Freshman Debra Hurt of Chestertown, Md., heads toward Davis Dorm with suitcase

Think pink: It's curtains for W&L as first women undergraduates arrive

By MARY BISHOP
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LEXINGTON — They were just two little words that might have gone unnoticed anywhere else.

But history was made at Washington and Lee University Sunday afternoon when speeches welcomed the parents of this year's freshman class — and their sons and daughters.

Cathy Boardman's father and uncle want to W&L. Her mother met her father on a blind date from Randolph-Macon Woman's College. "We curved down at the Beth house," said Marilyn Boardman, gesturing across the W&L campus.

But it wasn't until July of last year, when W&L's trustees decided to admit women after 135 years of only male undergraduates, that it occurred to members of this Bedford County family that Cathy might wind up at the school.

On Sunday, she was already at home in Graham-Lees Dormitory, with her home-made pastel curtains, the new W&L sweatshirt her mother bought her and fresh-from-the-store green carpeting. "You notice the carpet?" asked her mother, checking out the decorating job. "Robert E. Lee never knew this was going to happen."

"I didn't really choose the school because Dad went here," Cathy Boardman said of her father, furniture manufacturer John K. Boardman Jr. Rather, she said, it was because W&L's admissions staff made her feel more "comfortable" than those anywhere else.

She wanted a small school. "The campus is gorgeous, the people are nice. It just felt right."

Julie Salaerno packs belongings, including teddy bear, to her room.