

Reflections of the Class of 1988

By Steven Fink

The occasion of a college reunion always lends itself towards nostalgic thinking. The 25th such occasion prompts one to feel that we have officially become our parents, or at least what we perceived them to be while spending four fun-filled, knowledge acquiring, inspiring and influential years of our respective lives. We look back today at that cherished time spent in Lancaster, Pennsylvania thankful for the memories that linger and the bonds of friendships made and strengthened over time. We also naturally mourn for those classmates whose circumstances and post-college experiences have been less fortuitous and for those who have suffered ill-health or who have passed on.

Many noteworthy and enduring occurrences transpired during the time we spent at F&M which have impacted the world politically, economically, socially and environmentally since then. Who could ever forget the initial discovery of the AIDS virus, the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, the Challenger space shuttle explosion, the "Black Monday" US stock market crash in October, 1987, the sudden death of star athlete Len Bias, and the initial introduction of personal computers and the Apple Macintosh.

If only we had access to Google from our dorm rooms while ordering late night Dominos pizza instead of photo copies of library obtained microfiche and an IBM electric typewriter. Oh how cool the backspace white-out feature was! The fun it would be to experience a philosophy class today with Luther Binkley on the merits of social media and the use of Twitter relative to business ethics.

However, most significantly, the recognition of our mortality comes to the forefront at this time of a milestone reunion. Not only because of the natural evolution and passage of time, but due more to the climate in which we presently live our lives in 2013. We're told to be "vigilant" as we stand on endless airport security lines to be patted down and personally violated all in the name of public safety. We are the September 11th generation.

The roots of that day and the "age of terror" were sown with the downing of Pan Am flight #103 over Lockerbie, Scotland shortly after our college graduation in 1988 by radical Islamic jihadists from Libya. That was a London to New York commercial flight filled with people, young and old, from free-thinking democracies around the world. For me, it had a personal connection because my sister had flown on flight #103 the prior day. She had originally been scheduled to be on the doomed flight but had changed her itinerary 48-hours earlier simply to travel together with a friend.

The global "wars" to fight this unknown evil that have transpired in the years since college somewhat define our time and place in history. The recent Boston bombings, 25 years after we wore caps and gowns on the quad, illustrate nothing if not to be thankful for what we have and to cherish all the days of our lives.