

CLASS OF 1974 REFLECTION
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The early 1970s were a time of great social and political change in America. Students demonstrating against the Vietnam war at Kent State University were killed and wounded by National Guardsmen. Backlash from widespread student demonstrations led to diminished support for higher education, a nationwide financial crisis in higher education, and a serious financial deficit at F&M. Eighteen-year-olds were given the right to vote in federal elections. The World Trade Center was completed. The Pentagon Papers were released to the world press. The Environmental Protection Agency and the Nasdaq were created. China joined the United Nations. Israeli athletes were murdered at the Munich Olympic Games. A draft lottery went into effect and military involvement in the Vietnam war ended. Hurricane Agnes was Pennsylvania's worst natural disaster. The Watergate burglary led to President Nixon's resignation and he was soon pardoned by President Ford. On campus, tuition was repeatedly hiked to cover fiscal deficits, ground was broken for the College Center, and students responded by streaking. Forty years later, these events remain collectively unsettling. Some marked the beginning of yet-unfolding societal and government changes, some were ephemeral and stemmed from youthful exuberance, and some reflected intractable problems faced by every generation.

Over the decades a repeated vision has come to me, usually upon waking. A faceless, hooded person offers a small golden cup, kindly with outstretched hands. I can drink as much as I want- the cup never runs dry. It contains complex aromas and flavors, like a vintage wine opening itself to me over time: the flinty, mineralic essence of Ordovician

limestone when freshly broken with a rock hammer; the grassy bouquet of herbs in a plastic bag; the musty paper of a cherished old book; the taste and smell of rainfall on the Quad, the strangely delightful marriage of cold milk and inhaled cigarette smoke.

Some of these were childish ways, long gone.

A residue, filtered across forty years and validated by the Ancients, goes something like this:

Ars longa, vita brevis.

Only the dead have seen the end of war.

Try to enjoy the great festival of life with other people.

This College is a jewel of great price, not purchased to be discarded or lost, but enjoyed for a lifetime, then passed to future generations.