The crowd poured into the Armstrong auditorium in the early evening of September 11, 1946. Red flares burned. A brass band played. Those who could not find seats in the building or who preferred the late summer heat outside to the stuffy heat of the full house inside sat in their cars or on benches in the park to listen to the speeches broadcast through a public address system. It was not a college event. The G.I. People’s Party had rented the auditorium to make its appeal for the votes of Savannah veterans in the city’s upcoming primary election. A host of newly organized political groups claimed to represent the interests of the returning servicemen, though each group also held connections with various power centers in the city. The speaker at the microphone assured his listeners that the G.I. People’s Party stood for progress and good government and served as no “stooge” for any particular political group. Out of the audience, the president of the Veteran’s Progressive Club rose from his seat and strode to the stage. Was it not true, he asked, that the G.I. People’s Party was in fact dominated by the city administration, which had let its police officers off duty to attend the rally and swell the numbers of the crowd? The questioner and his group supported the new Citizen’s Progressive League, a challenger to the present city administration. The heat in the room rose higher with the exchange of charges and countercharges. The spokesman for the G.I. People’s Party denied the accusation and warned his listeners that the promises of the two “Progressive” groups most likely meant only what veterans usually found when they came home from war, that “a broom and a rake are good enough for a veteran.”

The boys came back like an invading army. Demobilizations began in the fall of 1945, and by August 1946 the Chatham County Superior Court reported 19,000 registered discharges and 13,000 veterans of World War II residing in Chatham County. They were looking for jobs, and those who wanted more than a broom and a rake flooded onto college campuses, either to resume an interrupted education or to enter as freshmen. The G.I. Bill (Public Law 346, the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944) opened the doors of higher education and, to the great surprise of the lawmakers, veterans leaped at the chance. Designed primarily to provide a smooth transition into the peacetime economy and protect the job market from being overwhelmed by servicemen, the G.I. Bill cushioned the country against the volatile political consequences of unemployed veterans by channeling them into higher education. The Roosevelt administration did not want to see any Hooverville tents pitched on the grounds in Washington, D.C., as had occurred after World War I. But the broader effects of the act were enormous. By 1950, eight million veterans had entered college under the provisions of the G.I. Bill. By some estimates, one out of every two college students in 1946 was a veteran. Armstrong received its share.

Every college in the country rode the enrollment roller coaster from 1946 through the early 1950s: the great peaks of 1947 and 1948, followed by the sharp drop before the smaller peak of veterans from the Korean War, and then the slow rise until the post-war babies reached college age in the mid-1960s. The test for a small city college like Armstrong was to survive both the ups and the downs. Even the high enrollment periods presented problems beyond the obvious ones of size and space. President Hawes constantly warned...
the Commission about the danger of expanding into bankruptcy. Tuition, he repeated time and time again, never covered the cost of a college education. Endowment or public funding always had to make up the difference. Increased numbers of students did not change the hard reality of that fact. As a result, the Armstrong University System would work in conjunction with Armstrong or would become a competitor. There was also the question of whether the Armstrong curriculum would expand in new directions or maintain a liberal arts tradition of preparing students for transfer to four-year institutions. The veteran’s story bulged at the center of Armstrong’s second decade; but it was not the only story, and around its edges lay larger issues of the college’s future direction and purpose.

POST-WAR PEOPLE AND PLACES

In 1946, Foreman Hawes was in his tenth year at Armstrong. He had been sitting in the president’s chair for four years, and he would carry that responsibility for almost twenty more. A chemistry professor by training, he gave the impression of being somewhat surprised to find himself a college president. His manner was quiet and reserved, slightly formal but not stiff. He brought to his office a sense of dignity and an unexpected sense of humor. On most days, he walked across Bull Street to the Oglethorpe Club to have a tomato sandwich and a martini for lunch, often inviting a faculty member to join him.

When he interviewed prospective faculty and took them to lunch, he expected them to order an alcoholic beverage to accompany the midday meal. He frowned on teetotalers. He also made regular treks across Whitaker Street to the Georgia Historical Society in Hodgson Hall, where he visited the small, red-headed librarian who happened to be his wife, Lilla Mills Hawes. Students who did not know the librarian’s identity found the gossip delicious, and Hawes found the rumors amusing.

Hawes found the rumors amusing. He had a happy habit of whistling as he walked and a nervous habit of endlessly clearing his throat, harrumping his way through his sentences. Consequently, he often used more articulate faculty members to serve as spokesmen with the press and the public. His written reports to the Armstrong Commission, however, were as precise as lab reports, with clear underlined topics followed by brief factual comment, no frills or flourishes in the manner of Mayor Gamble and no narrative exposition in the style of Lowe and Askew. He dealt with facts directly as he saw them, pleasant or unpleasant. Financial facts were particularly worrisome. He rarely took a vacation, as if fearful that something might go wrong while he was away from the college.

New faculty were also in place. Martha Fay arrived from the Midwest as a godsend for the sciences, which became particularly thin when scientists entered war-related services. Her field was genetics, but with the versatility typical of Armstrong faculty, she relieved Hawes of a chemistry class, learned coastal biology, and coordinated the science classes for the Candler Hospital nurses who took their pre-clinical work at the college. She was amazed to find that lab chemicals in storage would melt in Savannah’s heat and humidity.

Lee Goodwin came from Duke to teach English and was surprised to discover a college housed in old residences rather than on a broad green campus of Gothic and Georgian buildings. From St. John’s College in Maryland, a young Savannahian returned...
home with his baccalaureate degree to apply for any position that might employ the liberal arts skill that the St. John’s curriculum instilled in its students. His name was Joe Killorin. President Hawes hired him to teach German, the last (and least) of the fields that the young applicant listed in his repertoire. He joined Mr. Beecher in covering a whole range of courses in the humanities, and for Lee Goodwin and faculty and students over the course of the next thirty-five years, he was “a scholar the likes of which most of us had not encountered.” Students found an equally inspiring young scholar the likes of which most of us had not encountered over the course of the next thirty-five years, he was “a Gladly taught.” And they ate. They had picnics at Tybee, at the Duhu Clubhouse, with boiled shrimp in the shells, spiced ham, potato salad, and rolls, all prepared by Mrs. Hawes. Later, when the numbers in the first class of 1935. With a dry wit, brilliant blue eyes, and rumpled suits that “looked like he kept them in a mayonnaise jar,” he engaged the minds of veterans in a mayonnaise jar,” he engaged the minds of veterans who wanted to work while they attended college. It would also provide non-credit adult education courses of interest to the community. The college would continue to teach the Candler nurses, but there was no recommendation to develop new areas of vocational or technical training. Home economics would remain and would need more space. The Playhouse should reopen, and the Institute of Citizenship should continue its series of public speakers. In 1944, the vision for Armstrong’s academic future appeared very similar to what it had been before the war.

In the summer of 1944, Hawes and the faculty prepared a statement of academic priorities for Armstrong’s post-war curriculum. The liberal arts program would remain central for the traditional students and for the veterans. In addition to the day classes, an enlarged evening program would serve veterans who wanted to work while they attended college. It would also provide non-credit adult education courses of interest to the community. The college would continue to teach the Candler nurses, but there was no recommendation to develop new areas of vocational or technical training. Home economics would remain and would need more space. The Playhouse should reopen, and the Institute of Citizenship should continue its series of public speakers. In 1944, the vision for Armstrong’s academic future appeared very similar to what it had been before the war.

Its first occupant was the Veteran’s Guidance Center, which hung out its sign on the ground floor of the Bull Street side in December 1945. The center offered a battery of psychological and aptitude tests to help veterans make job decisions and determine their future direction. By contractual arrangement, Armstrong provided part of the staff and the Veteran’s Administration provided the rest. The college received $20 for each veteran counseled by the Center, and more than 2,000 veterans took advantage of the Center’s services prior to its closing in March 1948. It was a major part of the college’s life, strongly emphasized in the Bulletin. Armstrong’s non-veteran students could also receive job counseling at the Center for little or no extra expense, and schools and physicians in the community recommended its services to the general public.
By the fall of 1948, the move was complete. According to the agreement, the Armstrong library occupied the ground floor and the main floor of Hodgson Hall. Researchers and members of the Society used the balcony area. Armstrong students became non-voting, non-dues-paying “members” of the Society, with full access to its materials. Again, the college had expanded its facilities at minimal cost.

The students wanted more than a library. They needed a student center, and Hawes thought so too. Aside from the front steps of the mansion, the lobby of the Armstrong building had always been a hub of traffic and an informal social center throughout the day. The resulting noise and litter in the lobby were considerable. Hawes calculated at least 1,200 comings and goings through the front hall each day.84 When the third floor ballroom-recreation room was reassigned to other uses, the students found their lounge relegated to the basement, which they complained was “a scandal – too small, no victrola, no room to dance, no place to play cards.”85 After the library moved to Hodgson Hall, the Guidance Center occupied the vacant rooms in the Lane Building, and the empty space on the ground floor of the Hunt Building took on new life as a student snack bar with tables and booths able to seat 100 students. The essential ingredient was the jukebox. In January 1949, “The Dump” opened its doors to the sound of Dinah Shore singing “Buttons and Bows.”86 The records dropped and the songs and singers of the 1950s followed: Eddie Fisher with “O My Papa,” Doris Day and her “Secret Love,” Dean Martin’s “Amore,” and others.87 And always beneath the music lay the soft slap of cards in endless games of bridge.88 With the addition of the Hunt Building and Hodgson Hall, Armstrong had the campus it would keep for the next fifteen years: three converted residences, two buildings constructed for academic use, and one library, rented and shared.

VETERAN’S AFFAIRS

The great wave of veterans arrived too late to have their pictures in the 1946 ‘Georgia’, but their faces filled the yearbooks for 1947 and 1948 with photos in which leather flight jackets replaced the formality of coat and tie. Some of them might not have attended college at all except for the war and the G.I. Bill, but here they were and they immediately made their presence felt in every phase of life at Armstrong. They swooped down and took over the class offices and most of the high profile positions. The leaders among them were confident and self-assured. They established competing political parties for student elections, and they conducted loud and boisterous campaigns. They debated Cold War issues by shouting “communist” and “capitalist” at each other.89 A few of them produced cartoon newspapers with language and viewpoints very different from those that appeared in The Inkwell. They were sports-minded and wanted a gymnasium. They wanted alcoholic beverages at college dances.90 In class discussions and in the columns of The Inkwell, they brought a new dimension of personal experience. They had made history in Europe and had learned their French and German fighting their way down the roads of France and Germany. Many of them had flown combat missions in the Pacific. Some of them had walked through the bombed streets of Tokyo. One of them had survived the Bataan Death March.

In general, they mixed easily and well with the other students. The age difference was really not very great. The girls found them exciting. The boys found them daring. And they were.

Veterans constituted more than 64% of the day students for 1946-47 as daytime enrollment leaped to 408 in the fall and averaged 440 for the year.91 The numbers rose to 469 in the fall of 1947 and spiked to 510 by the fall of 1948. Faculty increased from nineteen to twenty-seven; and the programs of study doubled from three to six, with new associate degree programs in engineering, physical education, and sciences.92 The college Bulletin showed other adjustments as well. The section on Reports and Grades stated that “students who are old enough to vote should be held accountable for their own scholarship,” and therefore grades would be sent only to students and not to parents unless specifically requested. The section on Student Conduct included a strong new statement:

Armstrong students conduct themselves as ladies and gentlemen … Organizations and groups using the name of the college in their social and other functions are identified with the college and become subject to the same high standards of conduct and of supervision whether on or off campus. The reputation of Armstrong is in the hands of its students.”93

No such statement had appeared before the war. In fact, Armstrong prided itself on having no formal rules regarding student conduct. Appropriate behavior was simply assumed. But the post-war climate was different.

Students now were activists who took their opinions onto the streets and into campus politics. In February 1947, they staged a nighttime march in downtown Savannah against a Licensing Bill that limited liquor sales. The trustees had a “capitalist” at each other.94 A few of them produced cartoon newspapers with language and viewpoints very different from those that appeared in The Inkwell.
Savannah carrying torches and placards and an effigy of “Herman the hooligan” to protest the young Talmadge’s attempt to seize the governorship after his father’s death in office. Student elections changed from the benign politeness of the pre-war years to high-energy campaigns led by veterans and their newly formed political organizations. First on the scene in the fall of 1945 was John K. McGinty and his Revolutionist Party, which came fully equipped with a newspaper, *The Revolute*, a seven-point program, and a clarion call: “Freshmen, Unite, Join the Revolution.” McGinty called himself the “Generalissimo” and listed his cohorts as “Generals of the Staff.” Their aim, they said, was “not to rest until power from the worthy hands of the sophomores but to give freshmen the opportunity to be leaders in the school also.”

Their first effort was to revive intramural sports for boys, naming their teams the “Socialists” and the “Revolutionists.” The contentious language captured campus attention, and the second issue of *The Revolute* carried endorsements from several faculty members and an encouraging statement from President Hawes. “Any class or club has a perfect right to publish a news sheet of its activities and if the ‘Revolute’ continues as successfully as it started, it should be a great newspaper.”

Other political parties joined the scene. In the fall of 1946, “boss” Donald Austin led the Progressive Political Party (PPP) in a campaign that “turned the school inside out, upside down, and several other ways” in “the hottest election the Armstrong’s granite walls have ever seen.” The party platform demanded a cafeteria, water coolers in each building, a victrola and radio for the student lounge, a telephone for student use in the Armstrong Building, an endowment fund, and a *Geechee* published on time. McGinty and *The Revolute* accused the newcomers of undemocratic practices and hurled a shrill headline against the PPP machine: “Pressure Politics Invade Armstrong.” The “Generalissimo” took his stand in behalf of “the ordinary student” and vowed to fight against any organization or policy not beneficial to the college. In the fall of 1947, Grady Dickey’s Free Party slate swept into office. In the fall of 1948 an Independent Party ran candidates for the sophomore elections, while
The Turtle Times too published a newspaper, Terrapin Club. Officially an intramural sports team, it echoed the raucous sound of Savannah politics. Open to all students with lots of eating, dancing, and theater productions. They sponsored a shrimp dinner as well as snappish, however. They served as ushers for the government meetings. But the editorial policy of for scholarships, and they presented the sophomore alumnus now returned to teach chemistry, but Magee Fretwell Crider, himself a veteran and an Armstrong representative appeared before the senate to hear the reading of the letter and to present a formal apology on behalf of the club. He then read a policy statement from editor Magee promising that future issues of The Turtle Times would be “clean enough to be read in church.” But a rap on the knuckles with the silver gavel was not enough for President Hawes, who carried the matter to the Armstrong Commission and asked for a resolution prohibiting the use of college equipment to produce unapproved publications and banning any such publication from being distributed or posted on the Armstrong premises.

The Inkwell rose to the defense of its nemesis and suggested that the Commission’s action was overly hasty. The Turtle Times was “rather rugged,” said The Inkwell editor, but it was “newly” and deserved a second chance. President Hawes was unmoved. The college attorney had advised him that the college could be sued for libelous statements made by an Armstrong publication or an Armstrong club. And that was the end of the matter. The Terrapin intramural team remained, but The Turtle Times left the scene; and in due course so did Joe Magee.

The following fall of 1949, Inkwell reporter Archie Whitefield compared the uncontested sophomore elections with the heated campaigns of the previous year. “Have politics gone to pot at Dear Old Armstrong?” he mused. The answer was “no.” A week after Whitfield’s question, the political scene caught fire again. The Inkwell headlined “Hellzapoppin,” as charges fired back and forth that a “sophomore syndicate” was controlling all campus elections. The spark for the new outburst came from Ned Fogler and a new, rogue publication, The Divisifier.

The Divisifier was only mildly iconoclastic as compared with The Turtle Times, but its printing and distribution could be extraordinarily imaginative. Its first issue came off the press at Wesley Monumental Church. Fogler identified himself as a student from Armstrong’s “publications department” and asked the church secretaries if he could use their mimeograph machine while they went to lunch. The secretaries generously provided the paper and everything. The next day, Fogler and accomplice Archie Whitefield carried their bundles of news sheets to the third floor terrace of the Armstrong building and dropped them over the balustrade to flutter gently down into the yard below. The guys gave up shaving, and a hillbilly band provided singing from the third floor terrace. A man of causes, with a veteran’s “attitude” and a very large cigar, Fogler became by the end of the year everyone’s favorite enemy. The Inkwell claimed that it signed him up as assistant editor in order to transform him into a conservative.

The Revolote, The Turtle Times, and The Divisifier were the work of outspoken individuals who brought a lively new energy to Armstrong student life, but the post-war world included serious issues that touched veterans and non-veterans alike. Their generation lived in the shadow of the mushroom cloud, and their Inkwell articles described the complexities of their “New Universe” with its glass skyscrapers and stockpiles of atomic bombs. They wrote about “Anesthetics and War” and compared the benefits of novocain with the new magnitude of death and destruction. “What Price Success?” asked Mark Steadman, when guided missiles and other military technology made it possible to kill two million people at a time. Arthur Chandler, the Bataan survivor who had seen the deepest horrors of war, wrote in the voice of war itself: “I am the juggernaut that levels mankind to nothingness.”

The issue of Universal Military Training drew heated debate. An Inkwell editorial opposed it, and Joe Magee took The Turtle Times into the discussion with an article entitled “UMT – Or Not To Be,” in which he denounced The Inkwell’s position (as usual) and declared that he would post a petition on the bulletin board to gather signatures in support of universal military training. When the petition disappeared, he set up a ballot box in the lobby with Terrapins standing guard.

In early February 1946, a college-sponsored public forum invited Associated Press correspondent Anna Louise Strong to speak on the subject of “Post-War Russia.” When she proposed that the Soviet Union wanted only peace and a chance to build its own system and show the world what it was like, a uniformed member of the audience stood up and vehemently challenged her remarks. Student articles in The Inkwell expressed various opinions about the Soviet Union, and classroom discussions of the subject prompted rumors that Armstrong’s teachers were introduced Pioneer Days in an effort to enliven the campus routine with a few days of Wild West frivolity. Students wore blue jeans and western wear to school, the guys gave up shaving, and a hillbilly band provided picking and singing from the third floor terrace. A man of causes, with a veteran’s “attitude” and a very large cigar, Fogler became by the end of the year everyone’s favorite enemy. The Inkwell claimed that it signed him up as assistant editor in order to transform him into a conservative.
ruining the youth of Savannah by teaching them to believe in atheism and communism.”81 Hawes assured the Commission that the allegations were absurd. But on several evenings during the fall of 1948, Armstrong alumnus Carlton Kimberly gathered a group in Jenkins Auditorium to discuss the need for a world government to take control of all atomic weapons and prevent the possibility of future atomic warfare. These United World Federalists announced their meetings in The Inkwell and invited students and faculty to participate and help establish a Savannah chapter of the organization. Their slogan was simple: “One World or None.” A few students and faculty were daring or curious enough to attend.82

For both the sports-minded veterans and the traditional students, President Hawes hired Carmen Torrie as a new full-time physical education teacher and coach in the fall of 1946. Torrie had the dark good looks of a matinee movie idol, and he liked to roll up his sleeves and flex the muscles he had developed in the coal mines of Pennsylvania. Sharp knives, he declared, would bounce off those biceps.84 The boys were duly impressed. Under his direction in 1947, a varsity basketball team took to the courts for a nine game winning streak in the college’s first basketball season since 1942.85 The following year the team won the state junior college championship, and for the next three years they placed as either finalists or semifinalists.86 They played their games at the gymnasium at Hunter Field, since the college still had no sports facility of its own. For regular physical education classes, the students continued their well-worn paths to the YMCA and the YWCA, or they drew chalk lines on the floor of Jenkins auditorium for handball and deck tennis.87 The arrangements worked but not very well.

Hawes brought the matter of a gymnasium to the Commission’s finance committee in the spring of 1947. Committee chairman William Murphy suggested that Hawes publicize the need to the community at large.88 The following week a major article appeared in the morning newspaper in which Hawes proposed that the college purchase a B-29 airplane hangar and move it from Hunter Field to the south end of Forsyth Park to house a multi-purpose gymnasium. The hangar, Hawes wrote, could accommodate one large gym and two small ones, or two large gyms. With a seating capacity of 2,500-4,500, the building could attract high school tournaments and provide drill space for the Chatham Field Artillery. It could also serve as a rainy day play area for children. Hawes estimated that it would cost $30,000 to purchase, move, install, and floor the proposed structure.89 The park extension beyond the Confederate monument was not landscaped or developed as the north end of the park was, but a B-29 hangar would certainly have changed the character of the neighborhood. The idea disappeared quickly. As with President Lowe’s suggestion for a science building on the site of the dummy fort, Forsyth Park was a continuing temptation for Armstrong expansion, but it was forbidden ground.

After the Armstrong team won their 1948 championship, the issue of a gym surfaced again. This time Hawes petitioned the city to purchase the gymnasium abandoned by the army at Hunter Field. It could stay at its existing location and Coach Torrie could live in one of the nearby housing units to oversee the activities and security of the building.90 The details were approved, and with the help of a modest scholarship program, Torrie began to recruit out-of-state players to supplement the local talent of Bobby Gunn, Walt Campbell, and John Rousakis.91 Torrie and his team spent $5,000 and the summer of 1949 reworking the gym’s interior.

During the night of Thursday, December 1, following the first home game of the season, the building burned to the ground.92 The students were stunned. At noon the next day, they crowded into Jenkins auditorium for a rousing rally of school spirit led by the college cheerleaders. Torrie already had pledges of help from the community. Sears and Roebuck offered to donate $100 worth of athletic gear. Stubbs Hardware volunteered either new shoes or new uniforms. The college intramural clubs caught the spirit, with the Eager Beavers first on their feet to pledge $10 toward replacing lost equipment. The other clubs followed their example.93 The rally then took to the streets with drums and cymbals as 250 students marched down Bull Street to City Hall carrying signs that proclaimed “Our team is red hot; our gym is burned up.” At Broughton Street they borrowed the loudspeaker of their police escort, and beneath the balcony of City Hall, they chanted their demands to Mayor Fulmer: “We want another one better than the other one.”94 They were zealots, exhilarated by a cause and the excitement of being part of a mob. It was heady stuff.

For more students marched than ever attended a basketball game. Basketball held a high profile, but attendance at games was always low. The Inkwell constantly lamented the low turnout, whereas local high school rivalries continued to draw a large attendance from Armstrong students.95 After the fire, Armstrong’s games moved to the new Hellenic Center gym at Whittaker and Anderson Streets, and physical education classes continued to use facilities at the Y.

The most active part of the college’s athletic life centered on intramural sports. The Terrapins were primarily an intramural club, and they faced off against rivals with names suggesting various degrees of strength and energy: Gators, Scholars, Loafers, and Eager Beavers. On most afternoons they played out their rivalries in Forsyth Park where, as long as there was no B-29 hangar, nobody minded if they scrimmaged on the grass. The women fought their intramural contests as Stick Chicks, Sassy Strutters, and Glamas-zons. They petitioned the college for a women’s basketball team in...
In the spring of 1949, and when they were turned down, they took their revenge through the female-dominated student senate by denying the men’s request for a baseball team. They relented after reviewing the request a second time.97

The formal campus organization for veterans was the Veteran’s Social Club, formed in April 1946, and numbering sixty members by April 1947. For the 1948 ‘Geechee, eighty-two of them lined up on the front steps to have their picture taken. The purpose of the club, as clearly stated in the name, was social, with one formal dance a year, three informal dances, and a June banquet.98

Homecoming in December was still the primary campus celebration, and in 1948 Joe Magee described its various events: students shivering on the back of Bar-bed trucks decorated with paint and props and crêpe paper for the parade, the post-parade gathering in the Armstrong lobby, the early evening basketball game, and the formal dance that crowned the freshman king and queen at midnight.99 It was all a bit much to cram into one day, and in 1950 the schedule spread the activities across a weekend.100

Dance music still carried the big band sound played by students like George Doerner or other local musicians; and when they opened up with “Begin the Beguine,” Armstrong couples would swing and sway and glide and slide across the well-waxed floor of Jenkins Auditorium.101 Dances observed carefully defined “corsage” rules. Formal dances required corsages, evening gowns, and tuxedos. Semi-formal dances came in two varieties, with or without corsages, always clearly specified. Informal dances came in any number of forms. A Shipwreck Dance in the entrance hall of the Armstrong building pinned a pirate’s patch over one eye of Mr. Armstrong’s portrait, set out whiskey bottles with dripping candles on the tables, and sold fifteen-cent beer (root beer) to thirsty dancers. Real beer at a college dance was, in the words of the ‘Geechee, ”the students’ dream” and “the Commission’s nightmare.”102

The return of the veterans and the rise in enrollment allowed the college to revive the Savannah Playhouse. Described by President Hawes as “probably the most popular project ever initiated and promoted by the college,” it came back to life in August 1947 under the direction of newly hired Carlson Thomas.103 Thomas sorted out the dust and debris that had accumulated backstage during the war years and set up his “green room” in the carriage house formerly occupied by The Nut. He rearranged the seating plan for Jenkins auditorium and revamped the backstage area to provide greater stage space and permanent rigging for major scenery pieces.104 Outside the auditorium, he constructed a new, lighted marquee to announce that theater was back at Armstrong. On November 17, 1947, the first-night audience walked down a red-carpeted center aisle to watch new red velvet curtains rise on the opening production of My Sister Eileen, in which Thomas himself took a substitute role in a last minute emergency. At the end of the six-night run, 1,500 people had come to see the performance.105 Thomas was less of a showman than Stacy Keach, but he was a genius at the technical side of theater productions. He could build anything, and what he could not build he could scrounge up from somewhere. He scavenged the city’s second-hand stores and gained access to the treasures in the attic trunks of some of Savannah’s leading matrons.106 Inevitably, he worked in Keach’s shadow, but the revived Playhouse successfully carried forward the earlier tradition of the college-community theater. Probably the most popular production appeared in 1949, when Green Grow the Lilacs delighted Savannah audiences in the same way that it charmed other audiences under the name of Oklahoma! The sell-out performance issued standing-room tickets at the end of the week’s run and...
then extended the show into the following week.107 Thomas concluded his season in May with Taming of the Shrew, putting Joe Killorin in rights to play Petruchio. He then staged a six-day drama festival featuring the three plays of the year with afternoon and evening performances and a forum in Hodgson Hall to discuss different aspects of theater production. The whole affair was a local tour de force of staging and organization.

December of 1949 was a jinxed month. It was the month that the Hunter gym burned, and Thomas was badly injured in a car accident during the Christmas holiday. With two cracked vertebrae in his neck, he did not return to campus until spring and even then still wore a twelve-pound plaster cast from his neck to his waist.108 In the best stage tradition, his troupe carried on without him and presented Charley's Aunt as scheduled, directed by Ross Durfee, a talented older student and veteran who had professional acting experience. At the end of the school year, however, the college decided to discontinue the Playhouse as a joint college-community venture and replaced it with a student-only theater program. Hawes cited “financial reasons” and told the Commission that the revised arrangement would involve less of a time commitment and would "not interfere with the students’ academic program.”109

The new theater group, The Masquers, made its debut in the fall of 1950 just as the enrollment roller coaster turned downward behind the departing World War II veterans and the Korean War added its effect on the declining numbers.

AROUND THE EDGES

As enrollment rose and fell with the comings and goings of military service, other developments circled around the edges of the Armstrong story. Two major issues concerned the relationship with the city and the relationship with the University System. Within these two matters lay two others: finances and four-year status. The presence, or absence, of the veterans affected all of these questions.

In January 1946, when the trickle of returning soldiers became a steady stream, the Savannah Jaycees asked the city to look toward Armstrong's expansion into a four-year college.112 The request came after a month of study and discussion with Commission Chairman Jenkins and President Hawes. Jenkins endorsed the idea as a long-term goal, but Hawes expressed strong reservations. A four-year college would need a library with twice as many volumes as Armstrong currently held, and it would need a budget more than double Armstrong’s current budget of $65,000, of which the city provided $31,500. He calculated that a four-year college of 300 students could expect a natural attrition that would produce twenty-five seniors, for which the city would pay the rather costly sum of $75,000. A larger enrollment would not change the basic ratio. Hawes declared that he did not wish to “throw cold water on a worthy objective,” but he believed that the trend in higher education pointed away from four-year colleges: "The junior college and the university are the promising institutions of the future."113 He saw Armstrong continuing as a junior college with a broadening base of service to the community.

In the summer of 1946, Mayor Peter Roe Nugent took a different direction. He contacted President Harmon Caldwell of the University of Georgia and asked about the possibility of establishing a branch of the University of Georgia in Savannah. Nugent explained that a number of veterans had appealed to him personally after being turned down by colleges that had no room for them. A Savannah branch of the University of Georgia could solve the problem by occupying the now vacant facilities of Hunter Field. The buildings were well-suited for classes and included housing facilities, a theater, a chapel, and a gymnasium. “All you have to do is come in and turn on the lights,”114 President Caldwell flew to Savannah to tour the grounds with the mayor’s committee, which included President Hawes. Nugent was ecstatic at the prospect of a Savannah branch. The newspaper leaped to predict that “a full-blown, four-year college will be established at Hunter Field to accommodate from 1,000 to 3,000 veterans and other young people from this area and possibly from beyond the state.”115 The newspaper did not have it quite right. The next report explained that the Savannah Branch would serve only freshmen and sophomores who were veterans. Nevertheless, the story revealed what many Savannahians wanted to hear: “Savannah has landed a branch of the University of Georgia.”116 The Savannah Branch opened in September 1946 with 556 students.117

At first, of course, there were more than enough veterans to go around, but Hawes remained concerned about the long-term effects of the Savannah Branch on Armstrong. Both he and Chairman Jenkins wrote to President Caldwell and to new Chancellor Raymond Paty to ask about the Regents’ intentions. Rumors in the community talked about the possibility that the Savannah Branch might become a permanent presence as a two-year or even a four-year institution. Paty assured the Armstrong leaders that the Hunter arrangement was purely temporary.118

In July 1947, new mayor John G. Kennedy resumed the call for a four-year institution. There was no reason, he insisted, for all university education to remain concentrated in Athens and Atlanta.119 He appointed a study committee, but the committee’s conclusions were cautious. The easiest way to get a four-year college in Savannah, they admitted, would be for the city to continue and expand the Branch Campus at Hunter, but that decision would have to come from Atlanta. For the city to expand Armstrong to a four-year institution was out of the question at present. Funding simply did not permit it. Until that picture changed, Armstrong fulfilled its primary purpose of serving local educational needs through its own courses and through others that might be offered in collaboration with the Extension Division of the University of Georgia.120

By January 1948, the number of veterans had peaked, and new rumors circulated that the Regents were ready to close the Hunter Branch. Mayor Kennedy and other community leaders protested vehemently.121 The president of the Chamber of Commerce and the dean of the Savannah Branch traveled to Atlanta and engaged in “spirited debate” with the Regents, imploring them not to close the school, or at least not yet.122 They won a brief reprieve, but declining enrollment was a financial liability and the Board of Regents closed the Branch in June 1948.123

Several students remained for summer courses offered at Armstrong by the University of Georgia Extension Division under a special “temporary plan.” The director of the Extension Division, whom Hawes presented to the Commission at its May meeting, was none other than Ernest Lowe, Armstrong’s first president, now back at the Athens campus. To help work out the details for the summer program, Lowe brought with him the university’s registrar and director of admission, Thomas Askew, Armstrong’s second president. The planning session must have felt like a presidential reunion. The summer arrangements provided that Armstrong faculty would offer most of the instruction for the Extension Division, and Armstrong would receive any money left over after salaries were paid. The experience proved successful enough for the university to propose to locate an Off-Campus Center in Savannah, renting Armstrong’s buildings for evening courses and offering some junior-level courses in the afternoon. It did not give Savannah a four-year college, but it provided additional college-level work that served local educational needs and thereby fulfilled much of the mission identified by Mayor Kennedy’s committee. It also helped Armstrong’s finances.124

The post-war leap in enrollment raised the college’s expenses far more than its income; and when the number of veterans declined, income fell too quickly to allow for budget adjustments to be made. The college raised its tuition in 1946 to $40 per quarter and again in 1947 to $50 per quarter, with higher
rates for students outside of Chatham County and outside of Georgia.125 But tuition increases were not the answer, financially or philosophically, since Hawes and the Commission were all conscious of the fact that the college served families of modest income. Other sources of revenue were very limited. In 1949, the college endowment stood at $20,000, which provided income of $450 a year that could be used for small projects such as reopening the Playhouse.126 Hawes was not a fundraiser, and even Chairman Jenkins admitted that Savannah’s influential citizens showed little interest in contributing to the college endowment.127 The alumni had begun to organize, but they were still young and not yet in a position to offer much help. The remaining resource was the city.

In 1949, the city appropriation for the college amounted to $51,000 of the college’s total budget of $138,600. Hawes anticipated that tuition, rentals, and the bookstore would bring the revenue total to $110,665, but an imbalance of nearly $28,000 remained.128 In his summer report to the Commission, he underscored the question that had to be answered: “Where can we find the funds to adequately finance the college for the academic year 1949-1950?”129 Enrollment for the fall of 1949 dropped to 386, following the 510 high mark caused by the veterans in the fall of 1948. Hawes told the Commission that even though faculty and staff positions might be cut for the following year, if the budget were reduced to $100,000 the school would have to eliminate so many programs (such as basketball, physical education, the Playhouse, and music) that it would be unattractive to students and would be forced to close its doors. Faced with such a dire prediction, the Commission discussed whether Armstrong should ask to join the University System. They decided to make a special request to the city first, and somehow the city came up with an increased allocation for the coming year.130 The college slid through the summer of 1950 on a $10,000 loan covered by Chairman Jenkins’ personal credit. The position cuts began in September, including Carlson Thomas’ position as Playhouse director.131

In the fall of 1950, enrollment fell to 309 as the Korean War began to call young men back into service. The Index revealed Armstrong’s first death in the new war in November: James Waring Hornung, Jr., class of 1950.132 In December, the Air National Guard mobilized its 117th Aircraft Control and Warning Flight to Stewart Air Base near Nashville and took with it the freshman and sophomore class presidents, along with thirty of their classmates. The Terrapin Club, still mostly veterans and reservists, disappeared into service, and the 1951 “Geechee list” showed a roll of forty students and faculty serving in Korea.133 But the Cold War did not generate the same kind of response as a hot one. The college-age boys did not rush out to enlist as they had after Pearl Harbor. They delayed for the draft, but they received an automatic deferment for the current year with further deferment possible depending on class rank and performance on a Selective Service Exam.134 The students in reserve units were the ones most immediately affected. The Korean War did not devastate the college as had been the case in World War II, but enrollment dropped to 237 day students in the fall of 1951, and in the spring of 1954 it fell to 217.


The war’s impact on enrollment and finances led the college to look for new solutions. From Hawes’s perspective, Armstrong needed to take advantage of the large number of veterans in the evening program operated by the University of Georgia’s Athens Campus Center that had succeeded the Branch Campus at Hunter. The Center rented the college’s buildings for its afternoon and evening courses, but its students did not pay tuition to Armstrong. A record number of 230 students were enrolled in the Center for the fall of 1950.135 Although only seventeen of those students took a full load of courses, the revenue from large numbers of part-time students would help relieve the budget crisis. Hawes told the Commission that the initial rental arrangement had been “mutually helpful for a while. However, in view of present conditions and the problems which face us, Armstrong must operate its own evening school. Both the students and the income are badly needed.”136 The Commission wanted to be sure that the disengagement from the University of Georgia occurred carefully and diplomatically, with the announcement of the change coming from the offices in Athens. All went smoothly and Armstrong assumed control of the evening program June 1, 1951.

Armstrong had offered evening classes since 1936, and during WW II Hawes always listed Armstrong’s night students in the college’s catalog, even as the day enrollment dropped to the danger mark of 100 students. But he always evaluated the college’s viability by its full-time enrollment of traditional day students, regardless of the number of students taking evening classes. The primary role of the college lay with the credit program and its traditional day students. By 1950, however, Hawes’s remarks began to take a slightly different direction. He had always been cautious about four-year ambitions, but now he spoke of Armstrong’s future as a community college for students who did not intend to go further for a four-year degree: “On a long term basis the future of the institution lies in developing it as a community college…. Armstrong cannot adequately serve the high school graduates of this community nor can it develop much beyond its present level of operation so long as it functions largely as one-half of a four-year liberal arts college.”137 He recommended that a community advisory committee assist Armstrong to develop into a community college that would offer both a liberal education and terminal programs for practical job training. He particularly mentioned a recent report to the Board of Regents that “identifies adult education as an important feature of a junior college’s role in the local community.”138 An enhanced evening program for adults meant additional revenue, but it could also mean a change in emphasis for the college.

The faculty watched these developments warily, but their primary concern was salaries. In the spring of 1951, they presented the Commission with a formal request for a 30% raise to match the increase in the cost of living since 1946. Armstrong staff members have been surveyed to see how they are making it on their salaries. The answer: They aren’t. They are having to wear clothes to the point of shabbiness, they eat less, they entertain very seldom, they do without vacations, and worst of all they are having to work to earn savings at extra jobs and to dip into previ-ously earned life savings, savings which they brought to Armstrong but will not be able to take away from it. It is an unhappy paradox that educators must look forward to the impossibility of educating their own children in the future.

The question is not where will teachers cut down, but how will they survive. Stretching budgets which were modest in 1946 means today less food, less clothes, less rent, less furniture. The result must be overwork, loss of morale, and ultimately loss of the most capable staff members who, however much they want to remain at Armstrong and in Savannah, however much they want to build the College into the great institution it can become, must look to earning a living wage.”139

There followed eight pages of comparative statistics. The Commission referred the request to city council, where the council’s finance committee recommended a 15% raise. Discussion among the aldermen was heated at the June 2, 1951 meeting, with Hawes and faculty members present in the chamber. Opponents of the request argued that it would require a budget cut for all municipal departments. The city already carried a debt of $28,000 and was “going into the red at the rate of $100 an hour.” Money for faculty raises “is just not there.”140 But advocates for the college argued that existing faculty salaries between $2,600 and $3,100 a year were not enough. “Some railroad workers who sign their name with an X get better pay than our professors.” Since the college “is our baby… it’s up to us to feed and clothe it…. We’ll have to find the money somewhere.”141

“Somewhere” turned out to be the Housing Authority of Savannah, which came forward to offer the city $12,500 for faculty salary increases. The Housing Authority paid the city annually 3% of its net rent from public housing projects in lieu of taxes. The $12,500 was “an additional voluntary payment designated specifically for Armstrong faculty.”142 The relief was welcome, but the faculty wanted to know exactly what the extra funds would mean for their sala- ries. Chairman Jenkins replied that the faculty would receive a 15% raise. A 30% raise at one time was “quite unusual,” and the college needed to be careful not to provoke “opposition from the City Government as well as from the general public.” Jenkins assured the faculty that salary adjustments would be made to the extent possible; but beyond that assurance, “those members...
of the Armstrong staff who are dissatisfied with the salary increase and/or the outlook for the future should seek employment elsewhere." The faculty made no further response.

The evening program and the Housing Authority carried Armstrong into the early years of the Korean War. In the fall of 1951, evening enrollment leaped ahead of the day students, with 428 students registering for evening classes as compared with 257 students in the daytime classes. A major boost came from Hunter Field, where the army was back in business, and "Operation Bootstrap" sent 109 soldiers to take evening courses in science and math. The army paid three-quarters of the tuition and the student paid the rest. But the revival of Hunter also revived rumors that the University of Georgia might establish an "on base" college. Hawes did not want to go that route again. "We do not want competition from the University in our own area and at our own educational level... the least the University System can do is refrain from competing with us." President Caldwell assured Hawes that he knew of no such plans and promised to "oppose any move that might tend to injure the Armstrong Junior College." 114

That assurance did not change the grim facts of the budget that Hawes prepared for 1952. A downturn in city funding and the expected end of the special support from the Housing Authority would mean a $9,000 deficit for the college. "The financial structure within which Armstrong operates," Hawes told the Commission, "is so unstable that we are forced to plan for the college on a quarter to quarter basis." He presented four options: 1) close the college, 2) limit enrollment and cut out basketball, the glee club, and the Masquers, 3) raise tuition, or 4) ask to join the University System. The report was so dire that Mayor Fulmer suggested that it be modified before being published in the newspaper. The college slid through the summer of 1952 on another loan backed by Hensel Jenkins, and again the Housing Authority came to the rescue. Christmas brought gifts reminiscent of the days of Mayor Gamble, as the Savannah Morning News, the Citizens and Southerns (CAS) Bank, and Union Bag Corporation each donated $25,000 to the Armstrong endowment fund. But the operating budget continued to lean heavily on the contributions of the Housing Authority. In July 1953, Hawes told the Commission, "It is difficult to see how the institution could have survived the last two years without this additional source of revenue." 115

In the fall of 1952, both enrollment and revenue benefited from the arrival of the first Korean War veterans who had finished their tour of duty. The Indwell heralded their return. "The Dump looks like a YMCA again rather than the sewing circle it did last year." 116 The freshman class of 1952 elected a veteran as class president and another veteran was elected homecoming king. Some of the returning soldiers had served in two wars, World War II and Korea. This time, however, they did not rattle the rules in the same way as their predecessors had done. No renegade newspapers appeared. Instead, Bill Fulman wrote an Indwell column, "Tips for Vets," to explain the requirements of Public Law 550, the Korean War version of the G.I. Bill. There were forms and procedures and payment schedules to be mastered. But the veterans struggled with more than just paperwork; they also struggled with the readjustment to academic life. No Veteran's Social Club emerged to provide them with the camaraderie of their collective identity. 117 In his second column, Fulman described the frustration of veterans who found it difficult to resume study habits and who felt out of place and not well accepted in extracurricular activities. His comments aroused considerable response and satisfied his intent "to get everybody to think about the veteran's viewpoint on returning to school." 118

One reason for the reduced impact of the Korean War veterans was that most of them enrolled in the Evening College. In the fall of 1952, for example, twenty-four Korea War veterans registered for day classes and twenty-eight registered for the evening program. Two years later, in the fall of 1954, the day program enrolled twenty-nine Korea veterans, and the Evening College enrolled 386. For 1955-56, Hawes reported an average of fifty-two veterans taking day classes and an average of 300 veterans taking night classes. Evening students generally did not take a full load, and other people besides veterans attended evening courses, but the mixed constituency transformed the Evening College into a large phenomenon. Revenues from the evening students regularly offset losses in the day program. The faculty for the evening classes came partially from the day faculty, who found it a way to supplement their salary, but also drew instructors from throughout the Savannah community. The college Bulletin for 1953-54 listed thirty-three instructors...
from the community teaching in the evening compared with nineteen full-time and four part-time faculty teaching during the day. Business courses, engineering courses, and a new series of transportation courses attracted evening students. Art courses in drawing and ceramics brought out still others for evening classes. Traditional academic classes in history, literature, foreign languages, psychology, and other disciplines were also available in the evening so that shift workers at Union Bag could switch back and forth between day and evening classes as their schedule changed. The University of Georgia Extension Program returned to offer certain upper-level courses through the Evening College. Theoretically, a student could complete three years of college at home in Savannah with only one year of classes required on the Athens campus to earn a baccalaureate degree.

All of these factors led the Evening College to develop something of a life of its own. It had its own distinct title, a separate description in the catalog, and its own director, Arthur Gignilliat, Sr. His philosophy was broad and inviting: “For those who wish to keep mentally alert; for those who are employed by day so as to have to provide more facilities for working adults or for personal pleasure.” Hawes was correct in identifying the community college population as a new and growing demand for college work. In a sense, of course, it was not new. Mayor Gamble had always seen Armstrong as serving the particular needs of the Savannah community, especially in banking, business, and industry. But the traditional collegiate curriculum of the day program and the expanded direction of the Evening College sharpened the question of where the primary emphasis should lie. That question affected courses, programs, and selection of faculty; and it was intimately connected to the city appropriation. Armstrong was a city college; its Bulletin declared on its title page that it was “city-supported.” Yet, as Chairman Jenkins reminded the faculty, it was not like the public schools. Most Savannahians did not send their children to college at Armstrong even though they paid the taxes that helped to support the institution. Hawes never forgot that fact, and he regularly acknowledged it when he issued the public invitation to the college’s annual Open House. “Armstrong is supported by public funds which you provide. Armstrong is your institution and we want you to know about our program and take an interest in the college and its activities.” The Open House occasions invited the community to visit the college buildings, watch acts of scientific wizardry by students in Gamble Hall, or walk behind the scenes of college theater productions. With Herschel Jenkins as chairman of the Commission, generous publicity kept the community well aware of college news and events. Jenkins’ personal financial support of Armstrong was unwavering, and additional gifts came from the newspaper as well as from major businesses in the community: the C&S Bank, Union Bag, and the Savannah Sugar Refinery. Armstrong’s ties with the community constituted its main base of support and the reason for its existence. The post-war era and the Evening College broadened that relationship significantly.

By the mid-1950s Armstrong had survived the ups and downs of the veterans, and things were generally looking up. In July 1955, Hawes reported to the Commission that the college had just completed one of the most successful years in its history. Enrollment showed an increase in both the day and evening programs. Endowment income had eliminated the college’s debt, and Hawes expected a small surplus to remain in the operating budget at the end of the year. The future held the prospect of post-war babies whose numbers would soar up the charts and require expanded facilities and finances. Hawes reminded the Commission again that tuition never covered the cost of operating a college, no matter how many students enrolled. If enrollment went up, funding would have to go up as well. The University System of Georgia saw the same advancing wave of students that President Hawes saw and reached a similar conclusion. The state was going to have to provide more facilities for higher education. In 1950, the System included four junior colleges, which tended to be former A&M schools located in rural areas. One way to meet the coming needs of higher education would be to extend state funding to city-supported colleges like Armstrong and Augusta College. Columbus was also interested in establishing a junior college. All three communities would welcome state funding for their educational institutions. Early in 1955, two committees at the state level began to study the possibilities.
One other issue circled around the edges of higher education in the mid-1950s. The G.I. Bill had side-stepped it, but it rose up from the public schools in the heartland of Topeka, Kansas. It concerned race. In May of 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled against the "separate but equal" principle of segregated public schools. The ruling did not specifically apply to colleges, but it was a disquieting decision for southern educational circles. The Je盹e polled the reaction of Armstrong students and found a mixed response. Most students stated that they did not wish to make a comment for the newspaper.74

In the post-war decade, racial issues scarcely entered Armstrong's world at all. African American veterans were eligible for the same G.I. benefits as white veterans; but in the south as well as elsewhere, black veterans who wished to pursue their educational options were steered to traditional black colleges.57 Georgia had three such colleges, in Albany, Fort Valley, and in Savannah's nearby community of Thunderbolt. In August 1949, Hawes reported a rumor that "negroes were being urged to apply to Armstrong for the fall," as a way to create a junior college in the city for blacks.26 Hawes did not identify the potential applicants specifically as veterans, but the response from University System Chancellor Caldwell reflected the answer that faced any black applicant to a white institution. Caldwell assured Hawes that "the University System and the City of Savannah could arrange to have the Georgia State College here designated as the official city college for negroes."75 Two years later in 1951, the contingent of soldiers from Hunter who enrolled for evening courses at Armstrong included an African American who signed up for a typing class. Chairman Jenkins discussed the matter with Hunter officials in advance, and the student took the class without incident or publicity.76

But in the spring of 1954, racial issues appeared unexpectedly from another quarter when Masquers director Jack Porter offered Armstrong to serve as host of the annual meeting of the Southeastern Theater Conference, in which he was an active participant. President Hawes approved the idea as a useful opportunity for Armstrong to promote a professional activity. The usual conference schedule involved a luncheon, a performance presented by the host college, and a post-performance reception. Porter knew that the conference membership included blacks, and at least one or two usually attended the annual meeting. The problem began to surface as Porter negotiated for luncheon arrangements. After two rejected requests, he found a welcoming response from the Greek Orthodox priest for the use of the Hellenic Center. But word of the event's racial mix began to circulate among concerned persons. President Hawes now informed Porter that Armstrong students could not serve as wait staff for the luncheon; the reception could not take place in the Armstrong lobby; and he, Hawes, would not be present at any of the conference events. Porter accepted the changes and continued his preparations. He had chosen Orpheus as the showcase performance piece, with Joe Killorin in the leading role. The choice prompted a question from a conference colleague, "What color is your Orpheus?" Porter replied that Killorin's makeup changed with each presentation, which was not really true, but he understood that the question actually addressed not the color of the actor's skin but the way in which the character was portrayed. How black should Orpheus be? In a city like Savannah in the spring of 1954, the question and answer contained many layers of meaning. The conference events took place without incident, but the issue of race would move from the edge of Armstrong's world to the center in the coming decades.

The ups and downs of the post-war period brought various changes to Armstrong but many things remained the same. The veterans had come and gone, leaving a large boisterous memory that faded behind them as they left. In some ways, their biggest legacy would be their children who would be ready for college in the 1960s. Armstrong's name was shorter now; simply Armstrong College after dropping the Junior in 1948,58 and the evening program was larger, with a sizable roster of people who taught or took a broad range of courses. But for the daytime faculty and the daytime students of the mid-1950s, the focus remained on the arts and sciences curriculum as preparation for senior college work. Joe Killorin, Hinchley Murphy, and Dorothy Thompson personified those traditional values whenever they pooled their musical talents and picked up their instruments to perform a Handel trio in the parlor of the Hunt Building or in Jenkins Auditorium.54 They and their colleagues were a close-knit group who taught a classical, well-ordered repertoire, which they genuinely enjoyed playing together.

The students produced a more lively sound, but their instruments and rhythms would have been easily recognized by their predecessors: heavy on the horns, with clarinet, drums, and a piano on the side. At a popular nightclub on the east side of town, however, something different was happening. Patrons at their tables watched with amazement as a new trio took the stage. They had two guitars and a piano. There was no bass, no clarinet, no horns at all—and no chairs. The piano player stood up to play! And as his finger pummelled the keys, one came a sound the likes of which his listeners had never heard before. The age of Elvis was about to begin.95 And it had a very different sound indeed.
Chapter 4 Notes

1. SMN, 11 September 1946. The lively meeting received extensive coverage in both the morning and evening paper. The term “stooge” was a frequent slur in political campaigns and reflected the well-known fact that hands behind the scenes shaped Savannah politics. See R. M. Charlton, “Savannah’s Political Complexion,” paper delivered to the Cosmos Club, May 8, 1946, Georgia Historical Society, Collection 974, Box 1, Item 7. Charlton’s preferred subtitle for his topic was “It Stinks.”

2. SMN, 19 August 1946.


7. Martha Fay interview.

8. Robert Strozier interview. Bob Strozier’s memories of Armstrong as a student and a faculty member are rich, vivid, and numerous. This history is particularly indebted to his sense of detail and imagery.

9. Lee Goodwin Alexander interview. Lee Goodwin passed her luncheon test unknowingly by ordering a Manhattan, the only drink she could think of at the time. Hawes later told her it was a good choice.

10. Lilla Mills Hawes interview.

11. Lilla Mills Hawes interview; Bob Strozier interview.

12. Harriet Davis Killorin interview. Harriet Davis was the public relations officer for the college during the late 1940s.


15. Martha Fay interview.

16. Joe Killorin interview. See also Joseph I. Killorin to Foreman Hawes, 17 August 1947, AASU Archives (hereafter AASU), Box 25, File 13.

17. Lee Goodwin Alexander interview.
Inkwell, 26 October 1951.

20. Inkwell, 30 March 1949. Archie Whitfield quoted the phrase to me from memory before I found it printed in an Inkwell.

21. The faculty described here are the names that come up over and over again among students and colleagues. Beecher and Killorin remained at the college for a remarkably long time.


23. Bob Strozier interview.

24. Joe Killorin interview.

25. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 13 July 1944.

26. After the war, Augusta College introduced courses in auto mechanics, cosmetology, and air conditioning in addition to its liberal arts curriculum, Cashin, 47.

27. SMN, 15 September 1945. See also Commission Minutes, 9 August 1945.

28. In February 1946, the Center's staff of sixteen included seven from the college and nine from the V.A.

29. SMN, 11 December 1947. All disabled veterans were required to use the Center's services; non-disabled veterans had the option of using it or not. Pres, 19 November 1945.

30. Hawes suggested that two Commission members might wish to undertake some of the tests at the Center to find out just what was involved. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 15 February 1946. Initially the Commission had reservations about the arrangement with the Center. Commission Minutes, 15 February 1947.

31. Joe Killorin interview; Bob Strozier interview.


34. Commission Minutes, 18 February 1948.


37. SMN, 27 November 1947.


40. Inkwell, 19 January 1949. Previously, "The Dump" had been the name the students gave to the non-college owned snack shop across the street. Different generations of Armstrong students knew different Dumps.

41. Inkwell, 26 January 1954.

42. Inkwell, 31 March 1950.


44. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 27 July 1948.


46. The pre-war programs in liberal arts, home economics, and commerce continued, but the commerce degree was now directed primarily toward secretarial training.


49. The Armstrong Brandon, Issue 1, 1 November 1945. AA, Box 12, file 1. The group financed and published the paper themselves. After the first issue, Armstrong disappeared from the banner. I have found four surviving issues, two from the fall of 1945 and two from the fall of 1946, reflecting a primary interest in campus elections. I am grateful to Mr. McGinty for providing me with copies that he had saved.

50. Inkwell, 26 October 1945. McGinty's party established its teams before its newspaper, a sequence which probably shows their order of priorities.

51. Revolute, 8 November 1945.


53. Inkwell, November 1946.

54. Revolute, 1 November 1946.


57. Turtle Times, 13 May 1948.


60. Turtle Times, 21 May 1948.


62. Inkwell, 3 November 1948.

63. Inkwell, 1 November 1948.

64. Commission Minutes, 2 November 1948.

65. Inkwell, 8 November 1948.

66. Inkwell, 15 November 1948.

67. Eight issues of The Turtle Times survive in the Armstrong Archives. The issues extend from October 1947 through May 1948. Lee Goodwin Alexander remembers seeing a meeting between an angry parent and President Hawes that left Hawes very unnerved. She also remembers Hawes saying that when one particular student crossed the stage at graduation he intended to give him a bone-crushing handshake that the student would never forget. Joe Magee seems a likely candidate for the honor.

68. Inkwell Extra, 7 October 1949.

69. Interview with Archie Whitfield. I have found no surviving copies of The Dirsifter.

70. Inkwell, 10 February 1950.

71. Inkwell, 10 March 1950.


73. Inkwell, 3 May 1950; Harriet Killorin interview.

74. Inkwell, 2 June 1950.

75. Hal Greene, "Introduction to a New Universe," Inkwell, 22 May 1946.


82. Inkwell, 8 November 1948, 17 November 1948, 10 December 1948. Orson Beecher invited Archie Whitfield to go to one of the meetings. Archie Whitfield interview.

83. See college Bulletin for 1946 and 1947 and graduation programs for subsequent years. Graduation programs for 1948 and 1953 are missing. AA, Box 7-B.

84. Bob Strozier interview.


87. Inkwell, 17 April 1947.

88. Finance Committee Minutes, Commission Minutes, 8 April 1947.

89. SMN, 14 April 1947.

90. Press, 9 June 1948. Hawes preferred a gymnasium closer to the college and identified a site on the corner of Gaston and Barnard as a possibility, but the necessary funds were not available. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 6 April 1949.

91. Inkwell, 30 September 1949.

92. SMN, 2 December 1949.

93. Inkwell, 2 December 1949.

94. SMN, 3 December 1949.

95. Archie Whitfield interview.

96. Inkwell, 11 October 1948.

97. Inkwell, 30 March 1949, 13 April 1949.


100. Clippings Scrapbook, December 1950.


103. SMN, 3 June 1947.

104. Clippings Scrapbook, October 1947.


106. Lee Goodwin Alexander interview.

107. SMN, 3 February 1949.

108. Inkwell, 13 April 1949, 26 May 1949. See also Playhouse 1947-1950 materials in AA, Box 11, file 1. These materials come from Shirley Hoffman, an active student participant in Thomas's theater program. The Bulletin for 1949-1950 claimed that the festival "received nation-wide recognition."


110. Inkwell, 2 June 1950; President's Report, Commission Minutes, 18 July 1950. Shirley Hoffman suggests that the ability of the troupe to continue their performances during Thomas's lengthy recovery period may have led to the conclusion that the drama activity could be scaled back and covered satisfactorily by one of the English faculty. Letter from Shirley Hoffman, 27 July 1954. Thomas became director of a new community theater under the auspices of the Telfair Academy. SMN, 14 May 1950.
111. SMN, 31 January 1946.
112. SMN, 31 February 1946; President's Report, Commission Minutes, 14 February 1946.
113. SMN, 25 July 1946.
114. SMN, 28 July 1946.
115. SMN, 31 July 1946. The original plan suggested a five-year period of operation until facilities at Athens could handle the additional applicants. A new branch campus in Moultrie, Georgia would handle veterans interested in agriculture, but all others would be referred to Savannah.
117. All of the correspondence, undated, appears as part of the Commission Minutes for 13 February 1947.
118. Peus, 4 July 1947, 10 July 1947. Kennedy was a former Regent of the University System.
119. SMN, 13 November 1947. A minority report proposed the merger of Armstrong with the Hunter Branch, and the Ferry Institute to create a college specializing in work supportive of the pulp and paper industry. The “paper college” project, or more formally a “college of industrial and forest products,” provoked enough interest for the Board of Regents to appoint an investigating committee that met twice in Savannah. No proposal ensued. See SMN, 8 April 1948, 8 May 1948, 9 May 1948, 12 May 1948. The Commission Minutes do not mention the issue.
120. SMN, 14 January 1948.
121. SMN, 15 January 1948.
122. Dyer, 261-262. Dyer describes the establishment of the Branch Campus as a hasty action taken under pressure and contrary to the Regents’ general dislike of the branch campus concept based on the experience that preceded the creation of the University System. Dyer also indicates that the relationship with the administrators at the Branch Campus was difficult.
123. Commission Minutes, 26 May 1948; SMN, 15 May 1948. A small number of Armstrong students also took summer courses, but in the days before air-conditioning interest in summer school was very limited.
124. Commission Minutes, 26 May 1948; President’s Report, 22 July 1948. The summer arrangement produced $16,000 for Armstrong’s strained budget.
125. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 18 April 1946, 13 February 1947. See also Bulletin, 1946-47 and 1948-49. Students outside of Chatham County paid $60 per quarter; out of state students paid $75 per quarter. According to Hawes, the VA would pay the highest rate listed in the Bulletin. In-state students at the University of Georgia paid $47.50 per quarter in 1947. Armstrong next raised its tuition in 1951/52 to a single rate of $55. See Bulletin, 1951-52.
126. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, August 1949, 31 January 1948. The Playhouse always benefited from patrons in the community, most notably Mrs. Trousdale.
128. Ibid.
129. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, August 1949.
130. Commission Minutes, 10 February 1950; SMN, 15 January 1950. The city provided $75,000, or 56%, of the college’s budget for the year.
131. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 18 July 1950. Six faculty positions were cut, along with one administrative position, the business manager. Hawes took over the responsibilities of the business office.
133. Geechee, 1951.
134. Clippings Scrapbook, August 1951.
135. SMN, 4 October 1950.
136. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 1 November 1950.
137. President’s Report, 10 February 1950.
138. The Strayer Report of December 1949 proposed that the junior colleges of the University System be realigned with secondary schools under the State Board of Education, where they could continue to prepare students for transfer to baccalaureate programs and offer adult education programs to the local community. The Board of Regents did not adopt any of the Strayer Report’s recommendations concerning junior colleges. Fincher, 36-39.
139. Faculty letter, 2 April 1951, presented to the Commission meeting of 10 May 1951.
140. Press, 2 June 1951. The comment on the city’s debt was based on the comptroller’s report for the first four months of the year. The mayor and others challenged the allegation.
141. Ibid.
142. The Housing Authority operated Garden Homes, Yamacraw Village, and Fellwood Homes. The members of the Housing Authority Commission included Herbert Kayton, a frequent member of the College Commission, and Judge Hugh Stephens, husband of faculty member Margaret White. SMN, 15 June 1951. The personal connections may have influenced the decision or may simply have made them aware of the revenue source.
143. Herschel V. Jenkins to Margaret Stephens and Orson Beecher, 5 July 1951, Commission Minutes, June-July 1951. See also President’s Report, Commission Minutes, August 1951. Jenkins’ comments at the Council meeting were supportive of the college. Hawes also supported and encouraged the faculty action. The figures cited in the faculty request came from regional and national statistics as well as from the salaries paid in local high schools and local industries. The request did not use figures from the University System. The treasurer of the University System told Hawes that the salary increases at Armstrong would put them slightly above the $3,500 average paid to faculty in the System’s junior colleges. James E. Blisset to Foreman Hawes, 31 July 1951, Commission Minutes.
144. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 16 November 1951.
145. SMN, 29 December 1951.
146. Ibid.
147. Harmon Caldwell to [Commission member] William Murphy, 29 November 1951; Commission Minutes. Caldwell reminded the Commission that Ernest Lowe was still director of the University’s Extension Program and would not do anything harmful to Armstrong.
149. President’s Report and Commission Minutes, 30 July 1952. The modification removed Hawes’s opening sentence (“Armstrong College is in serious financial difficulty”), and it deleted the statement of the reduced allocation from the city.
150. SMN, 25 December 1952.
151. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 9 July 1953.
152. Ibbetson, 30 October 1952.
154. Ibbetson, 30 October 1952. The benefits for Korean War veterans were not as generous as those for World War II veterans. Korean War veterans paid tuition and fees when they registered, with reimbursement checks arriving subsequently. See Bulletin, 1953-1954. World War II veterans, with a certificate of eligibility, did not make up-front payments.
155. No specific veteran’s group appeared in the Bulletin, The Ibbetson, or the Geechee following the Korean War.
156. Ibbetson, 14 November 1952.
158. Commission Minutes, 9 July 1953.
159. Commission Minutes, 18 November 1954.
160. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 12 July 1956.
161. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 6 November 1953, 13 May 1954.
162. Bulletin, 1953-54. Even instructors were part-time.
163. Bulletin, 1954-55. Business courses had long been a staple in the evening program. Engineering expanded from day to evening classes. Transportation was a new field, offering a two-year degree and a terminal one-year program.
164. Geechee, 1951. A picture of Mr. Duhney teaching a class for Union Bag employees describes the swing-schedule arrangement.
165. Bulletin, 1954-55. The college stressed this possibility, though it would depend on how well the courses fit into a particular degree program. It was not simply a matter of credits and hours.
167. SMN, 3 September 1951.
168. Lee Goodwin Alexander interview; Joseph Killorin interview.
172. President’s Report, Commission Minutes, 13 May 1954.
175. Humes, 222-223.
177. Ibid. Until 1950, Savannah State was known as Georgia State College.
179. Jack Potter Memoir, AA, manuscript collection.
180. Chairman Jenkins proposed the change. Commission Minutes, 15 December 1948.
18. Fincher, 44.
19. Pers, 9 November 1955. The public schools operated under the authority of Chatham County, not the city.
20. SMN, 15 November 1955.
21. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 18 February 1955. According to Hawes, the college had twenty classrooms, eight of which were actually constructed to be classrooms. Similarly, the college operated eight laboratories, only three of which were built for that purpose.
22. SMN, 31 October 1954. The Donner Foundation, established by William H. Donner, maintained an interest in medical research and in educational institutions. In 1945, the Foundation acquired a substantial amount of stock in the Savannah Electric and Power Company, after which Mr. Donner made frequent visits to the city and developed an interest in the city's welfare. Lee C. McClurkin, president of SEPCO, negotiated the grant for the college.
24. SMN, 12 January 1956. Hawes emphasized the schedule of classes for shift workers that allowed "the student to shift from one class to another depending on his work hours."
25. Bulletin, 1955-56. The labeling of these programs was certainly creative and visionary as well as helpful to students in planning a course of study. The new programs consisted of the general college core curriculum and specific courses in biology and chemistry.
26. The Commission Minutes do not report the final amount raised from the campaign, and newspaper reports generally included gifts received in earlier years, which boosted the appearance of generous donations. The campaign also operated on several fronts at once, for endowment giving, new construction, and alumni membership donations. Sifting these figures, I would estimate that perhaps $6,000 was raised in this first effort. SMN, 12 July 1956.
27. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 12 July 1956.
28. SMN, 8 August 1956, 6 November 1956.
29. Hawes to Mingleford, 18 April 1956, in President's Report, Commission Minutes, 12 July 1956. Hawes had identified this area as of interest to the college on previous occasions. The reference to the cost of the real estate reflected the 1956 condition of the property in question.
30. Pers, 12 July 1956. The newspaper mentioned "other space in the vicinity of the college which could be used for building space."
31. Caldwell to Hawes, 8 March 1956, GDA, "Establishment of ASC."
32. M. Gordon Brown, Assistant Chancellor, to Frank Folley, Columbus, Ga., 16 April 1956, GDA, 37-13-26, Box 1, General Assembly, State Junior College Study Committee of 1957, hereafter GDA, State Jr. College Committee.
33. Minutes of the Board of Regents, 10 October 1956. The Education Committee of the Board reported that Savannah's officials planned to "appeal to the governor and the General Assembly of Georgia for State funds for the partial support of the Armstrong Junior College in Savannah."
34. Pers, 26 January 1957. The two other cities were also in contact with the governor. The Armstrong Commission had considered a joint effort with Columbus but decided against it since Columbus had no public junior college as yet and the Commission felt that Armstrong could make a stronger case acting alone.
36. SMN, 28 January 1957.
37. Ibid. The increased amount included funds to acquire new property.
38. Ibid.
39. SMN, 1 February 1957. The article noted that twenty-six SEPCO employees attended Armstrong's Evening College.
40. SMN, 1 February 1957, editorial.
42. Pers, 4 February 1957. Union Bag had made a similar gift in 1953.
43. Inthewell, 23 January 1957.
44. SMN, 24 February 1957.
45. Pers, 14 February 1957.
46. SMN, 25 February 1957.
47. Commission Minutes, 28 June 1957. President Hawes reported $135,000, but Dr. Victor believed that $140,000 was a more accurate figure.
48. SMN, 27 October 1956.
51. SMN, 20 March 1957.
52. Commission Minutes, 28 March 1957.
53. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 28 March 1957. This report coincided with the Commission meeting with the school board members to discuss the Barned Street School option.
55. SMN, 6 September 1957.
57. Hawes's budget for 1958 projected $97,266 for daytime faculty as compared with $45,850 for evening instructors. Commission Minutes, 29 October 1957.
58. President's Report, Commission Minutes, 28 March 1957.
59. Inthewell, 1 March 1957. The initial announcement of the technical program stated that its courses would be "exactly the same as regular college courses. Letter grades will be given, and college standards rigidly maintained." SMN, 6 November 1956. Inthewell pointed to rumors that the evening classes might drop the parallel reading requirement.
60. Meeting of the State Junior College Committee, 6 May 1957, GDA, State Jr. College Committee, Box 1. The Augusta representative was future governor Carl Sanders. Hubert Dewberry served as the Regens' eyes and ears in a way far beyond what might be suggested by his official title. He was a significant figure in many of Armstrong's early dealings with the University System.
62. "A Report from the University of Georgia to the State Junior College Study Committee, July 15, 1957," GDA, State Jr. College Committee, Box 1. Armstrong first offered an engineering program in 1948-49. Twelve students completed the one-year program in 1949 according to the commencement program of that year. The 1948-49 catalog listed eight engineering courses. By 1951, the course listings dropped to four and thereafter fluctuated between four and seven, probably depending on the personnel available to teach them. The number of graduates from the program also dropped, and no graduates of the engineering program are listed in the commencement program for June 1957. In the summer of 1957, when the above discussion took place, the engineering program was still present in the Armstrong catalog as a two-year plan of study. By this time, the program had the resources of the Technical Institute instructors.