

# 20 Years

## Created in a Time of Crisis, the Cavalier Daily Alumni Association Still Seeks to Provide Strength and Stability to the Student Paper it Supports

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The Cavalier Daily has been U.Va. students' main—and often only—outlet for news and opinion since 1890, but there was a time when it was nearly silenced by University officials bent on asserting their control over it.

In the spirit of Jefferson, the student-run newspaper and its alumni banded together to fight for a free press, and in doing so planted the seeds for U.Va.'s first student-activity alumni organization, the Cavalier Daily Alumni Association.

The CDAA, which celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, has helped rescue the newspaper from legal and financial difficulties, as well as provided training, encouragement and a sounding board for aspiring journalists on the publication's staff.

"The CDAA does a lot of good work, and it's easy to assume we've been around forever," says CDAA President Diane Krehmeyer. "But the story of how the group got started is a reminder of the difference alumni can make to an organization's survival and success."

Like most student newspapers, the CD has often irked University administrators and student leaders with its reporting and editorial barbs. In the mid-1970s, however, frictions escalated after the paper helped pressure then-U.Va. President Frank Hereford to resign from an all-white country club and published the leaked transcripts of a secret honor trial.

Seeking to curb student-media excesses, in 1976, the Board of Visitors established a Media Board to govern the activities of the University's media organizations. The board, composed of students chosen by the presidents of the University's schools, was empowered to recommend corrections, censure, and even remove a group's managing board members.

As the only daily publication on Grounds and a breeding ground for future professional journalists, The Cavalier Daily strongly resented any administration oversight.

Stuart Jones, business manager of The Cavalier Daily in 1978-'79, recalls "ranting and raving" about the Media Board in the pages of the newspaper, as well as questioning First Amendment lawyers about the board's legality.

On at least two occasions the paper refused to print letters of censure by the Media Board. It refused a Media Board demand, however, that wasn't until the paper's managing board bluntly about the board's legality.

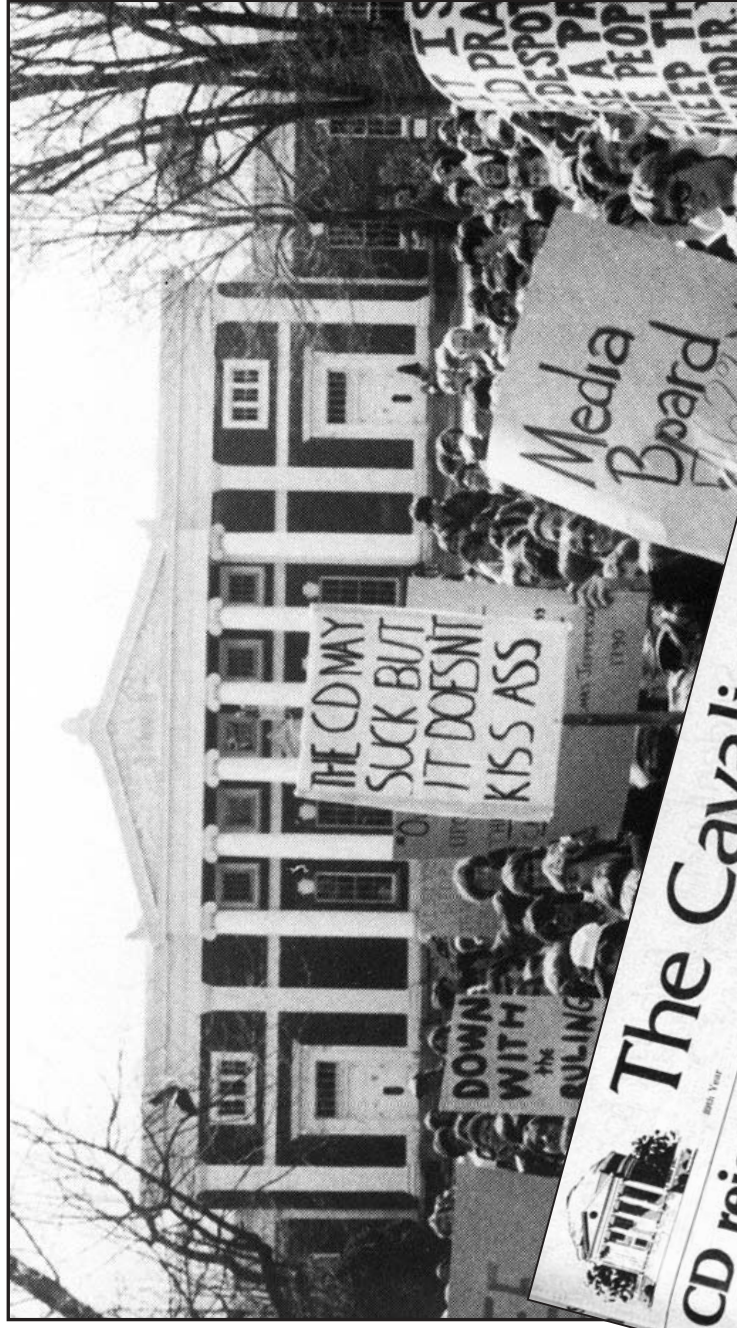
According to William Spatz, projects editor for The Cavalier Daily in 1977, problems arose when a CD reporter began making political statements in public meetings.

"The CD editors at the time were keenly interested in operating the newspaper in adherence to professional journalistic standards," recalls Rick Neel, then a CD associate news editor. "As part of that effort, the editors insisted that the news staff remain nonpartisan to preserve the objectivity of the newspaper."

Consequently, Spatz told the reporter to either "stop being a newsmaker or leave the staff."

According to Neel, the student claimed he was being forced out because of his conservative Republican views. He took his firing to the Media Board, which insisted he be reinstated.

The Cavalier Daily stood its ground. University President Frank Hereford—ironically a former CD staff member himself—decided to quell the paper's defiance and chose, in Neel's words, "the most vulnerable time for The Cavalier Daily in which to launch his strike." On March 31, 1979, according to Neel, Hereford told the University's Board of Visitors that The Cavalier Daily was "oper-



PHOTOS FROM THE CAVALIER DAILY ARCHIVES



ating in direct defiance of the Visitors' authority." Hereford received the Board of Visitors' permission to remove all University support—including office space—if the paper did not acquiesce.

The following day was Neel's first as the paper's newly elected editor-in-chief.

The CD's initial impulse was to stall for time. Neel remembers telling Hereford that the board wished to ascertain their legal rights and that they had "a responsibility to safeguard unconstitutional infringements," but that they were willing to negotiate.

Hereford responded with an 18-hour ultimatum: The Cavalier Daily must recognize the full authority of the Media Board or lose its on-Grounds office space and equipment. On Tuesday, April 3, Neel issued a public statement: The managing board "could not recognize the Media Board's ability to control content under its current constitution."

At approximately 4:20 that afternoon, Hereford

The Cavalier Daily's dispute with the Administration over the Media Board helped give rise to the Cavalier Daily Alumni Association, the University's first student activity alumni group.

Year Council encouraged students to boycott classes Thursday afternoon to attend a rally in front of Pavilion VIII, Hereford's office. Approximately 1,500 students heeded the call and gathered on the Lawn.

National media outlets picked up the story, and their coverage was "placing as much pressure on the administration as the administration was placing on The Cavalier Daily," said Neel.

Meanwhile, the student editors turned to their best allies: the Cavalier Daily's alumni.

The former staffers rallied to the cause by "generating favorable publicity, obtaining pro bono legal assistance from top talent and raising money for related purposes," recalls Spatz.

Before long, Neel said, the CD had a "dream team" of lawyers led by Charlottesville attorney Ted Hogshire and supported by the Student Press Law Center, the American Civil Liberties Union and other respected attorneys in Washington, D.C., and Richmond.

The collected alumni also offered advice. Tim Wheeler, who was editor-in-chief in 1973-'74, remembers urging Neel and his board to seek a compromise with the administration.

"Some thought we were selling the CD out, that we should give no ground at all," Wheeler said. "But we feared that if the CD stopped publishing, even temporarily, University administrators would gin up some other publication that they could control to fill the vacuum of information."

Coincidentally, the first issue of a rival newspaper, the U.Va. Daily, appeared on Grounds the following Monday. While Neel believes founder Peter Briggs "literally started it on his own," he admits it was fairly early on that some "vested interests at the University" began supporting the fledgling paper, which was later renamed the University Journal.

In the end, after what Neel described as "tense behind-the-scenes negotiations," a compromised was reached: The Cavalier Daily agreed to recognize the Board of Visitors'

authority over some aspects of the paper's operations, but not over what the paper printed. University officials accepted the statement and allowed the newspaper back into its offices.

The crisis was over, and The Cavalier Daily had declared independence.

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The Cavalier Daily had explored seeking independence before the Media Board flap. Samuel Barnes, managing editor in 1974, recalls discussing the need to form an alumni association to help the CD buy a printing press and become independent of the University. Support from an alumni association, Barnes reasoned, "would give the CD the ability to do things it wouldn't be able to do otherwise."

However, it took the severity of getting kicked out of its offices, and the perseverance of then-editor-in-chief Neel to make CD independence, and the Cavalier Daily Alumni Association, a reality.

After his graduation, Neel retained a lawyer to study the possibility of incorporating a Cavalier Daily alumni association that would provide the newspaper with financial and moral support.

"The CD really struggled financially during those years, and poor relations with the University did not help," said Stuart Jones, who was the CD's business manager in 1978-'79. "There was a very real concern that the CD would not survive unless alumni took an interest in helping it."

In addition, as Neel wrote to alumnus Stephen Wells in 1980, an alumni association would serve as a counterweight should "the University administration ever want to enter into another confrontation over the Media Board."

Neel recalls wanting "to protect future editors from facing the type of grueling experience I had as a 20-year-old newspaper editor."

Over the next three years, Neel drafted a constitution for the group. He also met with Gilbert Sullivan, the executive director of the University Alumni Association, whom Neel found to be "keenly interested" in the idea of a Cavalier Daily alumni association.

"The UVAA was encouraging affinity groups for alumni based on student activities," recalls Neel. The UVAA believed that alumni student activity alumni associations

See 20 YEARS, Page 6