

# **Cornell Class of 1963...Fifty Years Later!**

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Dear Classmates,

As you may know, we conducted a survey of about 800 classmates (those for whom we had email addresses) this past May about their current roles in life and their reflections of the past. Here is what we learned.

## **Further Education and Employment**

Many of us kept on learning after we left Cornell --- more than half completed a Master's degree and 40 percent went on for a doctorate.

While about 20 percent have held senior level executive or managerial positions, a noticeable proportion of us entered the field of education: 15 percent became college professors while another 11 percent became teachers or held other positions within education.

Another 7 percent entered the legal field, 5 percent held financial positions, 4 percent became engineers, 3 percent became medical doctors and another 3 percent entered the fields of art or music.

But many of us held a range of unique positions in our life such as owning an adventure travel company, becoming a sculptor, photographer, or physicist.

## **How Many Jobs**

While one-third of us have held three or fewer jobs since leaving Cornell, 40 percent had 4-6 jobs, and an impressive 25 percent held 7 or more jobs. In fact, 10 percent have had more than 10 jobs!

In regard to career changes, 30 percent of us have made no career change over these past 50 years while 25 percent made one change, about 20 percent made two, and about 15 percent made three. Six percent of us actually made more than ten changes!

### **Would We Have Chosen the Same Occupation?**

An overwhelming proportion of us are definitely sure they would have --- two out of three of us felt that way.

### **Where Do We Live?**

Most often, our primary residence today is a house in town or in an established neighborhood – about 65 percent reported so. Next most often – about 15 percent – reside in a condo or coop. Only 4 percent live in an apartment while 3 percent live on a farm.

While 25 percent of our classmates live in the suburbs, 15 percent live in a large city (over 2 million), 15 percent live in a mid-size city and 15 percent live in a small city.

35 percent of us have resided in a foreign country since leaving Cornell, including Afghanistan, Bulgaria, Chile, Columbia, Kenya, Nepal, Nigeria, Republic of Georgia, and Tanzania.

### **Family Life**

Close to 90 percent of us have children and on average, we have two. More than 10 percent of our classmates have four or more children.

As for grandchildren, they are in good supply: 75 percent of us enjoy them (I hope!) and typically we have on average 3 grandchildren. However, a very busy group of us -- 25 percent -- are enjoying 6 or more.

Did they make their way to Cornell? 30 percent of our classmates have had one or more of their own children attend Cornell.

### **Retirement Plans**

As to any desire to change their locations upon retirement, our class is relatively stable – the very large majority of us have or will stay in our current locations. Those of us who have or will move, select places such as Cape Cod, Costa Rica, Naples (Fla.), Santa Fe, and even Hawaii.

How do we spend our time in retirement? The most popular activity is travel, followed by spending time with our grandchildren and doing volunteer work. Of moderate interest are gardening, taking courses, taking up a hobby (such as birding, photography, painting, woodworking, but the adventurers amongst us will also take up trap shooting, model railroading, and writing fiction and poetry), playing a sport (such as golf, tennis and rowing...and believe it or not “pickleball”), and being a consultant. A few of us offered ideas beyond hobbies or playing a sport. Some of us have or will devote our expertise to Board memberships, farming, assisting with political campaigns, play and record music, or take part in political activism efforts.

### **Cornell On Our Minds**

Unfortunately and though a small proportion, about 20 percent of us do not keep in touch with any of our friends from Cornell. Now, that is something our class should try to do something about. For the large majority who do, by far we do so via email, then the telephone, and even through written correspondence – about one out of five of us. Less than 10 percent of us use Facebook or Skype for keeping in touch.

Would we choose Cornell again? More than 80 percent of us said “Yes.” On the other hand, only half of us believe we would be accepted!

When asked how a Cornell education affected them, our classmates said “a great deal” to these descriptions:

Made me a better thinker	77%
Increased my earning power	57
Provided me with a degree that has opened up doors in the professional/business world	52
Helped shape my career goals	43
Taught me practical skills	38
Provided me with close friends Whom I still see	32
Helped shape my personal values	31
Provided me with professional/ business contacts that have been valuable	12

### **My Life Today**

We are a very fortunate class --- more than 80 percent of us are “very content” with our lives.

And, we have goals that are very important to us:

Being fair and decent to other people	95%
Maintaining good health	86
Having a good marriage or romantic Relationship	84
Enjoying my work	82
Raising children for the 21 <sup>st</sup> century	73
Staying in good physical shape	64
Helping to improve and make society A little better	63
Planning for retirement	58
Living the good life	46

Our classmates were asked how well a set of words best describe them. They most often chose the following characteristics:

Top Choices: Independent, Well informed, and Happy

Next: Family oriented, successful

Next: Persistent, Generous, Warm and Caring

Next: Creative, Idealistic

Next: Use of new technology, Ambitious, Prefer the Simple Life,  
Cautious

Least often, they characterized themselves as pleasure seeking, old fashioned, impulsive or a “curmudgeon”.

## **Interests and Activities**

Cornell must have influenced our lives in several ways. Most often, when asked about activities and interests they **enjoy** participating in, our classmates overwhelmingly placed “reading books” in first place, followed by listening to music, traveling in the U.S. and abroad, physical fitness and working out and attending cultural and arts events. They least often play video games, knit or sew, play tennis, sail or boat, or fish.

In contrast a bit, they noted that they **actively** engage in travel opportunities, followed by giving and contributing their time to volunteer organizations (hospitals, churches/temples, environment, etc.) On a regular basis, our '63 classmates--- two-thirds of them---walk regularly and frequent a fitness center or gym.

### **Political Inclinations**

In contrasting their political inclinations at Cornell vs. today, there appears to be some but not much difference. Then and now, we were more often liberal and moderate rather than conservative. Today, we are a bit more liberal (believe it or not) and a bit less moderate.

As to our outlook for the U.S., an impressive, and unfortunately, 55 percent of us believe that the United States as a strong world leader in foreign affairs in the next four years will weaken. In regard to domestic social and economic conditions for the country over the next four years, the large proportion of us --- 46 percent --- see it weakening over time. In spite of these less than optimistic views, we believe that our standard of living over the next five years will stay the same continuing on a more dismal note, 75 percent of us think the world will not be a better place for our grandchildren.

### **What's Important to Us**

When given more than 12 different statements about their views, our classmates most often agreed with these:

- Financial security is very important to me
- I believe a woman can work outside the home even if she has small children and still be a good mother

- My family is the single most important thing to me
- I like to try new and different things

Very few of us agreed with these:

- My greatest achievements are ahead of me (“quite wisely we would agree”)
- I’m a “spender” rather than a “saver”
- I prefer to be alone than with others
- TV is my main form of entertainment

## **Social Media**

Nearly one half of us have a profile on Facebook and nearly as many on LinkedIn. Obviously, we still want to be connected...whatever the medium!

## **Major Concerns About the Next Five Years**

Most often, we pointed to personal economic security, the economy overall, the environment and climate change, our health, and the role of the United States worldwide as our major concerns in the near future..

However, a few unique concerns included:

- Domestic political dysfunction
- Changes to medicare and the entire health system
- Another military conflict
- Growing class separation in the US
- Inability of Republicans and Democrats to work together
- Increased partisan bickering fostered by the cable TV culture
- The destruction of the middle class and.....
- Not letting myself or my wife decline, psychologically or physically!  
Noted by a few others.....”staying alive.”

## **What We Look Forward to in the Next Five Years**

Being a member of the Class of 1963 and the “era” in which we grew, it is no surprise that we have many, many unique expectations. Most often, we point to:

- Being with and watching our children and grandchildren grow and to be a part of their lives
- Continued good health and strong friendships
- Foreign and domestic travel
- Doing more volunteer work
- Keeping active while enjoying more leisure time

Of course, being Cornellians, we added a few unique expectations, like...

- A 15 golf handicap
- Cruising in our new trawler
- Writing a book with my new wife
- Organizing family records and photos

## **Fondest Memory of Cornell**

Hearing from more than 700 classmates, you can imagine the diverse responses to this question. There was no way to classify the responses. Thus, we offer a colorful and vivid set of descriptions that may bring back memories for you.

On a serious note:

- Being with intelligent , well-aimed other young people
- Challenges academically and fulfillment in meeting those challenges
- Feeling capable enough to do well
- Independence...feeling a part of a vibrant intellectual community; learning and questioning

- Being with smart and well-informed people who sought knowledge and used it positively
- Sage Chapel choir
- Friendship of the freshman year corridor
- Intellectual and personal stimulation provided by wonderful professors

On the other hand:

- Sunbathing on life slope while most were studying for finals
- Ray Charles concert
- My fraternity and friendships I made there
- Meeting my wife
- Dating
- Dragon Day
- Meeting the person I thought was my “soul mate” during freshman orientation

All in all, it seems as though we, the Class of 1963, profited well from our years on the hill. We learned a lot, gained sound values, and went on to do good things.

