

Full Circle - The Value of this Moment -

My Reasons to Participate in our Yale 1963 50th Reunion in 2013

Speaking from my heart more than my head, I make this appeal about why every one of us should make the supreme effort to reassemble once more in New Haven in May.

An incredible, rare (literally once in a lifetime) opportunity presents itself, to reconnect with myself and others, to return to the place where I launched my life's exploration journey and to revisit those places in my own soul since strengthened and deepened from embracing the joy and the natural grief, disappointments and losses I encountered along the way. And to share those experiences with a likewise group of battle tested and wizened old geezers like myself, humbled but not broken by life's challenges, and very glad to still be here.

Wow! Returning to New Haven for our 50th reunion. It seems 54 years have passed in the blink of an eye since September of 1959 when I first walked through the portal of Phelps Gate onto the Old Campus, having traveled all the way from Hawaii (one of eight of us from the Islands), dragging my one suitcase from the train station containing all of my stuff, getting my room assignment in Lawrance Hall (built in 1886), and walking up the two flights of stairs to the spartan tri-plex I would share with Randy Ryan and David Jack for the year (three rooms, three beds, three desks) and a shared floor bathroom down the hall. Now I have the opportunity of a lifetime to return to that exact same place, this time closer to the end than the beginning, but with eyes wide open and arms spread to embrace it all again.

The occasion to reflect on the 50 years from the day I left the campus as an undergraduate student and was freed to chart my own life course forward. Regrets looking back are many of course. We all have them. Reaching those decision forks in the road and taking each one, sometimes with great forethought and planning but more often a serendipitous and sometimes callous and even reckless lurch left or right. Each decision fork led to new adventures and new learnings, and each new path "Made all the Difference". Now 50 years and 10,000+ forks in the road later, I have the opportunity to return, perhaps one final time, to that exact time and place in the universe from where I embarked on my life's course to which I have returned so often in thought but only twice for real. Strengthened by the traditions I learned there and the great men with whom I grew together, I reflect on my pride at graduating from a learned institution that has emboldened me every day of my life since.

I have some trepidations about returning now. I am carrying 50 pounds more than I did as a limber freshman rowing crew, I move more slowly, I carry a lot of baggage, scars (physical and emotional), and I am reminded daily of my shortcomings and those loved ones that I failed along the way with occasional misplaced loyalties and priorities. I am always intimidated by the incredible strengths and capabilities of my Yale colleagues, most of them a lot smarter than myself and many of them much more successful than I in navigating the shoals of life after Yale.

And I carry the burden we all share, what I call the "*Yale (over)-Achievement Imperative*", that special calling and responsibility we all felt that drove our many achievements prior to Yale which were among the reasons we were selected to matriculate, but which continued our entire lives as an extra burden. It contributes even now to my own sense of under-achievement, of not living up fully to that promise and imperative Yale and the world expected of me.

As with many of us, the fiscal crisis of the last five years has decimated my retirement fund so I am sensitive to the expense of the reunion participation. But using my accumulated credit card miles for air and rental car for the week, staying in Davenport for \$128 for three nights, with the meals covered while at Yale, and no cost to participate, I will be out of pocket \$250, the best travel bargain I will ever get in my life.

This will be my last chance to hear Rick Levin as the outgoing president and my first chance to meet our new incoming President Peter Salovey. I will sign up for several fun lectures, hoping I can still fit in the narrow desk seats of the lecture halls, only this time no taking notes and no test to follow. I am excited about joining three of the diverse Discussion Groups. The In-Memorial Service will remind me how fortunate I am to still be here among our 850 living colleagues, down 160 from the 1010 of us who graduated together 50 years ago. Recognizing our favorite professors will be fun, my three nominations are Charles Rickart, Math, Theron Usher, Electrical Engineering, and Mr. Manley, English, who all remind me how blessed we were to share so many incredibly good teachers in so many subject areas. Regrets now include wishing I had made the effort to audit classes outside my IA/EE major. The dinners will be incredibly delicious, I expect the customary Maine lobster will be on the menu for at least one of the dinners, and dining in the massive Commons will bring back a rush of memories.

Experiencing the Class Video first hand live with the others and the discussions afterwards that it will engender will be 100 times more meaningful than viewing it alone at home later. I look forward to seeing the upgraded and new campus buildings and teaching facilities including SOM, Malone Engineering Center, the residential colleges including my Calhoun, and visiting our Mace & Chain Society "tomb" for a sub-reunion. I look forward to guided visits to special facilities including the new world class Yale Art Gallery. Hearing the famous Yale acapella singing groups reunite will be a pleasure as they lead us one more time and we wave our white handkerchiefs and experience the tears of pride, joy, togetherness, fullness and inclusiveness (mixed with bittersweet tinges of the natural human sorrow, separation, loss and estrangement) that will well in our eyes and flow down our cheeks to replenish our deep souls one more time as we close the week and reunion united in our beloved song "*Bright College Years*". Yes a bittersweet moment as we are reminded by Emily Dickenson.... "*That it will never come again, is what makes life so sweet.*"

I admit to harboring trepidations about my own perceived inadequacies, measuring myself up to the inflated mythic character of the super-human Yale man which I have learned does not exist but is only an amalgamation of the best characteristics of a body of men. Individually I probably measure up well and make a proud contribution to that whole. Regardless, being asked to return brings up old feelings inside that I do not totally measure up. And I suspect a lot of us feel this way. But this is too good an opportunity to let pass by, reassembling a collection of good men like myself, reaching out to each other, and the weaving together of our individual life stories and learnings one final time that together measure a significant accomplishment for a hopeful mankind. To physically be part of that weave truly is "the value of this moment", reassembling together for a proud (and yes bittersweet) moment, standing together to be counted, and gaining strength from this historic once in a lifetime occasion, to make final amends for (and peace with) our perceived shortcomings, and to repurpose ourselves to remain involved and inspired to create new wealth and security for our families and loved ones and a

nation and people sorely in need of role models that reflect the real brains, muscle, sinew, heart and conscience of our society.

My wife Karen will not be coming, she knows me when I get "running with the Big Dogs" in full reunion mode, but wishes me only the best of good times entrusting me to a group of men she knows as only "the best of the best".

Please join me and the over 300 others who have already made the commitment to return in May to New Haven. It will not be the same without you. And if you share any trepidations or negative associations from the encounter, please just stand in line behind me because you could not possibly share more fears of under-achievement and negative associations than myself. But I plan to wade in, shake as many hands as I can, introduce myself to anyone who will listen, smile and enjoy just being there soaking it all up, reminding myself that "90% of winning in life is just showing up". Having experienced the 40th reunion and two mini-reunions and being a small part of the planning for our 50th, I can positively guarantee assure you that this will be one of the key and most memorable occasions of your life, a milestone you do not want to miss.

So please just reach inside, grab hold, make the commitment, and join us in New Haven. We will be there to greet you. Go to www.yale63.org and register to come so we can make proper plans. Our Class Book participation smashed the previous record for % class participation. And we now hope that 1963 will set a record for the highest class participation in Yale's history of 50 year reunions. Over 300 of us have already committed to participate with five months to go. Browse the Reunion web site, Userid: **yale63** and Password: **50th** to enter the secure sections of the site including the Essays.

T.S. Eliot - Four Quartets "We shall not cease from exploration. And the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started, and know the place for the first time."

Come back full circle to your own starting point. We will be there to greet you.

Every day is a gift to be enjoyed, or not, surrounded by friends and folks who still love us because of our imperfections, not in spite of them. God bless us one and all.

See you in New Haven in May. All the best.



Bright College Years

Bright College years, with pleasure rife, the shortest, gladdest years of life;
How swiftly are ye gliding by! Oh, why doth time so quickly fly?

The seasons come, the seasons go, the earth is green or white with snow,
But time and change shall naught avail, to break the friendships formed at Yale.

In after years, should troubles rise, to cloud the blue of sunny skies,
How bright will seem, through mem'ry's haze, those happy, golden, bygone days!

Oh, let us strive that ever we, may let these words our watch-cry be,
Where'er upon life's sea we sail: "**For God, for Country and for Yale!**"