

BRUCIE SLEEP
HERE AND SHE TALKED
THE
PRESIDENT!!!



The renowned Bruce (center) and Lucy (right) . . . They met the President!!!! . . . relate their story that started with a joke that backfired. Their attentive audience is Retha Willis.

Six VSC Students Meet Ike As Result of 'Practical Joke'

By JACK MCGRAW, Director, Public Relations, VSC.

The hearty laughter of President Dwight D. Eisenhower is still ringing in the ears of six Valdosta State College students who cut classes on Valentine's Day to meet the nation's chief executive. And for two of the six students, the laughter is remembered a little louder than the rest.

The president's laughter was the result of a practical joke—concerning him—which set off a chain reaction that ended with the meeting.

Two of the six students, Thelma Bruce of Homerville and Lucy Henderson, had their pictures with the president circulated in daily newspapers, over television stations and in newsreels throughout the United States. They are still receiving correspondence as a result of it.

It all began when the Student Government Association at VSC, in formal session, passed a resolution suggesting the president of the college, Dr. Ralph Thaxton, invite President Eisenhower to ride in the Homecoming Parade. Mr. Eisenhower was vacationing in nearby Thomasville, Ga.

The telegram was dispatched.

After two days and no answer from Thomasville, the students were growing impatient. They decided to act.

One called President Thaxton's secretary and, posing as a Western Union operator, read her a "wire" from Thomasville stating the President of the United States had accepted the invitation.

Luckily, she suspected a trick and called the real Western Union Office.

Still in a festive mood and wanting more action, the pranksters called two members of the Student Government—Marsha Paulk of Valdosta and Lucy Henderson—and in an excited voice informed the girls that President Eisenhower could not attend Homecoming but would welcome the SGA members for a tea in Thomasville. They had two hours.

Marsha doubted the authenticity of the call and decided to check. She called Lucy—and received confirmation of the story.

Both dressed hurriedly and dashed off, white gloves, hats, high heels and hose, to Ashley Hall to meet the other students for the trip to the Rose City and President Eisenhower.

"Oh, how I wished for a deep, dark hole to use as a
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School Buildings Sh

An early variation among school buildings is this little hexagon school of Pennsylvania. It had enough sides for each of six classes, one stove, and one teacher, all facing the center—an arrangement for efficiency and economy in construction. Such a building is Diamond Rock School in Chester County, Pa., near Valley Forge Park. Built about 1812, it is less than 20 feet in diameter with a window on each of seven sides.

The log made in a general design which still survives in frame school buildings in many outlying communities today, has the shape used in the "little red schoolhouse" carica-

ture. Actually, the school house was almost never red, was usually white or unpainted. This one is a Wisconsin school abandoned about 1919.

The three-story building, which came with central heating and indoor plumbing, had high ceilings and windows on two sides of each classroom for light and ventilation, though window



—Ike

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hiding place," Marsha said later. "Waiting in front of the building were the other members of the SGA who had planned the joke and many, many laughing spectators."

"We were all dressed up and no place to go," Lucy laughed.

This was the first phase of the chain reaction, for the "place to go" was Thomasville.

The jokesters had had such success with their pranks they were having trouble stopping themselves. Maybe they could meet the president.

Bill Jackson, Sylvester, president of the SGA, called Press Secretary Jim Hagerty's office and secured permission to attend the presidential press conference in Thomasville the following morning.

Six members of the SGA arranged to cut classes and go. They were Marsha and Lucy, Raymond Wilson of Decatur, Denson Wood of Tifton, Liz Waltman of Valdosta, and Thelma Bruce—better known as Brucie. Arriving just prior to the press conference their first contact was with Harold Davis, the Atlanta Journal's Washington Correspondent, who advised the students to invite the President to all the activities of the Homecoming Weekend.

When Hagerty arrived they extended the invitation and he thanked them for their thoughtfulness.

SOMEONE TOLD!

Following the conference, Hagerty stopped to talk with the group again. When he met Marsha Paulk he asked:

"Oh, you're the one who had a big hoax pulled on you yesterday, aren't you?"

They were dumbfounded. Someone had told on them.

Later they learned that Charlie Barnes, chairman of the Republican Committee in Valdosta, had wired Hagerty of the joke and the students' desire to meet the President.

Hagerty advised the group to go to Thomasville's Glen Arven Country Club, where President Eisenhower was playing golf, and they might "see the president from a distance."

"MEET THE BOSS"

They were totally unprepared when a casually dressed gentleman asked Raymond Wil-

son to bring his group off to one side, away from the crowd, for the "boss" might want to see them. They did not know him or his boss.

He was Jim Reilley, chief of the secret service and his "boss" was President Eisenhower, who did see them briefly at the 10th hole, and wanted to know:

"Tell me about this practical joke—who were the victims and who pulled it?"

His hearty laughter could be heard up and down the golf course as Marsha related the story. The nation's chief executive said they might need proof of their visit and asked Reilley to arrange for pictures after the golf game.

The students were delighted for they had just heard Hagerty tell the newsmen: "Sorry boys, no pictures today."

The picture which was used most widely over the nation was one of the President, Lucy Henderson and Thelma Bruce—a Valentine's Day natural: the chief executive with two pretty coeds.

"FAMOUS" OVERNIGHT

Mail poured in from all parts of the nation. Clippings from newspapers from Miami to Seattle, Los Angeles to Washington, D. C., Confederate money from Virginia, requests for donations to many organizations, letters from former home town residents asking about old friends and relatives—every type of correspondence included in letters from prospective boy friends.

Lucy received a letter from

a Marine stationed at Paris Island—"But it was a personal letter," she said.

RECEPTION AT VSC

When they returned from the Thomasville trip their friends were waiting—and so were their rooms.

"Lucy Primps Here" was written in lipstick on the mirror, "Brucie Sleeps Here" was on the bed and many other notations of affection from their friends and roommates adorned the walls, beds, mirrors and doors of their rooms.

"We've had so many jokes played on us," Lucy said, "that if President Eisenhower called now I'd probably tell him to go fly a kite—for I wouldn't believe it was he."

A week after "the historic meeting" Lucy received a "long distance call" (from the men's dormitory) informing her that "New York" was calling and asking her to arrange for the group to appear on a nationwide television show.

"By then, I wasn't biting too quick," she added.

"WOULD IKE COME?"

During the Homecoming activities, with rumors running rampant, many persons asked: "Is President Eisenhower here yet?" Even Vocalist Dotty Dare, who appeared with husband Billy Butterfield's Orchestra at the Homecoming Dance, was taken in by the rumors.

During the dance a table sat unoccupied in front of the orchestra. The reservation sign read: "President Eisenhower."

They were prepared, just in case.

