



## HARVARD-RADCLIFFE CLASS OF 1966

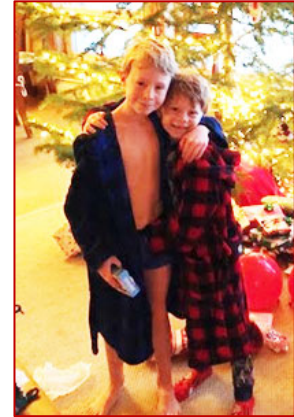
Dear Classmates,

December 2023

In my alert email I had asked you to comment on two topics: Harvard and any joy you experienced during this holiday season. We have a lot on the former and not much on the latter. Therefore, I feel *obligated* to start this newsletter with a little joy.

### Tom Black:

I spent Christmas with these two grandsons in Colorado. Santa still pays a visit to their house and consumes the milk and cookies!



### Robert Leavitt:

An article I wrote reflecting on 50+ years of working with Passamaquoddy-Wolastoqey, a native language spoken in Maine and New Brunswick, and coauthoring a dictionary of the language was published this month in an indigenous lexicography edition of *Dictionaries: Journal of the Dictionary Society of North America*. The article is available online [here](#).

The dictionary itself was published in book form in 2008 by the University of Maine Press, and a second, revised and expanded edition is in the works for 2024. The dictionary may also be found online at [pmportal.org](http://pmportal.org), where it is hosted by the University of New Brunswick. This multimedia resource includes audio and video recordings in addition to the dictionary entries.

Saludos to all from sunny Oaxaca, Mexico, where I've been spending the winters.

### Mark Packer:

The classic literature reading group he facilitates, Heavy Culture, has just completed its 33<sup>rd</sup> year.

### Andy Levy:

Dear Classmates. I had hoped, it turns out naively, that the crisis in Cambridge would have become less severe by the time of this monthly letter. As we all know, it's only become worse, deeply worse. The very integrity of Harvard is now at stake, and unless alumni exert whatever influence we can and other positive lights are shined upon Cambridge immediately, it will take even more time to rectify the situation.

Imagine: some elements of Congress and others expressing interest in reviewing/eliminating tax exempt status and grants to institutions of higher education, with particular focus on Harvard. DEI, which had noble intentions, has morphed into something that needs to be re-examined from the core and changed, or eliminated, depending on your view. Here is not a place to debate the issues but I just note it for context. And let's not forget the antisemitism element. As one way to address it, I urge all to join immediately, and support, the Harvard Jewish Alumni Alliance, at <https://harvardjewishalumni.org>, an advocacy group composed of

many people with a diversity of views. we have a meeting scheduled with President Gay in January.

i'm open to discussing any issues with any interested classmates.

May 2024 bring us all health, peace, meaning and prosperity.

**Wendy Sanford:**

I am thinking a lot about Harvard President Gay. As a white person seeking to live past my training in the culture of white supremacy, I have learned that I have to watch out for the revolving door, in which an institution hires a person of color and then doesn't support them in the ways we would support a white person, even when they (like, for example, Larry Summers) seems to us to misstep. It seems no accident that alumni are heaping criticism on a Black person, and a woman, at this time. Let's not go there! Let's not let the war crimes on both sides in the Middle East thrust us into taking our anger out on the first Black woman to lead Harvard.

**Max Factor III:**

Many of us are experiencing far greater anxiety because the West is involved in two wars (Russia-Ukraine and Hamas-Israel) that have some of the governmental dysfunction that immediately preceded WWI. Now, we are faced with the additional concern that our alma mater and its sister colleges are failing to provide a responsible learning environment that includes a healthy dollop of "parens patriae".

For most of the students attending Harvard College, they have left their "safe" homes and a nurturing family for a learning environment that is anticipated to be life changing in the most positive ways. It is painful to discover that our University seems to value micro-aggressions as conduct that is to be sanctioned, while macro-aggressions that create an atmosphere in which one may reasonably fear for one's safety or drown out the voice of speakers whose beliefs are antithetical to some (i.e., a heckler's veto) are questions of relativistic morality - rather than simply being antithetical to the continued existence of a safe, respectful and challenging learning environment.

Harvard Professor Steven Pinker recently published - in The Boston Globe - an article that expresses a five-point plan which I believe is the proper balance for Harvard to achieve:

"For universities to have a leg to stand on when they try to stand on principle, they must embark on a long-term plan to undo the damage they have inflicted on themselves. This requires five commitments.

**Free speech.** Universities should adopt a clear and conspicuous policy on academic freedom. It might start with the First Amendment, which binds public universities and which has been refined over the decades with carefully justified exceptions. These include crimes that by their very nature are committed with speech, like extortion, bribery, libel, and threats, together with incitement of imminent lawless action. It also permits restraints on the time, place, and manner of expression. The First Amendment does not entitle someone to blare propaganda from a sound truck in a residential neighborhood at 3 a.m. or to set up a soapbox in the middle of a busy freeway.

Since universities are institutions with a mission of research and education, they are also entitled to controls on speech that are necessary to fulfill that mission. These include standards of quality and relevance: You can't teach anything you want at Harvard, just like you can't

publish anything you want in The Boston Globe. And it includes an environment conducive to learning. Though a university should not punish a student for holding up a placard, it has a legitimate interest in preventing a group from permanently repurposing its walls as political billboards or from forcing students to walk through a gauntlet of intimidating slogan-chanters on their way to class every day.

**Institutional neutrality.** A university does not need a foreign policy, and it does not need to issue pronouncements on the controversies and events of the day. It is a forum for debate, not a protagonist in debates. When a university takes a public stand, it either puts words in the mouths of faculty and students who can speak for themselves or unfairly pits them against their own employer. It's even worse when individual departments take positions, because it sets up a conflict of interest with any dissenting students and faculty whose fates they control.

The events of this autumn also show that university pronouncements are an invitation to rancor and distraction. Inevitably there will be constituencies who feel a statement is too strong, too weak, too late, or wrongheaded. The resulting apologies and backtracking compromise the reputation of the university and interfere with the task of administering it. For this reason, a stated policy of institutional neutrality would be a godsend to university administrators. Such a policy would still allow them to comment on issues that directly affect university business, just like any institution.

**Nonviolence.** Some students think it is a legitimate form of political expression to drown out a speaker, block the audience's view with a screen, obstruct public passageways, invade a lecture hall chanting slogans over bullhorns, force administrators out of their offices and occupy the building, or get in the faces of other students.

Universities should not indulge acts of vandalism, trespassing, and extortion. Free speech does not include a heckler's veto, which blocks the speech of others. These goon tactics also violate the deepest value of a university, which is that opinions are advanced by reason and persuasion, not by force. And they bring further discredit to the institution: Parents and taxpayers wonder why they should support, at fantastic expense, students being forced to listen to political propaganda from other students when they should be learning math and history from their professors.

**Viewpoint diversity.** Universities have become intellectual and political monocultures. Seventy-seven percent of the professors in Harvard's Faculty of Arts and Sciences describe themselves as liberal, and fewer than 3 percent as conservative. Many university programs have been monopolized by extreme ideologies, such as the conspiracy theory that the world's problems are the deliberate designs of a white heterosexual male colonialist oppressor class. (The appalling antisemitism infesting college campuses grew out of the corollary that Israelis, and by extension Jews who support them, are a party to this conspiracy.) Vast regions in the landscape of ideas are no-go zones, and dissenting ideas are greeted with incomprehension, outrage, and censorship.

The entrenchment of dogma is a hazard of policies that hire and promote on the say-so of faculty backed by peer evaluations. Though intended to protect departments from outside interference, the policies can devolve into a network of like-minded cronies conferring prestige on each other. Universities should incentivize departments to diversify their ideologies, and they should find ways of opening up their programs to sanity checks from the world outside.

**Disempowering DEI.** Many of the assaults on academic freedom (not to mention common sense) come from a burgeoning bureaucracy that calls itself diversity, equity, and inclusion

while enforcing a uniformity of opinion, a hierarchy of victim groups, and the exclusion of freethinkers. Often hastily appointed by deans as expiation for some gaffe or outrage, these officers stealthily implement policies that were never approved in faculty deliberations or by university leaders willing to take responsibility for them.

An infamous example is the freshman training sessions that terrify students with warnings of all the ways they can be racist (such as asking, "Where are you from?"). Another is the mandatory diversity statements for job applicants, which purge the next generation of scholars of anyone who isn't a woke ideologue or a skilled liar. And since overt bigotry is in fact rare in elite universities, bureaucrats whose job depends on rooting out instances of it are incentivized to hone their Rorschach skills to discern ever-more-subtle forms of "systemic" or "implicit" bias.

Universities should stanch the flood of DEI officials, expose their policies to the light of day, and repeal the ones that cannot be publicly justified.

A fivefold way of free speech, institutional neutrality, nonviolence, viewpoint diversity, and DEI disempowerment will not be a quick fix for universities. But it's necessary to reverse their tanking credibility and better than the alternatives of firing the coach or deepening the hole they have dug for themselves."

<https://www.bostonglobe.com/2023/12/11/opinion/steven-pinker-how-to-save-universities-harvard-claudine-gay/>

Frankly, it had never occurred to me that I would feel such surprise at our University's failure to grasp such essential principles in the creation and maintenance of a fine educational environment for students, visiting speakers, professors and educational staff. May we each learn from what has occurred and proceed with all to uncommon "common sense".

**Gail Melson:**

Thank you for reaching out to classmates. I was not able to view President Gay's complete televised testimony to the House committee on antisemitism at Harvard. That said, the excerpts that I did view left an impression that was not worthy of Harvard. What I heard was a squirming failure to forcefully condemn antisemitism in all its forms (much less calling for genocide of Jews), and instead a technically legal tepid response. An important part of a President's job, indeed, of any administrator, is public relations. Her testimony could not have been more tone deaf in that regard.

A much-needed reform at Harvard (as well as other institutions) is not restraint on free speech, even highly offensive speech. Rather, defense of free speech needs to be universally applied. It is not acceptable to censure offensive speech related to gender identity or race, while failing to do so only in the case of hate speech against Jews.

I find it also concerning that President Gay has had to offer repeated corrections to her scholarly work, including her dissertation, for failing to properly cite the work of others. It is important that she, along with any other faculty, are held to at least the same standards as students. Indeed, they should be held to higher standards, as ignorance and oversight are not acceptable excuses.

Sincerely,  
Gail F. Melson, PhD  
Professor Emerita  
Department of Human Development and Family Studies  
Purdue University

<http://www.gailmelson.com/>  
[www.psychologytoday.com/blog/why-the-wild-things-are](http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/why-the-wild-things-are)

### **Tony Scholl:**

I strongly supported Dr. Gay's management of post-October 7 issues. And I am cautiously waiting for the University's assessment of probably baseless charges of plagiarism against her.

### **Robert Olsen:**

As a graduate of both Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania, I have been troubled by the grilling their presidents received in a recent Congressional committee meeting, the resulting announced intention of certain university benefactors to withhold further contributions, and the subsequent fall-out. Not knowing what campus activity exactly -- whether real or hypothetical -- the Committee members were asking the presidents to comment on, I Googled the matter and found this excerpt from an AP story to be the best brief explanation of what has been taking place at Harvard:

"Some of the most notable recent disputes have come at Harvard University, where the Palestine Solidarity Committee student group released a statement holding Israel 'entirely responsible for all unfolding violence,' cosigned by a few dozen other student organizations. At least one student had a job offer rescinded as a result of the statement.

"Then Accuracy in Media, a conservative group, arranged for a billboard truck to drive around campus showing the faces of students associated with the groups. 'Harvard's leading anti-Semites,' it called them.

"Former Harvard President Lawrence Summers, who is Jewish, was critical of university leadership for appearing 'at best neutral towards acts of terror against the Jewish state of Israel.'

"In nearly 50 years of @Harvard affiliation, I have never been as disillusioned and alienated as I am today,' Summers said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

"A day later Harvard President Claudine Gay condemned 'terrorist atrocities perpetrated by Hamas' and said that while students have the right to speak out, 'no student group — not even 30 student groups — speaks for Harvard University or its leadership.'

"Summers joined the university's Hillel student group later in the week in opposing efforts to 'vilify,' as he put it, signers of the anti-Israel statement.

"Such intimidation is counterproductive to the education that needs to take place on our campus at this difficult time,' Harvard Hillel said."\*

One need not agree with the statement of the Palestine Solidarity Committee – surely attributing to Israel "all" present and future violence occurring anywhere in the Middle East ignores, among other things, decades of Israeli-Palestinian history, including obviously the Hamas-led violence that occurred in October – to respect the right of that organization and those supporting it to take a position on the Israeli government's reported "final solution" for Hamas and for the destruction of Gaza as a permitted Palestinian enclave. With all due respect to Larry Summers and President Gay, surely no one understood that position as representing the official view of Harvard University.

I personally find Accuracy in Media's public identification and shaming as "anti-Semites" of individual students associated with Palestinian Solidarity Committee and the other groups to be improper, an ugly stretch, and potentially threatening. Governments are not persons or ethnic groups. Opposing actions of the Knesset is hardly "antisemitism." Question the Palestinian groups' ideas and motives, if you wish; don't call out the supporters. Isn't that what informed debate is supposed to be about?

Does Harvard have the responsibility Summers suggests, to publicly comment on political issues throughout the world? I wouldn't think so -- that would keep a roomful of political

analysts busy more than full-time -- but, if it does, President Gay's next-day condemnation of Hamas' "terrorist atrocities" seems appropriate, if quite limited.

Harvard's Hillel House, supported now by Summers, seems ultimately to have come down in the right place for our university -- rejecting intimidation as a tactic and encouraging learned and polite dialogue, here on one of the most difficult and complex issues in international relations. See <https://apnews.com/article/harvard-mit-penn-campus-antisemitism-20b8513293ee2dbaee053a6fd3f8ce7a>

### **Laurence McKinney:**

Plagiarize, plagiarize, let no one's work evade your eyes - why do you think God made your eyes? It's not that Claudine Gay did a bit of borrowing that bothers me, it's that she was so inept at it. That's why she should resign. I faithfully wrote 95% of my papers 100% - but every now and then I'd get lazy. This was long ago before computers and all we had was the card catalog. There were two ways to do it.

(1) Find a thesis on the same subject or near. They're all bound and available and nobody ever reads them. Borrow a paragraph here and there. Addend the original writer's bibliography to your own and remove the card identifying it from the card catalog. As soon as you get your paper back, shred it and replace the card in the catalog. (2) Look in the stacks for books close to your subject. Choose some good chunks, but expand them so that you can add your original work *within* the borrowed words. This sort of semi-plagiarization is nearly impossible to detect.

I repeat, this was only very occasionally. I usually got top marks on my original work which often surprised me, Like - didn't everyone who read it realize that Oscar Wilde's **Picture of Dorian Gray** was a barely disguised *bildungsroman* - the story of his own life? Doh? My grader thought it was a brilliant insight. Good grief. In my final semester I took Scandinavian 50 in which even back then nearly everyone got an A, English Social History from 400 -1200, Chaucer - (which was just memorizing a bunch of excerpts that were repeated from year to year in previous exams which were available to review) and some other course that I forget.. They all sort of added to each other. Such fun. I remember my last major paper at Harvard was on the history of the Irish Wolfhound. Did you know it was actually a "created" breed put together in the 1850's from what was left of them, mastiffs, and other hounds?

I avoided the hard sciences, but I later patented the process to make pharmaceuticals from cannabis. It's used today to make a couple of million-dollar drugs (Sativex (c) and Epidiolex (c)) - but GW Pharmaceuticals didn't start making them until four years after my patent expired. You can't win. I was just chatting with my freshman GF - how the hell did we get so old?

### **Ellen Leopold:**

I would like to know who chose the three women college presidents to appear at that fateful House Committee hearing? The president of Columbia, yet another woman, was also invited to appear but said she had a scheduling conflict. Why were only women presidents approached? If anyone can enlighten me, I'd be grateful!

Thanks.

### **Perry Link:**

Our school anthem "Fair Harvard" ends with the words "...calm rising through change and through storm." The change and the storm are now here. Is fair Harvard calm? Rising? I wish I were sure but am not.

### **Marshall "Gus" Smith:**

Dr. Gay has done, and is continuing to do, the absolute right thing with regard to the West Bank issues and Harvard's student and faculty responses, both acting in her capacity as Harvard's president, but also very much so with respect to her actions furthering of the best interests of all Harvard's students and faculty.

What is, and has been, occurring in the West Bank, especially recently, is unconscionable. The irony of what Israel is doing there should not be lost on all of Harvard's students, especially those of Jewish heritage. I applaud her. Resignation is not only not an option, but considering the circumstances and, were that to occur, such an action by her would only give those on one side of the issue safe harbor and comfort, when both sides of the issue very much need to be kept in the forefront of the public's consciousness as things continue to evolve--and that includes open, and frank discussions of those issues by all of Harvard's students and faculty.

All the best to everyone in our class, and to those of all past, present, and future classes at Harvard, during what, in 2024, likely shapes up to be the most important year in our country's history.

### **Richard Zigmund:**

Apparently the current rules about plagiarism among students are very strict. Given that, I don't see how the Corporation can ignore plagiarism by the Harvard president. It's a sad situation in that what was copied does not seem to be very substantial, and thus the motivation of Dr. Gay seems hard to understand. As far as her testimony before the recent House committee, it appears to have been prescribed by lawyers and while insensitive does not seem to me a reason for dismissal.

### **Santiago Leon:**

Clearly this topic closely concerns Harvard. I think our classmates should have every opportunity to think about it, and that this gift article does a great job of summarizing the issues.

<https://wapo.st/47U5GIX>

Opinions | College presidents reveal three surprise truths about free speech and antisemitism

The controversial testimony of three elite university presidents should mark a turning point in the culture wars over higher education.

Opinion by Jason Willick

<https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2023/12/07/university-antisemitism-stefanik-culture-war/>

Excerpts:

Even speech endorsing violence in the abstract is protected. This might seem surprising, but it's well-established law. Speech crosses into incitement only if it is both intended to cause violence and likely to cause violence in the imminent future. As the Supreme Court affirmed in 1969's *Brandenburg v. Ohio*, advocating "the moral propriety or even moral necessity for a resort to force and violence is not the same as preparing a group for violent action and steeling it to such action."

\*\*\*

The path of least resistance, unfortunately, is for universities to respond to their current bad press by reshuffling the campus hierarchy of oppression, affording Jews victim status and censoring accordingly. That seems to be the approach of Penn's president, Liz Magill, who, again caving to pressure, released a video reversing her comments to Congress and announcing that Penn's speech codes would be "evaluated," presumably to restrict more speech.

Finally, it should now be obvious that there is a failure of leadership in American institutions. Economist Tyler Cowen described the college presidents' testimony as "ruled by their lawyers, by their fear that their universities might be sued, and their need to placate internal interest groups." Even as the presidents answered Stefanik's narrow question defensibly, they did so without courage or conviction.

They could have defended the progressive philosophy that really rules universities, and explained to Congress why groups should be treated differently according to their "oppressed" or "privileged" status. Or they could have owned a fidelity to the First Amendment and explained forthrightly that hate speech, even abstract advocacy of violence, is often constitutionally protected — no matter the group that takes offense. But that, too, would have offended this or that stakeholder. What seems in short supply in university leadership is underlying conviction and a sense of purpose beyond the bureaucratic instinct for self-preservation. The academy's decline will continue until it can produce leaders with the strength to break the ideological frenzy that has taken hold. That will mean rejecting identity politics, cracking down on mobs that disrupt and vandalize, but defending protected speech to the hilt.

Comment:

Where are the upstanding university presidents of yore? Where is the Harvard president whose secretary told Franklin Roosevelt "the president will see you now"? This debacle is attributable not only to the university presidents but to the lawyers at Wilmer Hale who coached them.

**Ken Sicchitano:**

Few were prouder than I of a Harvard connection. As with many small town kids Harvard, largely my wonderful classmates, showed me worlds I didn't know existed and changed my life for the better. I gave back through holding leadership positions in alumni affairs for decades.

It is therefore disappointing that in recent years Harvard has become somewhat of an embarrassment to me. Now I seldom mention my affiliation.

The University has lost its way. Despite many dedicated and outstanding faculty, Harvard apparently has forgotten its mission of teaching young minds to think critically and arrive at and defend their own conclusions – and equally important to understand and respect the opinions of others.

Weak, often non-existent leadership seems to be the root of the problem. The leadership void goes back some number of years. Far worse now as evidenced by the president's vacuous platitudes, decision paralysis and inability to take a stand on much of anything the past several weeks.

Our dangerous world needs Harvard to lead not follow. When the leadership proves incapable the governing body has to step in and right the ship. So far there is scant evidence of backbone at any level at Harvard.

**Alex Malozemoff:**

My comment on the Claudine Gay issue is the following:

Like many others, I am upset about the whole antisemitism and Claudine Gay situation at Harvard. But the problem is deeper than that. A noxious racist and quasi-Marxist ideology has captured the DEI movement, and DEI has captured Harvard, including, it seems, even its Board of Overseers. Dismantling DEI and restoring true intellectual diversity to Harvard is what is really needed.



### **Ethel Jackson:**

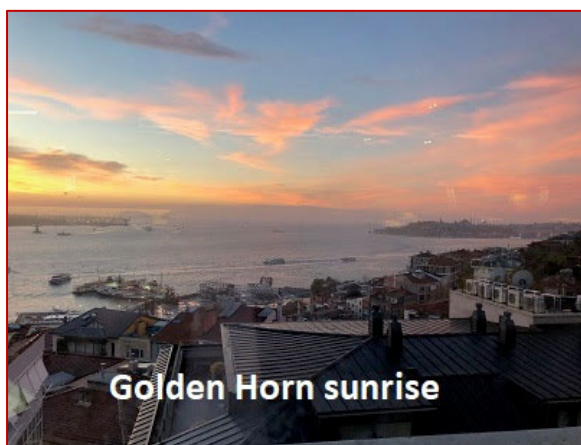
I'd like to share my thoughts about the controversy around President Claudine Gay. I applaud Harvard's decision to appoint an outstanding academic and leader who is also a woman of color. It was a brave choice at a time of sharp political division and when Harvard is a target in the culture wars. Critical commentary and politicized attacks were inevitable. Harvard should now stand by this choice. Harvard – not pundits or politicians – should evaluate the qualities of leadership and scholarship best suited to guide the University into the future.

Dr Gay is also criticized for her response to questioning in the Congressional hearing. This was not a format to examine the tension between hate speech and free speech on campus. Harvard however is a place where knowledge and different views can be brought to bear on these complicated issues facing society (e.g., Harvard Radcliffe Institute's panel discussion held 12/12/23 on "Free Speech, Political Speech, and Hate Speech on Campus"). I hope Harvard will give strong support for the historic appointment of President Gay.

### **Bill Hill:**

After having the international initiatives in which I am involved be mostly idle during the first half of this year, the past three months have been filled with international professional and domestic family travel. I have been involved with Moldova now in various capacities for almost a quarter century. I still am a participant in a track two exercise run by a Swiss NGO working with the Moldovan government in the hopes of assisting with or advancing progress toward settlement of the Transnistrian conflict. I visited Moldova in late October for a meeting with government officials involved in security policy and conflict resolution, and went on to Finland to give a paper on Moldova at a conference hosted by Helsinki University. In late November I headed to Istanbul for a two-day meeting with current and former Moldovan officials aimed at working out a proposed road map toward a conflict settlement. While the substance of that meeting probably will not interest many classmates, the attached photos show some of the benefits of continuing international travel, even if for causes where success seems distant or dubious: one is the sunrise over the Golden Horn; the other is the golf facility in the Turkish Airlines lounge in Istanbul Airport. Who says one cannot keep up one's game in shape while traveling?

I also traveled to Geneva in December for a meeting of a group of international experts organized by a couple of European NGOs to consider possible alternative futures for Euro-Atlantic security, hoping eventually to come up with some long-term policy recommendations. I am also participating in a Washington-based international effort to develop recommendations for a possible new global security order. I am aware of several dozen such initiatives. Perhaps one or more may help guide us through the chaotic, violent time in which we now live. Europe and Eurasia – the part of the world in and with which I have worked most over the bulk of my career – are clearly in a period of deep crisis and transition, with no clear indication of where



they will end up but with very high stakes involved for how our children and grandchildren in the US will live. Judging only from what I hear from friends and colleagues abroad, our own election in 2024 may well be the most important factor in determining which way the world goes for a long time. Not a political advertisement, but just a thought I believe worth keeping in mind.

You mention you have already received some communications regarding Dr. Gay and Harvard's response to protests of the war in Gaza. Here are my two cents:

I don't think an alumni newsletter is the place (or has the space) to provide a full assessment of Hamas's October 7 attack and/or Israel's response. These issues will be debated at length in policy circles and academic journals. The events and issues involved evoke deep emotions and continue to spark passionate protests from all sides. In some ways the current atmosphere reminds me of that on campus during the height of the Viet Nam war. However, I have been and continue to be disappointed by Harvard's response to the events and protests in Cambridge, including Dr. Gay's appearance before Congress. Neither Harvard as an institution nor Harvard's leaders should suppress debate, verbal policy analysis, or advocacy in support of Israel or Palestinians. Admittedly, first amendment questions can be complex, and applying my previous statement in practice is not necessarily as simple as it might sound. That said, it seems to me that common sense would indicate that calls for genocide or ethnic cleansing should never be acceptable, nor should physical coercion or online threats against those with whom one disagrees. Dr. Gay may have been correct in her testimony that context matters, but so do basic, guiding principles. I think she and her colleagues in Harvard's leadership from time to time lost sight of these basic principles in dealing with the day to day turmoil of protests, threats, and denunciations. Irrespective of the motives of the critics and the merits of some of their criticisms, Harvard's reputation has suffered over the past three months, a fact which pains me deeply. Harvard was not perfect in the 1960s, but it gave me academic and personal preparation and experience which have served me well over decades and which I continue to value. Irrespective of international events and domestic disputes, I wish this type of experience to be available to those attending Harvard today and in the future.

My family continues to be my bright spot in a troubled world. Just before Christmas the rest of the family visited our son and daughter in law in Arizona. Joyce and I, our daughter and son in law, and two grandchildren then returned to Virginia, where we live five miles apart, to celebrate Christmas. My son in law and grandson are now in Sweden, visiting his parents, three brothers, and their family. My mother's family came to the US from Sweden in the late 1860s, and I often refer to myself as half-Swedish. I find it ironic that my grandchildren, with a father born in Sweden, are arguably more Swedish than am I. Whatever the merits of such musings, we are now visiting with family in Sweden regularly, and I am learning Swedish by watching children's shows on Youtube. Altogether a welcome and pleasant experience.

**Tom Black:**

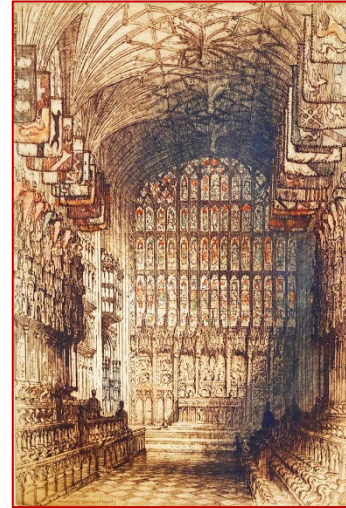
The following is the punch line from an article in the Wall Street Journal (12/28/23) by Harvard history professor, James Hankins:

"In appointing Ms. Gay, the Harvard Corp., the university's governing board, seems to have shifted the institution's priorities. It revealed those goals in its Dec.12 statement, noting that Ms. Gay is the right leader "to address the very serious societal issues we are facing." Harvard's mission is no longer simply advancing knowledge, but knowledge "that will help address deep societal issues and promote constructive discourse." From such a perspective, academic honesty seems to matter less than having the right progressive values, and the refusal to disclose underlying data is permissible so long as conclusions support a preferred narrative. Harvard is still among the world's premier research universities. It still has a great deal to offer, and calls on the right for it to be taxed or regulated at the state level—by Massachusetts—are shortsighted. The university nevertheless needs a reset. It can't continue down the path of political engagement, which undermines its true mission. If the university's governing bodies continue to behave as though academic dishonesty isn't of great concern, it can only damage

our hard-won prestige, cheapen the value of our degrees and erode the standards necessary for academic excellence."

### Ben Dunham:

Ben Dunham learned this month that "Windsor (St. George's Chapel)," an etching from his collection of works by James Alphege Brewer, has been accepted as a donation to The Royal Collection, Windsor Castle. The gift was made with the kind assistance of Martin Clayton, Head of Prints and Drawings of the Royal Collection Trust. Classmates may recognize the image of the East Window of St. George's Chapel when watching the last scenes of the Netflix series "The Crown." (More about Brewer at [www.jalphegebrewer.info](http://www.jalphegebrewer.info).)



### William Neaves:

Bill Neaves' Memory of November 22, 1963

In the early afternoon of November 22, 1963, the bells of Harvard's Memorial Church began ringing as I walked along the east side of the Old Yard from Wigglesworth to Thayer. My work-study job to supplement a scholarship entailed inspecting toilets cleaned by the student dorm crew, and on Fridays, that meant Wigglesworth. Thayer also housed freshmen, but its basement served as headquarters of Buildings & Grounds, known to everyone on campus as B&G.

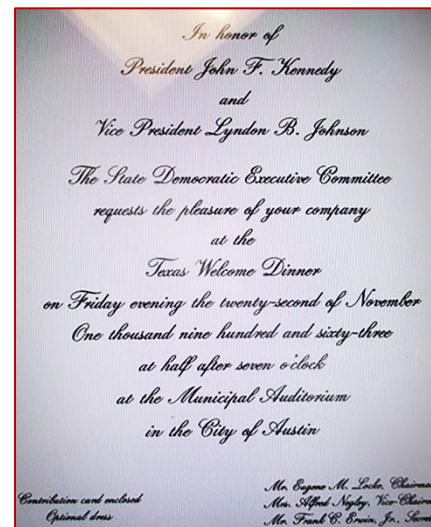
During the 1960s, B&G hired scholarship students to vacuum floors and scrub bathrooms in all the dorms and residential houses. The bells continued ringing as I descended the exterior stairwell into the Thayer basement to write my inspection report. During 15 months as an undergraduate, I had never heard the bells of Memorial Church ring on a Friday afternoon.

Jack O'Conner, former U.S. Coast Guard commander, headed B&G. Physically fit and silver-haired, his presence and dignity ensured respect from all his subordinates – superintendents, janitors, groundskeepers, and dorm-crew undergraduates. Once, I saw him intimidate a slacker by ripping a Boston telephone book in half.

No one ever considered Jack O'Conner soft-hearted. But now, while the bells continued ringing, he slumped against a wall in the Thayer basement, tears streaming down his cheeks. I realized something was terribly wrong. He noticed me standing there and sobbed, "The President's dead! He was shot in Dallas!"

I stood shocked and silent while the bells rang and Jack cried.

Thanks to Democratic Congressman George Mahon from the 19<sup>th</sup> District in West Texas, I received in my mailbox at Lowell House earlier in November an invitation to the Texas Welcome Dinner planned for Friday evening, November 22<sup>nd</sup> at the Municipal Auditorium in Austin (see attached PDF copy). I had tossed it in a desk drawer and soon forgot about President Kennedy's trip to Texas and his planned after-dinner speech to the Democratic State Committee.



Jack, a Boston Irishman, worshipped President Kennedy, and he knew I came from Texas. But he revealed only grief, not anger. I could only say, "Oh, Mr. O'Conner, I'm so sorry!"

**Fred Lowenfels:**

I came across some slides of our time at Harvard. Here are a few. The Eliot House raft race is a great memory. Can you identify Chip Clarke, Bob Saudek, Robert DeNormandie, George Brandenburg, and me? That's the Eliot House dining room, with all the men in jackets and ties! The poor quality of the photos is because I photographed with my iPhone slides projected against a wall.



## In Memoriam

### Alan Cross:

My room mate and friend, **Steven Samborski** passed away at his home York, Maine on November 28, 2023. He is survived by his wife, Lisa, daughters Zofie Moffert and Sasha Samborski, and granddaughters Elle and Hayden Moffert. Steve's career was in education, initially as teacher and guidance counseling to eventually being head of independent schools over a 30-year period.

### Neil Kominsky:

**W. Majors (Maje) Harris**, who entered with the Class of '64 and graduated with us, died earlier this fall in Dallas. His son informed me of the sad news.

'65 David Ross	09/08/23	Concord, NH
'66 Wilbert Jordan	04/17/23	Los Angeles, CA
'66 Herbert Bachelor	09/12/23	New Providence, NJ
'66 Eleanor Swift	09/20/23	San Francisco, CA
'66 Thomas Mackenzie	09/15/23	St. Paul, MN
'67 Steven Golovcsenko	10/12/23	Lexington, MA

You kept me busy this month, but I think I got it all. BTW, PDF's are hard to deal with in this template; try using jpg or jpeg.

Tom Black  
co-class secretary

*Wherever you go, there you are!*