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The Class of ’69 was destined to sit astride a transition from the old, comfortable, predictable world of the postwar era, and the tumultuous changes wrought by the end of innocence: the Vietnam War, civil rights, expanding consciousness, and accelerated momentum of change. Our freshman year was the year of “Rubber Soul,” war boards, Americans for the Reappraisal of Far Eastern Policy (ARFEP), Staughton Lynd, the Voting Rights Bill, all filtered through the lenses of our own early explorations into sciences, philosophy and literature. Even the Yale Swimming Team lost to Army, as if to prove that no institution was sacred. During the ensuing years, the struggle against the war and racism and arbitrary regulations intensified both in society and at Yale College. Having earlier quashed parietal rules and coat-and-tie requirements as a warm-up, in our senior year we instigated “Co-Ed Week,” which left us, paradoxically, with the ignominy of being the last all-male class at Yale. Over the four years we were irrevocably transformed, and we did much of the transforming. The assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King during our junior year affirmed the cynicism with which we viewed the old order.

My own life has been immeasurably enriched by my Yale classmates, both the enduring friendships, and the memories of those whom, unfortunately, I have not been able to follow. I remember the challenges, stimulation, and joint endeavors and musings as the core of my experience at Yale. I was always impressed with the depth and diversity of talents among my classmates; over time, there has hardly been an area of thought or endeavor for which I could not quickly recall a former classmate who would have seemed perfectly suited, in mind or talent or temperament.

The difficulties and uncertainties of those times not only were great preparation for facing the future, but illuminated our thoughts or personal characteristics that made those experiences particularly meaningful and telling. I still feel fortunate to have been at that place called Yale, with those people, at that particular time in history. We collectively made history and will continue to do so. This is not because we were better than our predecessors or successors, but because the confluence of time and events conspired with us.

For many years I dreaded our “twenty-fifth,” partially because those celebrating their “twenty-fifth” at the end of the year we started (the class of 1941!) seemed so ancient at the time, but more because I was always energized by thinking of everyone’s vast potential rather than the stark reality that we all had to make choices that would perforce limit that potential.

I now find the choices more interesting than the potential. My own choices of career, family, political orientation, lifestyle, occurred with the usual mix of serendipity and conscious decision. I stayed in New Haven to get my degrees in law and medicine, still looking to widen options rather than make choices. The intellectual stimulation of the law, the major questions it raised, was an exciting extension of the discourse of undergraduate life, while medicine

afforded the opportunity of making a difference to individuals. I kept my political antenna up, but immersed myself in a year each of internship and residency, before finding myself in a newly-developing field of molecular biology and oncology.

After a stint at the National Cancer Institute, I found that this field lent itself to the formation of new biotechnology companies, the first time that new firms could hope to compete with the established pharmaceutical organizations. I founded a company and had the opportunity of using the establishment to help transform itself.

I began as the medical director of the company and became President and Chief Executive Officer when it ran into difficulties. Fortunately, we were able to turn it around. The company is making substantial headway in developing new, more efficacious and less toxic, cancer treatments.

I moved from the East Coast, where I had spent my entire life, to Seattle when the company was established. Although rightly criticized for its rain and clouds, the openness and relative youth of the city permits one to believe that you can have an impact on its future. That is the same feeling we had about society as undergraduates and something that is not as easy to credit in the cities with more of a history.

Lest the above personal history sound too untroubled, I should add that none of these events/decisions were easy. They all contained varying elements of struggle, doubt and futility. Many roads were taken that led nowhere, many dreams were dreamt that never materialized.

Although this may sound like generational chauvinism, I have always believed we were part of a very special era. We stopped a war, changed the socially acceptable views of race, gender, and ethnicity, and maintained a strong sense of personal integrity and responsibility. At Yale we set the stage for those who followed, and that play is forever different from the refrains of more than two-and-a-half centuries.

We may have been spoiled by our opportunities. Over time, we may have compromised some of our intransigence to achieve more limited ends. But I think we also recognized that life must be lived to be real.

As we gray, we are starting to pay attention to the issues that will affect society’s treatment of the elderly. Although I cannot predict how we will respond, our history as the transforming and transformed group will inevitably repeat itself.