Classmates,

August's memoir writer, Alan Kennedy, is the third of our classmates (Barbara Carton and Mick McCue were the first two) whom I did not have to recruit to contribute to this project. Alan responded to my plea for authors in one of my earlier class blasts. While I personally do not know Alan, he grew up in Pittsburgh and currently lives in Paris with his wife, Joan Simon. They have two children – Kira (23) and Ani (25). While at Penn, Alan majored in political science and, as you will see, did not spend much time at the barber shop. He now is a dealer in antique Asian art. His hobbies include literature, film, bicycling, swimming and horse racing. Alan apparently honed his handicapping skills at Liberty Bell Racetrack which never recovered from his departure in 1972. The Bell went out of business in 1986 and is now a shopping mall. I hope you enjoy his memoir, “The More Things Change the More They Stay the Same.”

This is the 10th of the Class of ’72 series, “45 for 45.” By our 45th reunion, it is my goal to have published 45 memoirs written by classmates. Every attendee at that reunion will receive a bound volume containing the entire series, including my introduction of each writer. If you wish to become a permanent part of our class history, please email your submission to me at Friar72@gmail.com. Next month’s writer is Ron Malzer.

I have been remiss in not thanking earlier Lisbeth Willis, who is the Director of Classes and Reunions at the Penn Alumni office. Without Lisbeth and her staff, it would not be possible for these articles to be published. If you happen to see Lisbeth at Sweeten (the alumni house) or at an alumni event, please introduce yourself to her and express your gratitude for all of her help.

Best,

Jeff Rothbard
President, Class of ’72
“The More Things Change the More They Stay the Same”

Remember that feeling that our generation was different?

We were going to change the world. There would be no more wars, only peace and love amongst our under-30 peers. The world war that our parents fought less than 25 years since we entered Penn was about them, not us. The Vietnam War was something for which their generation was responsible; we opposed it by marching on Washington, erecting peace signs and evading the draft.

Our generation bonded through music, drugs, sex, long hair and protest. We could live cheaply, hitchhike to wherever we wanted to go, and crash on friends and strangers' floors. We were not going to work 9 - 5 jobs like our parents. We were different, and the world would never be the same when we took over.

In the midst of immersing myself in this new way of life while at Penn, I did attend classes most of the time. I remember C. J. Burnet commenting on my "liberated" hair as I arrived a few minutes late to his political science class. (What year was this?) I had had my last haircut after the first semester of freshman year, and was proud of my Afro.

In looking back at my Penn years, I was intellectually stimulated, in spite of my life style. I don't think that the word "intellectual" was part of my vocabulary, but in fact I was made to think about challenging topics that continue to fascinate me.

C. J. Burnet, in his street-wise Boston accent, pointed out the flaws in every system of government and in every political philosophy. He repeatedly told us, "The purpose of politics is power." That short sentence remains with me. It might be all we need to know about politics.

Schuyler van Rensaleer Cammann, of old American stock, aristocratic in bearing and a strict disciplinarian in class, became an important mentor for me. He taught several courses in Asian studies, and, for those of us who sat quietly in class and paid attention, Cammann would share his vast knowledge, and sometimes invite us to Chinese meals, explaining the significance of every dish, and teaching us proper chopstick etiquette.
On his own time, he took us to museums, and didn't hesitate to whip out his pen and correct errors in museum labels. He allowed us to call him "Ki" if we earned his approval by showing respect for his knowledge. He told us fascinating tales of old China, and mysterious stories of his experiences with ghosts.

Ki stressed that no culture existed in isolation. Japan cannot be understood without a knowledge of China. The same symbol can be shared by multiple cultures, but he explained the different nuances in the meaning of the symbol as it passed from culture to culture.

The name of the third professor who kept me thinking during and after Penn is gone from my memory. What I never forgot is the question he posed at the beginning of his course, "What is the nature of attitude change?" It must have been a political science course, and the motivation behind the question might have been to get us thinking about how a population might change its beliefs over time.

If we could think through that question, we might better understand major historic events, like revolutions, wars and uprisings. I didn't have a clue about how to answer the question, but as I've gotten older, I understand how important the question is.

Over 40 years later, our generation has yet to change the world, and if we've been fortunate, we learned something from our parents’ generation, in spite of ourselves.

By Alan Kennedy, W’72