

Reunion Reflections

First, my thanks to my classmates for making our graduation jubilee so enjoyable and memorable. It was remarkable to see so many from the class of 1963 (fully half the living class, roughly 40% of the original graduating class) a full half-century after graduation. I am glad we set a percentage record for attendance, if only to validate the extraordinary efforts of Guy Struve, Jon Rose and the others who worked so hard to make this reunion a success.

The honoring of our teachers was such a good idea that it should be passed along to other classes – with the recommendation that it be done at an earlier reunion, so more of the honorees can be there to appreciate the appreciation. The two professors I nominated died a few years ago.

To be precise, as reunions are quinquennial events this was our 10th (which also sounds less old than 50th). I think I've attended all but one, and during them I always have the same feeling – an almost surreal duality of being both in the present and once again walking the streets and the campus as an undergraduate. Everything is at once the same as it was and yet quite different – as is Yale, as are the classmates with whom I reacquaint, as am I.

It is never surprising that I recognize a minority of those at a reunion. I knew but a small fraction of the class as an undergraduate; no reason for that to change when the class reconvenes. But I always meet “new” classmates at these gatherings and am always impressed by the range of endeavors and achievements. Hearing their accomplishments gives me a sense of pride to be a part of this class.

There is always for me a post-reunion period of nostalgia and reflection. It is more acute this time – perhaps because there were so many eulogies and the list of departed classmates was too long to read aloud at the memorial service; perhaps because this was the last great get-together we will ever have; perhaps it is the blunt awareness that more has been than will be.

In a retrospective written for the class book I referenced Yale Prof. Robert Penn Warren's Pulitzer Prize-winning novel “All the King's Men.” His closing words are,

“the awful responsibility of Time.” The celebration of our graduation jubilee is ennobled and tempered by that awful responsibility.

Now we return home with the mandate to work on our aging, so that we may appear appropriately older for the 55th (11th) – which is only about 1820 days away. We expect Guy’s first email urging preparation next week.