

TIME FLIES!!!

60 years..... Really, 64 years (almost) since our first assembly in the barracks area on July 2, 1953.

Our being here today bears witness that (as I read somewhere recently) "We are aging successfully."

Congratulations to all of us! May we continue to enjoy that success.

IN MEMORIAM, please permit me to mention a few names:

Four months after graduation, we lost our first classmate, Jack Wiegner, in an air accident during his pilot training at Bartow AFB in Florida.

Early on, I learned to know Jack well... especially as he gave me a memorable licking in Plebe boxing. Jack was a star man in neighboring K-2, and we served together on a staff as Firsties.

A few years later....even before Vietnam became a household word, Morrie McBride, my Yearling year roommate, always eager to move toward the action, ultimately gave his life heroically attempting to carry his Vietnamese counterpart off the battlefield. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

Then there was Hop Keeler, star-man, athlete, my Cow year roommate and academic coach. Hop voluntarily interrupted his teaching tour at the Air Force Academy to fly RF 4 reconnaissance missions in Vietnam. Early in 1969 he was brought down by ground fire, dying in the crash.

Each of us had our own Jacks, Morries, and Hops. They belonged to all of us. When we lost them in their relative youth they, and we, still had many miles to go.

That era was nearly half a century ago.

In the intervening years, many more have been taken from us - natural causes, premature bouts with fatal illnesses, and, occasionally, accidents.

We are all diminished by their passing.....again, "...a part of the main, chipped away..."

It is important that today, and always, we remember them – somewhere it is written, "To be remembered is to live forever".

We pray today that they may somehow know that we remember them and we honor them.....as we also honor their survivors, many of whom have joined us in this celebration.

May we bow in a moment of silence.

Amen.....

Those of us who remain now find ourselves well into a new century, looking ahead, still with miles to go, though fewer they may be.

We pay tribute to those of us unable to be here this week except in spirit. Our wish for them is continued life, love, and happiness.

Let us, all, continue to exploit our good fortune of successful aging; let's continue gripping hands firmly as we take fresh looks to the future while continuing to make our preferences known and our voices heard.

Surely, in our eyes, "The Corps has" and we are duly entitled to our opinions and criticisms. But, hopefully, we are wise enough not to doubt the motivations of the responsible decision makers, or to overlook the necessary influences and parameters under which they labor.

Finally, as we continue to progress through our twilight, let us never take lightly how lucky we have been to have had each other.....how blessed we were to be a part of this group - guided always by Duty, Honor, Country - West Point's Class of 1957.

I close with a very personal note:

Every one of you - each one of you - is a part of a mosaic that gave me the wonderful life I have enjoyed with all of its ups and downs. Knowing what we shared, knowing what we became, and having you in my life made me a better person than I would have been otherwise. You made for me a life I would not trade with anyone. For that I say, Thank You, Thank You, Thank You.

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