

What a privilege to spend a few moments together to reflect and remember!

I would say that for most of us this has already begun in the last few days if not today. Just last night a few of us were enjoying a meal together along with our wives. It brought a smile to my face that the first thing we talked about was what part of our body hurts, which base pharmacy has best customer service, hair has stopped growing in some areas... and started growing in others, our cell phone volume needs turning up, and that those darned eye witnesses can certainly ruin great story-telling.

Even as we laughed during our dinner fellowship, the mystery of time and reality was evident... guys, it's some 35 years past our graduation and we are granted the distinct honor to reflect and remember.

At Amherst College in 1963, President John F. Kennedy said the following – “A nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces, but also by the men it honors, the men it remembers.”

I daresay as classmates and graduates there is in our DNA a desire to remember, and a common bond of service and self-sacrifice.

A cornerstone of every thriving culture throughout history has a generous heart of self-sacrifice in its citizens, the kind of sacrifice that can lead ultimately to surrendering one's life for a greater cause and greater good.

Not everyone has such a heart, or receives, one might say, the distinct privilege of placing their life on the line for the protection of someone else.

Within our culture we are in a small group where this kind of thinking is in our DNA. It's what makes us tick, what makes us friends and comrades.

We have lost classmates in service to our country. We have lost classmates through accidents and ill health. This is a reality of life.

We are here to remember them.

We are here to reflect on their example.

We are here to ask ourselves what we will do with their example in our own personal walk and however many days of life remain for each of us.

We can make a difference, and even as we sit here to remember, we are challenged to uphold and carry on the legacy of our classmates, and in time to pass the baton to the next generation.

So let me challenge us... may we be found true to our call to make a difference, and to live out the DNA of self sacrifice in every day of life, in every day decisions made.

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote that “self sacrifice is the real miracle out of which all the reported miracles grew.”

It’s the simple yet profound truth that Jesus said to His disciples “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

So, some 35 years later, in honor of those who have passed on, with life behind us.... and life ahead of us.... Let’s remember what AT [Stoddard] read to us a few minutes ago -

“So Lord teach us to number our days that we may present to you a heart of wisdom.”

And as John [Loucks] and Gary [Cox] prepare to come up to read for us the roll call, would you please pray with me:

“Father, thanks for bringing us here together today, to reflect on the passing of time, to remember and honor those of our classmates who have moved on, and to challenge our hearts through the days and years ahead.

“As to what we stand for and believe in, in your infinite wisdom, Lord, you’ve given each of us the responsibility and privilege to steward our life breath and heart beat until that day when you call us to be part of that roll call.

“We’re grateful for the amazing sacrifice you demonstrated through your Son Jesus, and thank you that this sacrifice binds us together in fellowship with each other, service to our country, and worship of You...

“We bring our hearts and thoughts to you today, in Jesus Name, AMEN”

Mike Biederman
Class of '75 Memorial Service
9 Oct 2010