sex Kittens, and Coeds, Then and Now* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 126.

<sup>21</sup> Deirdre Clemente, *Dress Casual: How College Students Redefined American Style* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 45.

<sup>22</sup> Jackson College 1903~78. Jackson Student Council Minutes, 1957~69. Student Council Minutes 1961-63. Minutes From March 19, 1962. UA033.001.005.00002. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

<sup>23</sup> Deirdre Clemente, “College Shop: Making, Selling, and Buying Women’s Casual Clothing, 1930-1970,” *Journal of Social History* 49, no. 2 (December 15, 2015): 339.

curfew privileges.<sup>24</sup> The severity of this punishment by the Judiciary Council, comprised of Jackson students, reflected how serious the act of dressing improperly was considered to be on the campus.

Realizing that there was widespread discontent with the dress policy, the Jackson Student Council decided to hold a student referendum to determine what Jackson students believed was appropriate dress on campus. This was another attempt to promote institutional change. The council defined three types of style in the questionnaire and asked students to say which they thought was appropriate for each meal of the week. Dress clothing consisted of stockings and heels, school clothes meant skirts, and casual outfits included slacks, Bermuda shorts, and sweatshirts. Based on the 429 responses, the Council passed a motion that would allow for casual dress to be worn in the dining halls from Friday through Sunday.<sup>25</sup> The Council brought this revised policy to Dean Herrick, but she again denied it. She did agree to allow slacks in the dining halls on Saturdays, which the students had been requesting since 1960. That was substantially less of a change than the students were hoping to achieve. This small concession was representative of a larger problem that existed between the Jackson students and the administration. Jackson College women made clear their desire for relaxed dress codes, but did not make progress in achieving their goals because on matters of dress, Dean Herrick was “inflexible and unyielding.”<sup>26</sup> Students wanted control that she would not allow.

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<sup>24</sup> Jackson College 1903~78. Jackson Organizations and Events 1916~89. Student Government Judiciary Council 1961-68. Minutes from March 21, 1962. UA033.001.002.00011. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

<sup>25</sup> Jackson College 1903~78. Jackson Student Council Minutes, 1957~69. Student Council Minutes 1961-63. Minutes From October 22, 1962. UA033.001.005.00002. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

<sup>26</sup> Miller, *The Light on the Hill Volume Two*, 98.



The Jackson students were not attempting to make radical changes. Out of the 429 survey responses, only seventy three women suggested the dress policy be entirely abolished.<sup>27</sup> Dress codes were still deemed important, students merely wanted to limit the restrictions and have more influence in shaping them. This was all part of the national Student Responsibility Movement that occurred in the early 1960s. Students protested for rule changes not just because they disagreed with the restrictions, but because they believed social issues should be under the purview of the student body.<sup>28</sup> It became a matter of autonomy and power. Across the country at this time, student governments began writing their own dress rules and submitting them to deans for approval.<sup>29</sup> More often than not at Jackson College though, these rule changes were denied by the administration.

During the tenure of Dean Herrick, students were unable to make any substantial reforms to dress policy. In her time at Jackson, Dean Herrick rejected nearly every proposal to liberalize social regulations.<sup>30</sup> At a time when Jackson and Tufts were becoming ever more entwined academically and administratively, Dean Herrick was very strict when it came to parietal rules because she had limited powers in other areas, so she focused on ensuring Jackson women were dedicated to their studies and presented a favorable image of the college. Many women deans during this period saw their roles as being rooted in providing counsel and support to their students, and promoting serious academic scholarship.<sup>31</sup> Dean Herrick attempted to take on this duty, but her views of what these lessons entailed clashed with the values of the Jackson students.

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<sup>27</sup> Jackson College 1903~78. Jackson Student Council Minutes, 1957~69. Student Council Minutes 1961-63. Minutes From October 22, 1962. UA033.001.005.00002. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

<sup>28</sup> Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999), 91.

<sup>29</sup> Clemente, *Dress Casual*, 135.

<sup>30</sup> Miller, *The Light on the Hill*, 98.

<sup>31</sup> Robert A. Schwartz, "Reconceptualizing the Leadership Roles of Women in Higher Education: A Brief History on the Importance of Deans of Women," *The Journal of Higher Education* 68, no. 5 (1997): 509.

The 1950s and 1960s saw the rise of pants and other casual, non-feminine clothing on college campuses and among young people more broadly. Part of this trend stemmed from a practical need, but there was also a political motivation. The action of wearing pants evoked discussions about what society considered to be “appropriate” for women to wear and do.<sup>32</sup> Bermuda shorts, slacks, and jeans were all considered to be staples of the new woman. College students, both male and female, needed clothing that worked for their busy lives and could go from activity to activity. For women, skirts were impractical. After experiencing the freedom given to women during World War II, they did not want to go back to having to wear clothing that restricted them. At this point, pants were no longer consigned to workwear or rural women’s colleges.<sup>33</sup> Instead, women brought pants into the mainstream.

Looking into the 1960s, women fought back against the rigid female role that was encouraged in the post war period. They tried to expand their position in society, which heavily influenced their sartorial choices. This movement instigated the adoption of casual clothing by young, middle class women.<sup>34</sup> The changes in women’s clothing, particularly concerning young women during this period, were indicative of greater shifts that were to come. For college students, slacks, sweaters, and jeans were all signs



*Students dancing at a fraternity party in 1962, wearing Bermuda shorts.<sup>2</sup>*

<sup>32</sup> Clemente, *Dress Casual*, 69.

<sup>33</sup> Clemente, “College Shop,” 338.

<sup>34</sup> Christopher Breward, *The Culture of Fashion: A New History of Fashionable Dress* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1994), 194.

of a move towards sexual equality.<sup>35</sup> Men had no dress regulations, so women believed they should not either. However, universities during this time were not ready to release their hold over female students, which was why they implemented strict dress codes to control what women could wear. Female college students, and particularly Jackson College students, did not want to be controlled, however. They held on to their Bermuda shorts and slacks as part of their fight for more freedom.

The strict nature of the Jackson dress policy was emphasized in November of 1963, when Tufts men were allowed to start wearing sweatshirts in the dining halls. This was the final dress regulation that had existed for men at the university. The rule was abolished because the male students were deemed old enough to decide what appropriate dress was on their own.<sup>36</sup> This served as a sharp contrast to the Jackson women who had been making the same argument about themselves to no avail. In 1964 the Jackson women presented this argument again in an attempt to gain more freedom in deciding when they could wear slacks in cold weather. This marked the beginning of the second stage of their protests. Dean Herrick rejected a motion that would let the students decide for themselves if the weather was bad enough to warrant wearing slacks.<sup>37</sup> She argued that the Jackson Student Council had created regulations in the past and not enforced them. Therefore, she saw no reason to give the council more power. The students of Jackson College saw the situation as being representative of a much larger issue. One student argued, “the decision should rest on the Dean’s confidence in the honor of Jackson women.”<sup>38</sup> Meanwhile, Jean Cormack, a Jackson student, did not think that Dean Herrick’s decision had anything to do with the Jackson

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<sup>35</sup> Alison Lurie, *The Language of Clothes* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), 229.

<sup>36</sup> “I.D.C. Legislates Clean Sweatshirts Fair At Dining Hall,” *The Tufts Weekly*, November 8, 1963.

<sup>37</sup> Jean Cormack, “Dean Vetoes Jackson Council; Blizzard Slacks Rule Remains,” *The Tufts Weekly*, November 13, 1964.

<sup>38</sup> “Confidence Lacking?,” *The Tufts Weekly*, November 29, 1964.

women. Instead, she believed “the main issue remains... Dean Herrick is opposed to the wearing of slacks.”<sup>39</sup> Cormack thought it was extremely problematic that Dean Herrick was forcing students to be guided by standards they did not believe in. She wrote in the *Tufts Weekly*, “if the Dean of Jackson wants to present an image of Jackson College which is not what we feel is Jackson College, we have to act.”<sup>40</sup> She did not understand the point of there being a Jackson Student Council if they had to have all of their actions approved by the dean.

The debate surrounding cold weather rules for slacks brought to light a larger issue that was coming to the forefront during this period. Jackson women wanted to wear pants, but more than that, they wanted to be able to decide when and where it was appropriate to wear them. They wanted freedom and responsibility. The student body did not want to have to abide by the administration's rules, and the Student Council did not want Dean Herrick approving their every move. In 1965, this sentiment became widespread. Jackson women felt the harsh dress codes and strict oversight from the Dean's office were stopping them from learning, and did not reflect their priorities. Undergraduate women during this period refused to be infantilized by dress restrictions. They wanted to be treated as mature adults.<sup>41</sup> One Jackson student proclaimed “in such areas as personal dress, a girl should be given the right to make her own choices as part of her maturation through experimentation.”<sup>42</sup> This same student also pointed out that dress regulations restricted creativity and individual thought. When Dean Herrick argued that student dress needed to be governed to ensure respect, several students commented in an article in the *Tufts Weekly*, “the

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<sup>39</sup> Jean Cormack, “Jaxon Council Requests Dean to Give Direct Slack Answer,” *The Tufts Weekly*, November 20, 1964.

<sup>40</sup> Cormack, “Jaxon Council Requests Dean to Give Direct Slack Answer.”

<sup>41</sup> Lansley, “College Women or College Girls,” 21.

<sup>42</sup> “...And By the Students,” *The Tufts Weekly*, May 7, 1965.

purpose of being on the Hill is to learn, and not to be preoccupied with dress and that the point of the issue is that such decisions belong solely to the individual student.”<sup>43</sup> Women wanted the focus of their time at Jackson to be on their academics, not the clothing they wore. Jackson women attended college to expand their prospects and open up opportunities. They did not want to be limited by sartorial requirements.

The women of Jackson College wanted the freedom to choose their own clothes, and they wanted to be deemed mature enough to have that responsibility. On a more basic level, however, they wanted to be held to the same standards as their male peers. Tufts men did not have dress restrictions.<sup>44</sup> Several Tufts men also agreed that the Jackson women should be allowed to wear what they wanted. However, the freedom the men enjoyed made them unreceptive to the plight of their female peers. Arthur Wolf, a Tufts student, thought the Jackson women let themselves be boxed in by the administration.<sup>45</sup> Therefore, he did not think they should need the support of their male colleagues. John Cimarosa, another Tufts student, believed that if the Jackson women stopped bowing to the administration they would not have so many rules.<sup>46</sup> Other Tufts men were even more demeaning. In response to a posting of the Jackson dress rules on the door of a dining hall, editors of the radical Tufts student publication *The Third Floor* encouraged “that strong disciplinary measures be taken against any transgressors of the dress code. Maybe that way Jackson chicks will get pissed enough to realize no one ought to have the right to make rules on purely personal matters.”<sup>47</sup> The Tufts men thought the Jackson women should be equal, but they refused to help.

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<sup>43</sup> “Dean Herrick Defines Advisory Position for Jackson Council,” *The Tufts Weekly*, May 7, 1965.

<sup>44</sup> Catherine Gody, “Lax on Jackson Slacks?,” *The Tufts Weekly*, October 7, 1966.

<sup>45</sup> Arthur Wolf, “A Matter of Perspective,” *The Tufts Weekly*, May 7, 1965.

<sup>46</sup> John Cimarosa, “An End to the Nonsense,” *The Tufts Weekly*, April 9, 1965.

<sup>47</sup> Activities and Organizations. Radio Society-Student Council Correspondence. Activities and Organizations Students for a Democratic Society 1967-71. *The Third Floor* Vol 1 No 4, February 29, 1968.

UA024.001.013.00007. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

The men believed the women should have to fight for the rights that the male students were guaranteed.

The fight for more control and an end to dress codes came to a peak in an unexpected way during the spring of 1966. During this time the Jackson women were fighting not just for an end to dress codes, but also for extended curfews, the right to live off campus, phones lines in the dorm rooms, and coke machines in the dormitory lounges. Most of all, they were fighting to be recognized as an organization that actually had power. In the mid 1960s, students across the country were rejecting university policies that governed their nonacademic lives.<sup>48</sup> At Jackson College, the Student Council in particular was angered by their repeated rejection by the administration. Every action they took had to be approved by Dean Herrick and presented an “issue testing the effectiveness of Jackson Student Council.”<sup>49</sup> In the spring of 1966, the students were especially angered by Dean Herrick’s complete dismissal of a proposal to put soda machines in the dormitory common areas. That semester, as a result of the soda machine debacle and the discontent that had been building for the last few years, the Jackson Student Council took a drastic step. Under the leadership of student council President Judy Brown, the Jackson Student Council disbanded itself in protest over Dean Herrick’s refusal to approve measures voted on by the Council that were overwhelmingly supported by the student body. Their dissatisfaction had reached “crisis proportions.”<sup>50</sup> They would not end up reconvening until Dean Herrick left Jackson College.

By this point, the Jackson women were still fighting to change the dress code, but more than that they wanted autonomy to make rules that reflected their own values. By 1966 the Jackson

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<sup>48</sup> Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland*, 80.

<sup>49</sup> “Jackson Awaits Coke Compromise,” *The Tufts Weekly*, October 24, 1962.

<sup>50</sup> Miller, *The Light on the Hill Volume Two*, 97.

dress code was so removed from the reality of student life that it created a major inconvenience for Jackson women. Since most women studied in slacks, they had to change into skirts just for meals. As Catherine Gody explained, “it takes up time which could be used more valuably for studying. If a girl changes into and out of a skirt for the dinner meal five days a week, she will have spent more than 100 hours changing for dinner at



*Jackson students studying in Bermuda shorts and slacks in 1969.<sup>3</sup>*

the end of her four years at Jackson.”<sup>51</sup> The formal petitioning by the Jackson students did lead to some reforms during this period. Slacks were allowed to almost all meals and on the Tufts campus, known as the hill, after business hours.<sup>52</sup> However, this was no longer enough for the Jackson students. They wanted autonomy and respect, and would not accept anything less than complete control over dress policy.

During the period when the Jackson Student Council was disbanded, Dean Herrick left Jackson and Betty Bone, former Assistant Dean of Jackson College, replaced her. Dean Herrick took a leave of absence shortly after the Jackson Student Council disbanded. For the 1966-1967 school year, Betty Bone was Acting Dean of Jackson. She would not actually be made Dean until the summer before the 1967-1968 school year, when Myra Herrick announced she would not return from her leave of absence and was resigning. During Dean Herrick’s leave of absence, President

<sup>51</sup> Gody, “Lax on Jackson Slacks?”

<sup>52</sup> Jackson College 1903~78. Jackson Student Council Association, 1926-67. Jackson Student Council. October 18th, 1966 Notice to Students. UA033.001.003.00001. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

Wessell, the head of Tufts University, also chartered a self-study of Jackson College to investigate parietal rules. In light of the appointment of the new dean, who seemed more receptive to student opinion, and the self-study, the Jackson Student Council decided to reconvene in the spring of the 1966-1967 school year. This commenced the final phase of the Jackson students' fight against the dress code.

During this final phase, the Jackson Student Council was restored in a time when nationally, institutional collegiate extracurriculars were not very popular. However, the students who did join student governments and write for campus newspapers during this time were doing so in an effort to promote change.<sup>53</sup> The students on the Jackson Student Council worked diligently in this period to end *in loco parentis* rules like dress codes, required on-campus housing, and curfews. The women students wanted to be sure they were taking full advantage of the opportunities afforded to them by



*Students in Bermuda shorts enjoying the nice weather, 1966.<sup>4</sup>*

attending Jackson College, and they did not feel they could do that given the dress codes. In this period, college women would not allow their education to be infringed upon by rules that restricted their freedom, so they joined together to force a change to the societal standards by which they were being governed.<sup>54</sup> With the understanding and progressive Dean Bone as the head of Jackson College, students believed they could actually make their voices heard.

Though no changes were made to the dress code for the following academic year, the Jackson Self Study Committee did make its recommendation to the Board of Trustees. They suggested, “dress

<sup>53</sup> Horowitz, *Campus Life*, 235.

<sup>54</sup> Lansley, “College Women or College Girls,” 12.



policy, a matter of social concern, should be determined by the Jackson Student Council.”<sup>55</sup> While the Board of Trustees voted to require the actions of the Jackson Student Council continue to be approved by the dean, Dean Bone was accepting of the council’s decisions. This was a major victory for the Jackson student body, allowing them the freedom they had been fighting for since the inception of the dress code in 1959. With this newfound power in hand, radical changes were quickly made. The Jackson students spent the spring of 1968 reviewing the dress code. Terri Sue Thompson and Susan Mathes, members of the council, led the movement to revise the dress code.<sup>56</sup> Ultimately, the students of Jackson College decided to completely abolish the dress code. Some students on the council had suggested that the code “be phrased as a suggestion and not as a rule, so as to allow freedom of choice without taking away a basic definition of what is considered good taste in dress.”<sup>57</sup> However, the 1968-1969 Jackson College Handbook had no mention of dress, removing the nearly page long list of restrictions that had regulated the women’s lives for over a decade.

This period saw several other changes in social policy as well. Across the country, undergraduate women’s protests to end dress codes led to larger movements to disassemble the entire *in loco parentis* system.<sup>58</sup> This was certainly true at Jackson College, where the abolition of dress codes occurred at the same time that an honor system was developed. Both of these changes helped

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<sup>55</sup> Jackson College 1903~78. Jackson Organizations and Events, 1916~69. Jackson Self Study Committee. Report From the Self Study For Jackson College. UA033.001.002.00007. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

<sup>56</sup> Jackson College 1903~78. Jackson Student Council Minutes, 1957~69. Student Council Minutes 1963-64. Minutes From March 4, 1968. UA033.001.005.00003. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

<sup>57</sup> Jackson College 1903~78. Jackson Student Council Minutes, 1957~69. Student Council Minutes 1963-64. Minutes From March 4, 1968. UA033.001.005.00003. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

<sup>58</sup> Lansley, “College Women or College Girls,” 372.

advance the fight Jackson women were simultaneously having against the curfew system and required on-campus housing. When the dress regulations were removed, it brought the women of Jackson College one step closer to having the same social freedoms as their male colleagues. The fight against dress codes was preparation for larger battles to come. Undergraduate women all over the United States were rallying for various causes. In the beginning of the 1960s, college women sought the freedom to choose their own dress. By the end of the decade they flocked to causes such as reproductive rights, gender equality, and civil liberties.<sup>59</sup> Women were forcing college administrations to acknowledge them as equal to male students.

When classes reconvened in September of 1968, the dress code was not the only liberal change that was seen. The college also had a new dean, Antonia Chayes. Dean Chayes was an active women's rights advocate, and worked hard early on to eradicate the double standard that had restricted Jackson students for so long.<sup>60</sup> She wanted Jackson College to broaden opportunities for its students. The Jackson women had already started to expand their power by taking out all mention of dress in the handbook that was given to the



*Jackson student looking at the bulletin board in 1969.<sup>5</sup>*

incoming Jackson freshman that year.<sup>61</sup> This was an important first step, but Dean Chayes and the Jackson students had higher aims. The dean wanted to show students that they could have

<sup>59</sup> Clemente, *Dress Casual*, 45.

<sup>60</sup> Miller, *The Light on the Hill Volume Two*, 102.

<sup>61</sup> Jackson College Handbook, 1911~70. Jackson College Regulations, 1965~. Jackson College Handbook 1968-1969. Jackson Student Handbook. UP076.001.002.00006. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

successful professional lives and personal ones. Dean Chayes argued that Jackson should be merged with Tufts College, since they were already so intertwined. This would afford more opportunities to Jackson students and hopefully force the men and women to be held to the same parietal regulations.<sup>62</sup> By the end of the 1968-1969 school year, the closely tied nature was emphasized when the Jackson student government decided to join the Tufts student government, so all the students of the university were governed by one body. The institution of Jackson College would continue to be considered independent for a while longer, but in the daily lives of students the separation was becoming harder to notice.

By the time the 1969-1970 school year began, Jackson women had fully embraced having the freedom to wear whatever they wanted. Slacks became a common sight on campus no matter what day of the week it was, and women were setting their sights on larger fights for equality. At the end of the 1960s, more middle class women nationally were attending college and expanding their career choices.<sup>63</sup> The students of Jackson College were following the lead of Dean Chayes in pursuing a successful family life and career. They were taking a first step in the women's movement, with the preliminary undergraduate women's activism focused on personal freedoms on campus and more democratic representation.<sup>64</sup> This battle prepared them for the tumultuous period to come, which would see huge social upheaval. Their triumph over dress codes brought them closer to equality with their male peers, it gave them new responsibility over their lives, and it outfitted them for further changes. Jackson women had been trying to prove for almost two decades that they were mature and responsible, and that they should be treated the same way as their male peers. When they were

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<sup>62</sup> Miller, *The Light on the Hill Volume Two*, 104.

<sup>63</sup> Eisenmann, *Higher Education for Women in Postwar America*, 13.

<sup>64</sup> Lansley, "College Women or College Girls," 13.



Sandals speak for freedom of the toes and of the mind. As one gets older one's shoes as well as one's point of view grow more rigid. Too often the toes grow inward.

*Student work in the  
1967 Jumbo Book.*<sup>65</sup>

finally given the power to make their own rules they did not just relax the dress code, they abolished it. They threw off the reins of an administration that was treating them unfairly and entrusted each individual student with the power to control their own personal freedom. In the final Jackson College Handbook that was printed at the start of the 1969 school year, they added the section on dress policy back, only to announce “shoes are sometimes worn, especially when it snows.”<sup>65</sup> This, to the Jackson women, was all the instruction they needed.

From the initial suggestion that dungarees only be worn in inclement weather, to the war against Bermuda shorts, to a full page of regulations on clothes in the dining halls, the Jackson administration of the 1950s and early 1960s worked hard to control every minute detail of its students lives. Jackson women would not be so easily restricted. They pushed back not just for the right to wear what they wanted, but for the larger issues. These students would not let themselves be treated as children, they would not lose out on opportunities to learn and mature, and they would not let themselves be seen as less capable than their male peers. From the campus wide survey to the disbanding of the student government, Jackson women did everything in their power to change the system that was oppressing them. Despite the lack of support from Tufts men, and Dean Herrick actively ignoring their demands, they worked for progress. When the women found allies in Deans Bone and Chayes, they made radical changes. The development of dress throughout

<sup>65</sup> Jackson College Handbook, 1911~70. Jackson College Regulations, 1965~. Jackson College Handbook 1969-1970. Dress Policy. UP076.001.002.00007. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

the 1960s marked more than just sartorial advancement. The emerging popularity of pants and casual clothing was the first step in a movement for women's liberation and equality. This period saw the changing definition of femininity and the rise of the modern women. It all started with college students, and specifically, their desire to wear pants.

Images

1. The Jumbo 1916-2017. The Jumbo 1917-2017. The Jumbo 1954. Photo of women in the theatre, 108. UP024.001.030.001. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.
2. The Jumbo 1916-2017. The Jumbo 1917-2017. The Jumbo 1962. Photo of couple dancing at fraternity party, 13. UP024.001.038.00001. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.
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4. The Jumbo 1916-2017. The Jumbo 1917-2017. The Jumbo 1966. Photo of couple outside, 165. UP024.001.042.001. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.
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6. The Jumbo 1916-2017. The Jumbo 1917-2017. The Jumbo 1967. Photo of sandals with caption, 136. UP024.001.043.001. Tufts University. Digital Collections and Archives. Medford, MA.

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