

Reflections of the Class of 1995

By Chad Williams

In what seems like a snap of the fingers, 20 years have passed and we are back on campus in beautiful Lancaster, Pa. Although we may not have sensed it at the time, 1995 was a watershed moment in our country and the world.

Divisions in domestic politics seemed to deepen that year and, unfortunately, our eyes were opened to the evils of terrorism, both at home and abroad. Indeed, during that year we witnessed the cowardly bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, the conviction of Omar Abdul Rahman and 9 others in connection with the World Trade Center bombing, and the withdraw of troops from Somalia following the tragic events that would later be chronicled in the best-selling book *Black Hawk Down*. Those events were a dark foreshadowing of many of the global threats we face today.

While the seeds of change in global politics were planted the year we graduated, exciting developments in technology also opened up pathways that would ultimately lead to exponential economic growth. Specifically, that year companies such as Netscape and Yahoo! were born; Microsoft released Windows 95, which would change the way many of us worked; and Steve Jobs, who was then 40 years old and the president of NeXT Computer, was only one year away from his return to Apple, which would usher in one of the most transformational entrepreneurial runs in history. These technological advancements, which were in

their nascent stages in 1995, became the foundation of a new global economy that continues to benefit the lives of many to this day.

The cultural winds were also changing during our senior year. A few of us were slowly (some more slowly than others) outgrowing the Grunge phase of our lives, while just about all of us were hooked on TV shows like *Seinfeld*, *Friends* and *Melrose Place*. Unfortunately, as with every generation, the world also lost some cultural icons: from Jonas Salk, to Mickey Mantle, to Dean Martin; a golden era in the United States seemed to come to an end that year. Sadly, a few months after graduation, on July 9, 1995, the Grateful Dead would play their last show at Soldier Field in Chicago, just one month to the day before the legendary Jerry Garcia died. But, as one period of popular culture came to an end, another remarkable period was just beginning.

As we consider this brief glimpse of 1995, we now see that the world was at a tipping point at the precise moment our time at F&M was coming to an end. Fortunately, our education and experiences at F&M prepared us to boldly enter and succeed in that brave new world. As a result of those experiences, we learned (as all who sincerely embrace a liberal arts education must) that the pursuit and defense of truth is *always* worth the fight. We observed that vision, creativity, and perseverance, directed in positive ways, would improve our lives and the lives of others. And we understood that a well-rounded life, one in which we pursued

challenges, remained open to new ideas and, most importantly, loved (and were loved by) those closest to us, would result in a life well lived.

On behalf of the Class of 1995, I wish you all the best.