

Dear Classmates,

On the occasion of our forty-fifth reunion I made the mistake of riding up to Ithaca from Manhattan with Bert Rosen. Now, understand that Bert is delightful company and an excellent diver and had a darn good car; my mistake had only to do with acceding to his insistence that we stay for the class business meeting on Sunday morning, a formality I had never before even momentarily considered required my presence. Before finishing my first cup of coffee at the pre-meeting continental breakfast in Risley dining room, our then President Bob Levitan publicly embarrassed me into agreeing to be Class Historian. Then I discovered that that is a responsibility without an established definition. Nobody seems to know what a Class Historian is supposed to do. How could anything as amorphous as a class of over 2000 people who attended classes in more than a dozen different academic settings, lived for four or five years in a kaleidoscope of living arrangements and lifestyles, worked or didn't work part-time to survive, and pursued an almost infinite number of social arrangements and extracurricular activities have A History? Two thousand plus histories with a bit of intertwining and overlapping would be a more realistic analysis. Well, says I to myself, so be it; let's have multiple histories and let everyone who will contribute, your Class Historian undertaking the responsibility of being primarily an editor and arranger, and, when necessary, a re-write man.

What I propose we *all* do is *all of us* tell *all of* our best stories, stories as to:

Why Cornell? In my case I can blame the New York State Board of Regents which gave me one scholarship usable only in New York State and another usable only at an endowed college at Cornell, which ended my flirtation with Yale, which might have ended for some other reason, but I had been tempted. Now a few of us were legacies, others were influences no doubt by their teachers and guidance counselors, but I am willing to be there are some stories which don't fit any standard scripts. In order to tell them some of you will have to share them. So get busy!

Getting acclimated to college. I know my college education began during the freshman orientation program when I went up to Schoellkopf to try out for the freshman cross-country team and discovered that everyone who showed up had been the captain of his high school track or cross-country team or maybe both. A new level of competition. I also remember Professor

Laubengayer's first chemistry prelim on which I got a rousing 61. Again a new level of competition. But I am sure there are better stories than those.

Classroom victories or near-disasters, favorite or non-favorite teachers. One of the best features of my undergraduate experience was being elected to Book and Bowl, a group of twenty faculty and twenty students who met once a month for refreshment, beer or wine and nibbles, and a scholarly presentation on some abstruse topic – my favorite was Mike Abrams' discourse on The Striptease as a Literary Motif. What were your favorite (or most hated) classroom experiences or teachers?

Lifestyles. Dormitories, fraternities, sororities, rooming houses, College Town or Cayuga Heights apartments, or various living arrangements downtown or out into the surrounding countryside. There are bound to be some great stories from all the possible venues, but some of you will have to scribble them down and let me have them if they are going to be told.

Getting back and forth. Interesting, sometimes funny, but not always pleasant things happen to cars, trains, buses and planes and also to the people riding in them. I am tempted to tell the tale of spending the night in a Pullman berth with a fellow student whom I deeply loved (it was a bit of an anticlimax which makes the story probably wryly funny), but now she's a grandmother, so I hesitate. But don't you hesitate. Write down the noteworthy or strange goings on and send them in.

Friendships. Bill Albers, who, as a five-year engineering student is of the Class of '53, and I roomed together our last three terms and still get together once or even twice a year for track or cross-country meets. It finally dawned on me a few years back that I have never known anyone else with whom I found it so easy to get along. Many of you found life-long friends and some found spouses at Cornell. I remember that when Dave Pratt and Kay Bailey got married in June 1954, two hours before the wedding Kay's mother was about to lose her composure entirely – the bride, the groom, maid of honor, best man and two ushers, all Cornellians, were still out playing golf (as I recall, none of us were very good, I certainly wasn't). Despite our rather relaxed attitude, the ceremony went off right on time. What can you share with us about such topics? Or even your best enemy, if that's a better story. (Every story doesn't have to be happy, if it's interesting.)

Extracurricular activities. Track and field, cross-country, the Glee Club (for one year) and the Dramatic Club made my life at Cornell hectic but fun. Some of you may have played in such challenges as the Michigan game in our sophomore year. There have to be a raft of wonderful stories in this very broad category. Write 'em up!

Cornell as a life adventure. While serving in the Army in Korea I decided to go to law school, but I also decided to get out of the Army in Japan and finish a trip around the world which would make it difficult for me to take the law school aptitude test at the times law schools insisted on. So I decided to go to the Cornell Law School where I figured, correctly, my recommendations from my undergraduate teachers, including a letter from Arthur Mizener I wish I had kept, would carry the most weight. I was admitted first and took the test later. And then I got to be assistant track coach for three years, which helped me to survive law school. My son, the cardiac surgeon, graduated from Cornell as a biochemistry major and my grandson started as a freshman this Fall. How has Cornell continued to impact your life?

These don't exhaust the possible topics; use your imaginations!

I can't say what we will do with all of this until we find out what it all adds up to. A Harvard class historian who is a sociologist produced first an elaborate survey form and then a scholarly tome plus a summary article for *The New York Times* Op-Ed Page. I certainly won't promise that much notoriety from our collective work product, but, then, you never know. It's mostly up to you, each of you. Write it up, send it in. I hope to see a batch of two- to three-hundred-word tales, but if it takes five hundred or even a thousand to do the story justice, I'll work with it. Or 75 words, or 100. Or challenge me: send me a poem. Your Class Historian reserves all of the privileges of an editor and, when appropriate, re-write man and your class officers will get involved when as and if we have something resembling a finished product in deciding what we might try, at least, to do with that end product. If it's as good as it could be we'll try to get it published. Again, I urge, write it up, send it in. If you don't contribute, nothing will happen. I promise I will at least acknowledge everything I receive, and very likely but not certainly enter into a negotiation with our contributors. But only if you send it, will I receive it. If there are enough early responses, I'll share my progress at reunion.

See you at our 55th Reunion, June 4-7, 2009!

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