

Lafayette fraternity making amends for party

By ANDREA AXELROD
 Of The Morning Call

Last spring, a party at Lafayette College's Delta Upsilon fraternity house infuriated many students and faculty members, who saw it as the worst of a string of insults against campus women.

During Lafayette's 10th year of coeducation, the fraternity threw a "Back-to-the-Womb" party, replete with decorations. What brothers found amusing, sisters found abusive.

Yesterday, Delta Upsilon began a week of amends, in full sincerity.

"In the long run, we're glad everything came out, to foster a more respectable atmosphere on campus," said Don King, a Delta Upsilon member who opened a discussion group attended by more than 100 students on their lunch hour.

Many Lafayette men like to throw beer on female classmates at parties, and women are subjected to rudely placed pinches, catcalls and numerical ratings, according to the accosted.

Melissa Galbraith, a senior and cochairman of the Association of Lafayette Women, said the womb party was "the accumulation of a lot of things on campus."

During the discussion in the Interfaith Chapel of Hogg Hall, the "lot of things" were generally called abuse and lack of awareness.

Many blamed the fraternity system for fostering such abuse. Others

blamed sexual stereotyping, which they called "a societal problem — not just a Lafayette problem."

"We're trying to enlighten our society here," responded a male student.

In that case, charged a coed, Lafayette should appoint more female faculty members and trustees.

"Trustees have to raise money," answered a male student. "Sure, if half the trustees were women, there goes the endowment."

Lafayette men apparently have to deal with a stereotype of their own: A macho image. The women end up stereotyped as victims.

One female student said women are able to fight back more because they form groups "bumping the structure of what men have had here for 150 years."

One woman who complained to men after the party found "a blank look on a lot of guys, a look of 'I don't understand why this bothers you.'"

"They didn't know a problem existed," she said.

"If they didn't like it, they wouldn't be there," said one male of the womb party. "A lot of women who complained about the party were there and having a good time."

"At first I thought, 'If you attend, you deserve this.' But there's no other social alternative. Otherwise, you sit in your room," countered a coed.

That infuriated the president of the

group that sets up nonfraternity activities and prompted Prof. Edwin Clausen to ponder why students don't find alternative activities off-campus, where there is a wealth of them.

Galbraith confessed that when she first heard about the banner at the Delta Upsilon party that read, "Association of Lafayette Wombs," she laughed.

"Something's being funny doesn't make it right," she warned.

"It's not women and men or men and women," said Andrea Josephson. "There were guys (at the party) who felt it out of place and women who didn't. Being a man or woman didn't give them their attitude."

"We are pressured by groups we belong to," countered a male classmate.

Some students felt that neutral turf is needed for meals. Men and women now eat in their fraternity or sorority houses or as each others' guests.

"When I eat at a frat house, I feel at home, but it's not my home," explained a coed.

"Fraternities and sororities divide the campus. We need men and women just getting together. Living together is a place to start. I don't mean living together," said Josephson, to laughs around the room, "but, you know, living together in one house, as though they were brother and sister. You wouldn't chuck a beer on them if they were your sisters."

"Friendship is lacking," said an administrator. "It takes time to get to know people, to set up opportunities to get to know them better."

"Having a friend and doing something different takes work," he said. Before leaving the room, he gave a tweak on the cheek to a coed, who smiled.

Delta Upsilon will sponsor a lecture by feminist author Charlotte Montgomery at 8 p.m. Sunday in Colton Chapel. The fraternity also will show "Killing Us Softly," a movie about advertising images of women, at 8 p.m. Wednesday in Pardee Auditorium. A discussion will follow.