

***“FOR GOD, FOR COUNTRY AND FOR THE PLANET:
THE BIG LESSONS OF 50 YEARS”***

**Yale Class Of 1969 – 50th Reunion Discussion
May 31, 2019, 1:30 – 3:30 PM, Sprague Hall**

INTRODUCTION

by Derry Allen and Tom Emmons

Derry:

Good afternoon. I am Derry Allen. Together with Tom Emmons, I am pleased to be one of the moderators for this program, “For God, For Country and For the Planet: The Big Lessons of 50 Years.” Thank you for coming.

We would like to frame this program, tell you about the plan and suggest some ground rules.

The day we graduated from this hallowed institution, I and at least some of you got a tap on the shoulder as we stood in our caps and gowns waiting to enter the Old Campus. The message was a reference to the then-popular movie, *The Graduate*: “Plastics! Pass it on.” Taking plastics as a particular product and as a proxy for the economy at large, I suggest that, depending on how you keep score, we have really overachieved or underachieved, and that is a major reason for today’s discussion. In that connection, note that Yale no longer distributes water in bottles made of plastic. More generally, Yale is a leader in climate and environment.

I can’t imagine that any of us were thinking 50 years ahead as we stood in line to graduate. If we had been, we would not have guessed that one of the defining issues of the next half century would be the challenging relationship between people and the planet. We expected our bodies to change in 50 years. We did not expect our planet to change.

It turned out that 1969 marked the beginning of what is commonly thought of as the modern environmental era. The environment was deteriorating. Days after we graduated the polluted Cuyahoga River in Cleveland famously caught fire. Within months, Congress began a several years burst of landmark environmental legislation. The next year, 1970, we had the first Earth Day, the 50th anniversary of which will be widely celebrated in 2020. The EPA was also established in 1970. Since then, many of our classmates have been directly involved in addressing environmental issues in a variety of public and private roles.

In retrospect, then, it is not surprising that the members of our Reunion Program Advisory Committee expressed great interest in having a major discussion on environment. In response, our Reunion Co-Chairs asked Tom and me to organize this discussion – a discussion that will span a very large topic, draw on the hard-won expertise of many classmates and actively engage

the whole audience. We will take stock of what has happened, draw out the big lessons and look ahead. And we will do all this in two hours.

Here is how we have decided to do this. We have ten experts who will each speak for four minutes or less on some specific issues. Finding ten was easy. Finding twenty or thirty would have been no problem. Think of this as a tasting menu or speed dating with issues or what the Japanese call PechaKucha. You are going to hear a lot of great stuff very quickly. Some of it is deliberately provocative. We have coordinated but not constrained the speakers, all of whom speak for themselves. We know that there are many topics that we are leaving out. The speakers and their issues are all described in the program handout that you have so we will not spend time introducing them. We are also putting all their slides and additional materials on a special page of the class website at www.Yale1969.org/environment.

We have put the speakers into two panels and after each panel has spoken, we are going to open the floor to everyone. We know that some of you are experts on particular topics and others are not. We hope you will all feel invited to speak up. You are welcome to bring up related topics that we have omitted. It is fine to make a short comment or statement without asking a question.

I also ask you to consider whether we are getting to another important inflection point such as what we had in 1969. Has the pressure built enough and are there enough pieces in place for some big changes to occur soon? It will be different but what might it look like? I leave you with that thought as I turn the microphone over to our classmate Tom Emmons.

Tom:

As Derry mentioned, we decided to go wide across many relevant topics, rather than delve deeply into only several, because there are so many important topics, which make up the broader environmental theme.

Still, there are so many important topics we could not get to: Things like waste and recycling, potable water, food and farming, land use, smart grids, transportation (including EV), and global initiatives.

We selected these 11 topics because we saw them as very important, and we identified a knowledgeable classmate. We decided not to import experts: we have plenty of experts in the class, including many we don't necessarily know about, and we hope you are here and will contribute.

Our intent is to stimulate constructive, forward-looking, inspirational discussion across this whole group.

We hope to avoid the familiar, too-easy blaming of politics, politicians, and special interest groups, which may be justified, but it doesn't move us in the direction we want to go, which is toward actions and solutions.

Let's get going: Skip is up first.