

Oral History Excerpt
George Hess '55 interview by Mac Barrett '67
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On being Jewish at Gilman:

Hess: Yeah. But the Jewish thing wasn't a simple thing. In those days, there really was no relationship between me and the rest of the class, socially, on the weekends. Even to the point when I graduated, I mean, yeah, there were a few guys who I occasionally saw, but I wasn't invited to anybody's dancing class or to most people's houses. The number of guys who I saw on a weekend occasionally wouldn't fill one hand. And there were incidents in the school well after that that, you know, were a real problem in trying to build relationships. So, my social life on the weekends was mainly with Jewish people and my life at Gilman was with Gilman guys during the week.

Barrett: Separate and distinct.

Hess: Yep.

Barrett: You obviously wrote about this for Gilman Voices, the school's centennial book, published in 1997, and you were a pioneer, at least in this regard.

Hess: It's true. I don't have any regrets about it. I think the evolution of Gilman from the WASP school that it was up until the vision of Henry Callard to start to change this, I think began a change, a metamorphosis, for Gilman, which was clearly furthered by Reddy Finney, and brought to where it is today where-I mean, I think Gilman is just a great educational experience for a Jew, an African American, a Muslim, an Asian-whatever the minority you want to say-because this is what the school is all about: you judge people based on what they are, not based on their religion, or their skin color, or whatever.