



## CLASS OF 1963 – ALUMNI NOTES JULY-AUGUST 2020

As previously reported, a committee of classmates headed by **Jon Larson** had made plans for a Yale Class of 1963 San Francisco Gathering from September 28 through October 3, 2020. More than 50 classmates and partners had already signed up and more had indicated that they also hoped to come. Unfortunately, the covid-19 pandemic has forced us to defer the San Francisco Gathering until next year. We hope that 2021 will bring a San Francisco Gathering even larger and more enjoyable than the one we had planned for this year. We will keep everyone informed as the plans for the 2021 San Francisco Gathering develop.

**Ron Crawford, Mike Koenig, Bob Kusterer**, and their spouses enjoyed a mini “Gathering” at Bob’s home in Bradenton, FL, highlighted by a Manatee river cruise on Bob’s party boat and the consumption of local delicacies – frog and alligator.

**Bob Dickie** writes: “Last summer I went with Jane Harman to visit World War I battlefields of the Somme. From one of the trench lines first breached by the British we could see the village of Pozières, the high point in the area, and, about half a mile away, High Wood, a large patch of forest surrounded by fields. Australia’s Eighth Infantry Battalion was tasked with taking Pozières to save the Gordon Highlanders locked in battle at High Wood. The mission was accomplished but not before Pozières changed hands several times. Several million tons of ordnance landed on it, and after the battle there was no evidence other than brick dust that there had been a village there. **Ian Robertson**’s father, who was with the Gordon Highlanders, was very severely injured at High Wood, and my grandfather’s Aussie cousin, who bore my name, was killed at Pozières when he tried to pull a wounded mate to relative safety. The retired

British Marine I hired to guide us said there were no bloodier battles in the War than Pozières and High Wood. It should make us all pray for peace.”

**Mike Skol** reports: “I have reached a kind of milestone in my post-Foreign Service career. Earlier this year in Bogotá, Skol & Serna and the Universidad de Salamanca (Spain) announced the formation of ‘iComplianza’ (Asociación Iberoamericana de Expertos en Complianza y Gestión de Riesgos Legales – the ‘Ibero-American Association of Experts in Compliance and Risk Management’), which will, *inter alia*, be offering courses, conferences, and certifications for financial compliance professionals in Spain and Latin America. Skol & Serna (a U.S.-Colombian counter-money laundering/anti-corruption services consortium) also celebrated its 20th anniversary (the University of Salamanca is a bit older – founded in 1218). The ‘S&S’ combine arose from a unique situation in Colombian-US relations just after my retirement in 1996: the revelation that President Ernesto Samper had accepted campaign funding from narco-traffickers sparked fears within the country’s banking community that Washington could well sanction Colombian private banks as a whole. Their association (‘Asobancaria’) hired me – both to help devise a system to insulate the banks from drug money laundering and to convince U.S. agencies and Congressional committees that such a program was in place and effective. My lead contact in the Association was Carlos Serna, a respected expert in bank regulation. Once the task was successfully completed, we decided to create our own bi-national group, which has since served clients in the U.S., Europe, and Latin America: banks and governments as well as major corporations. To counter-money laundering, we added the anti-corruption services portfolio (a special concern of mine in my last years in the State Department). S&S also illustrates my secret formula for a second career: Find a business partner who is 15 years younger and a workaholic. I still find time to focus some energy more generally on two countries: Colombia, of course – rising spectacularly from the narco-guerrilla

debacle of the last century, and Venezuela (my last overseas Foreign Service post) – today the world’s outstanding example of how to turn a rich, democratic country into a poor, dictatorial, criminal enterprise. Today’s politicians and voters in a number of places might well take note of both experiences.”

**Andre Fouilhoux Houston** died peacefully at home on March 5, 2020 after a heroic battle with cancer. Grandson of the renowned architect J. Andre Fouilhoux, Andre was admired and loved by family, friends, and colleagues for his brilliant mind, his soulful understanding of life, and his ever-present nutty and eccentric humor. Andre attended Yale University, where he received a B.A. and M.A. summa cum laude, Phi Beta Kappa. Shortly after graduating from architectural school, Andre joined the Peace Corps, where he designed several buildings in Iran. Andre designed over 50 residential projects and more than a dozen religious buildings, among them the seven-sided Wallace Presbyterian Church in College Park, MD. Before founding his firm in 1987, Andre was an Associate at Metcalf and Associates, where he designed the competition- and award-winning residences at the Torpedo Factory in Alexandria, VA and the U.S. Embassy and U.S. Ambassador’s residence in Cairo. Andre also worked at Perkins and Will in Chicago and Teheran, where he designed, among other projects, the Iranzamin School in Teheran. Andre is survived by his wife, Annie Houston; his daughter Marianna Werth and his son Maxwell Houston; and five grandchildren.

**Doug Crowley** writes: “Andy was a very private person and I am sure he would hate the idea that his friends were writing about him. He could be outrageously loud and boisterous , especially after a few drinks, or withdrawn and contemplative, depending upon the situation. He had a lively imagination, was very creative, and worked hard at Yale. Andy never abandoned his faith, even at Yale or during a brief flirtation with Buddhism in the 1970s, and I remember him quietly getting up and heading off to Mass at Saint Thomas More on Sunday mornings while the

rest of us slept off the effects of the night before. Throughout his life he devoted a good part of his time to various good works in Washington. He had redesigned Saint Peter's, the church where his funeral was held on March 14, 2020. It was a truly surreal moment for us who mourned Andy's death, dutifully scattered around his church, as the coronavirus began its descent on our lives." **Ridge Hall** remembers: "Andy was a gifted artist, noted for his meticulous pen-and-ink drawings of cathedrals, and a highly successful architect, focusing mainly on residential work. After Yale he hopped on a motorcycle and traveled through Europe, staying at the cheapest places he could find. He later served in the Peace Corps in Iran, which produced a life-long interest in Persian art, carpets, and culture. His architecture notably brought light and excitement into rooms – which he did in remodeling two rooms in a house Jill and I owned in Washington for many years. His son Maxwell describes Andy's taking him as a child to parks to pick up trash, telling him, 'You should always try to leave a place better than you found it.' In a sometimes raucous but often quiet way, that was what Andy was about."

**Crispin Wayne Thiessen** passed away on January 24, 2020 at the age of 78 surrounded by his family at his home in Sun Valley, ID. Cris is survived by his wife, Mary, three children, and five grandchildren who adored him. Cris was born in Ohio in 1941 and his family eventually settled in Scarsdale, New York, where he lived through high school, excelling academically and becoming a state champion wrestler. After graduating from Yale University with a degree in Metallurgical Engineering, he joined the U.S. Navy as a nuclear submarine officer and was on the crew that commissioned the USS Greenling (SSN-614) in 1967. While serving in the Navy he met his wife, Mary, and welcomed their daughter. After leaving the Navy, Cris embarked on a successful career at Westinghouse Electric Corporation based in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania and had several international postings in Brussels, Belgium, where his twin sons were born. While proud of his many business accomplishments, what gave Cris the

most joy during his life was his strong marriage and watching his children and grandchildren grow up, thrive personally and professionally, and enjoy life. When Cris was only 14, he wrote a surprisingly introspective autobiography for his school which began with a quote from *The Life We Prize* by Elton Trueblood: “A man has made at least a start on discovering the meaning of human life when he plants shade trees under which he knows full well he will never sit.” Cris ended his essay by stating that he only hoped that he could become a man who would plant a shade tree someday. For those who knew Cris, it was clear that he planted enough shade trees during his lifetime to fill a forest.

**Jim Green** remembers Cris Thiessen as follows: “I met Cris in our Freshman year during the orientation week before classes started since he lived directly above me in Durfee. We immediately became friends, but never would have expected that friendship to last 60 years. He was always a serious student but he loved having a good time and I do not think there was a movie that came through New Haven during our four years there that he did not see. He was also very serious about Naval ROTC and worked very hard to maintain his scholarship so that he could become a Nuclear Submariner, a goal he achieved after Yale. Unfortunately, his commitment to the Navy kept him from being my Best Man since he could not get leave soon enough to make the wedding. Once we left Yale we went our separate ways but always stayed in touch. After we both retired, we were able to see one another by getting together with our wives or with our other roommates, **Pete Doolittle** and **Gary Wilkinson** and their wives for mini-reunions as well as all being together for our 50th. Last Summer my wife and I stopped to see Cris and Mary in Sun Valley and spent a very enjoyable day with them at their beautiful home. Even though Cris was still doing chemo for his pancreatic cancer, he was in great spirits and as affable as ever and had me convinced that with that spirit and fight he would beat it.

Unfortunately, that was not to be, but I will always remember that last visit and the many wonderful times we had together at Yale and through the years since.” **Joe Valenta** writes: “I’ll remember Cris as my best friend at Yale at a time when we didn’t realize how influential a friend could be to our decision-making process. We were both engineering students in the Regular NROTC program with Naval careers ahead. The only key question for us then was, after graduation where could one best serve? After endless fast-friend discussions, and numerous double dates in his VW, we both decided to ‘Go Nuc’! So we flew with a dozen other classmates to DC to interview with Admiral Rickover, and then we were duly selected! Cris’s cool, logical, persuasive, and warm yet stalwart manner were invaluable to me during this period. I’m honored to have been his friend, and will miss him greatly.”

**Richard Eugene Willis** died peacefully in his home in Brunswick, ME on January 29, 2020, in the quiet hours of the morning, having valiantly made it through the holidays for his family. His last word was, “Love,” a word that defines him more than any other. Richard was born on October 23, 1941 in Springfield, MA, and graduated from Springfield Classical High School as one of the kids we called “eggheads” back in that century. Richard completed his B.A. in History at Yale, where he was named to Phi Beta Kappa, then surged toward the great Pacific, where his graduate advisor, in front of a class crammed with striving academicians, asked why someone from back East would choose Stanford for his doctorate, to which Richard quipped imperiously, “I find the weather to be quite salubrious.” Decades later, when asked by his wife of over 30 years, who married him because of his ice-dry wit, not in spite of it, what he liked most about his doctoral stint, he knitted his Gandalf-wild brows and said, “Might of been the pub across from the British Museum where I ate bangers and mash every single day because my fellowship grant housed me reasonably well but allowed few luxuries.”

Dr. Willis, a title few were allowed to use, continuously aligned his life's work with his personal belief that education is a lifelong pursuit and should endow the learner with ever-greater skills for being useful to others. His lifetime work included: Instructor, University of California at Berkeley, 1967-1970; Assistant Professor, Tufts University, 1970-1974; History Department Chair, Oak Grove-Coburn School, 1974-1978; Director, Division of Humanities and Sciences, Thomas College, 1978-1985; Dean, Division of Graduate and Professional Education, Thomas College, 1985-1991; Dean, Division of Continuing Education, Central Maine Technical College, 1991-2001; President, Mid-State College, 2001-2002; Program Director, Master of Science in Education, St. Joseph's College of Maine, 2002-2008; Distance/Online Faculty Member, St. Joseph's College of Maine, 1990-2018. He was published in various journals as well as a bibliography of books on American and European military history. Richard was singularly devoid of hubris, and that he vigorously eschewed both pretense and "self-puffing". He was a man of towering empathy and he "got" the humanity thing with a laser-sharp ability both to recognize all that is good and honorable in people and to spot deceit and cruelty and call it out. Richard is survived by his beloved wife and best friend, Shirley; his sons Nicholas and Jeremy; his daughter Maria Amoroso; his stepson Mark Hunter; and his grandchildren and friends.

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