

# *Year 50 Reunion*

## **Hello, Fellow 1964 Classmates**

As the title to this introduction indicates, it has been fifty years since we graduated from John Carroll University in Cleveland, Ohio. To put it into perspective, that is half a century, at least two generations –our children, grandchildren, and for a few of us, great-grandchildren. We have initiated, maintained, and lost numerous relationships in that time. We have watched grandparents, parents, siblings, children, relatives, friends, and associates pass away. Careers and interests have evolved and ended. Some of us have entered post-retirement occupations or volunteer work. Many of us have traveled around the globe, while others have not gone more than a couple of hundred miles from their home base. We count among our numbers members who have served with valor in the armed forces as well as those who have bravely protested wars and military service. Fashions, fortunes, political beliefs, and entertainment interests have changed rapidly and frequently. Our incomes have fluctuated. Some of us can still make extravagant purchases that attest to our economic status. Others, in retirement with a new fixed income, worry about affording the basics. We have scars, wrinkles, lost abilities, infirmities, weight gains, and graying hair that mark our progress through life. All of us have experienced things that we could not even imagine when we were graduating seniors.

Born in the upheaval and destruction of a global war, we reached our college years in a rigidly conformist society. Our parents strived to provide us with a life style and opportunities that were lacking in their Depression era childhood. Prosperity was always around the corner so long as you followed the rules, did not join the Communist Party, and remembered to duck-and-cover. During our childhood in the fifties, we traveled with our parents on new interstate roads and saw the USA in high- tail-fined cars. We concerned ourselves more with the latest dance moves and record scores on the Dick Clark Show than world affairs.

A sizable fissure in that foundation of conformity was made in 1957 when a group of Bohemian friends (Jack, Neal, Allen, and William), known as the Beats, challenged the laws of censorship and wrote the manual for promiscuity and excess in a haze of drugs and alcohol infused with the blare of Jazz. By the closing days of our JCU experience, a violent tornado of disillusionment and rebellion was brewing. This storm of discontent would eventually sweep over the nation and demolish the established post-war confidence. Its leadership and impetus, however, did not spring from our generation but from the one immediately after us. It was the younger boys and girls still in high school and college whose strident protests and non-conformist lifestyles brought us through civil rights reform and into the Summer of Love. We were now adults, starting careers or serving in the Armed Forces. We were on the other side of the barricades. Because of our age, both factions distrusted us.

## **TODAY**

There are approximately 332 living members of the Class of 1964. With our gathering in June, our class is breaking the attendances record for a fifty-year reunion. Nevertheless, nearly two-thirds of our classmates will not be able to join the celebration. Some are unwilling or unable to again walk the paths of their youth; others at this stage of life find themselves frequently wandering those familiar streets and boulevards. There are classmates who live at distances or have problems that prevent travel to their Alma Mater. There are forty-four of you for whom there is no contact information and more than that amount for whom the contact information is incomplete or inaccurate.

The Reunion Planning Committee formed affinity groups to make phone calls to classmates who were members of a targeted demographic: athletes, band, fraternities, ROTC. Student Union, Cleveland Club, Glee Club, etc.. The University Alumni Office sent numerous brochures, newsletters, and e-mail announcements. In spite of this preparation, the Committee was aware that many classmates would or could not attend. To make this milestone celebration a more inclusive event, the planners decided to open an opportunity for all members of the Class of 1964 to have a voice. The e-Yearbook was the answer. It would give a snapshot of classmates fifty years out. Because it will be distributed electronically, the Yearbook will be affordable –no printing, paper, assembly, or mailing expenses. Once permission was obtained to distribute and store the e-Yearbook on the University's web site, it became possible to update, add to, and continue this memory document. This means that if your profile and photo are not included in these pages, you can still be a part of future updates. At any time in the future, classmates can visit the web site and read, print, or download one or more pages or the whole document. If you have the skills, the first and last pages can be made into covers by printing them on hard stock.

## **OUR SENIOR YEAR**

The world was at the starting point of a cataclysmic transformation as we walked off the stage and into the adult world of responsibility. Generations were splitting. We were too old to be on the one side and too young to have any influence on the other. While we spent our halcyon days in the classrooms during the early 1960's the transformation was brewing in the world cauldron. The ingredients were a volatile mixture of pending war, civil rights unrest, Cold War confrontations, nuclear arms protest, the Berlin Wall, a revolutionary Vatican Council, space races, jarring technological advances, political changes, cultural upheavals, and a new wave in music. In our senior year alone, there were events that activated forces to shape our opportunities, careers, and sense of self and security from then until now. Computer research cut from the size of a room to the size of a suitcase the device that now controls every facet of our lives. President Kennedy's assassination revealed how vulnerable our nation and its citizens would become. Beatlemania started the British Invasion that rocked fashion and sensibility. Neal Cassady drove a busload of Ken Kasey's Merry Pranksters eastward from San Francisco during the dawning days of the Beat Generation into the rise of the Hippy and Psychedelic Age. The 1964 Civil Rights Act was signed but the nation would wade through bloody and terrifying decades before African-Americans achieved its promise. Today, Latino-Americans, Native Americans, Immigrants, and Gays still struggle for equality. Nelson Mandela was sent to prison in an attempt to silence the cry to end Apartheid. The brutal murder of three Civil Rights activists in Mississippi during the early months of 1964 propelled an era of hate, resistance, and riots. In the following years, Martin Luther King and Bobby Kennedy would be assassinated; police brutality would escalate with dogs, clubs, and fire hoses; and cities neighborhoods would burn in retaliation. Berry Goldwater became the Republican Party candidate for president that year and proclaimed, "extremism in the defense of liberty is no vice". This event ignited a conservative

movement that flamed through the next fifty years and reshaped the political landscape. China exploded its first atomic bomb. Unveiled May 7, 1964 at Ohio University by President Johnson, the Great Society got its kickoff following the Congressional elections later that year. Though tattered, this safety net stills exists today and its health care, consumer protection, and Older Americans Act provisions protect and support our new life as retired Americans. Convened during our sophomore year and closed three years later, the Second Vatican Council opened the window to modernism, changed how we worshiped, and discarded the two-thousand year use of Latin and nuns' habits. If we were not too distracted by girls, sox-hops, sports events, and final exams, we might have been aware that The Berkeley Free Speech Movement was stirring in California. It began a decade-long campus action that eventually led to the Kent State University shootings on May 4, 1970. Our graduation year ended with the Cleveland Browns defeating the Baltimore Colts, 27-0, in the National Football League Championship Game, something we have yet to see repeated.

### **OUR CLASS ACHIEVEMENTS**

What doom and gloom, you say. Where are the things that made our class notable and that left a lasting impression? Guess what, for that part of the story, your e-Yearbook profiles and the enthusiastic conversations at our Reunion will complete this article. Perhaps our classmate Frank Kelly has said it best in three lines:

"We'll celebrate 50 years with joy, food and drink.  
Review fond memories gone by in a blink  
And excuse tall tales with a nod and a wink."

Take a look at these web sites for a more in-depth review of what was happening in the world during our college days:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/1964>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/infocus/2013/02/50-years-ago-the-world-in-1963/100460/>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/infocus/2012/05/50-years-ago-the-world-in-1962/100296/>

<http://www.theatlantic.com/infocus/2011/10/50-years-ago-the-world-in-1961/100172/>

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