

Expanded Introductory Remarks for the Diploma Ceremony of

# The Reverend William Sloane Coffin, Jr.

Saturday, 31 May 2003

2:00 PM

SSS 114

Grove and College Street

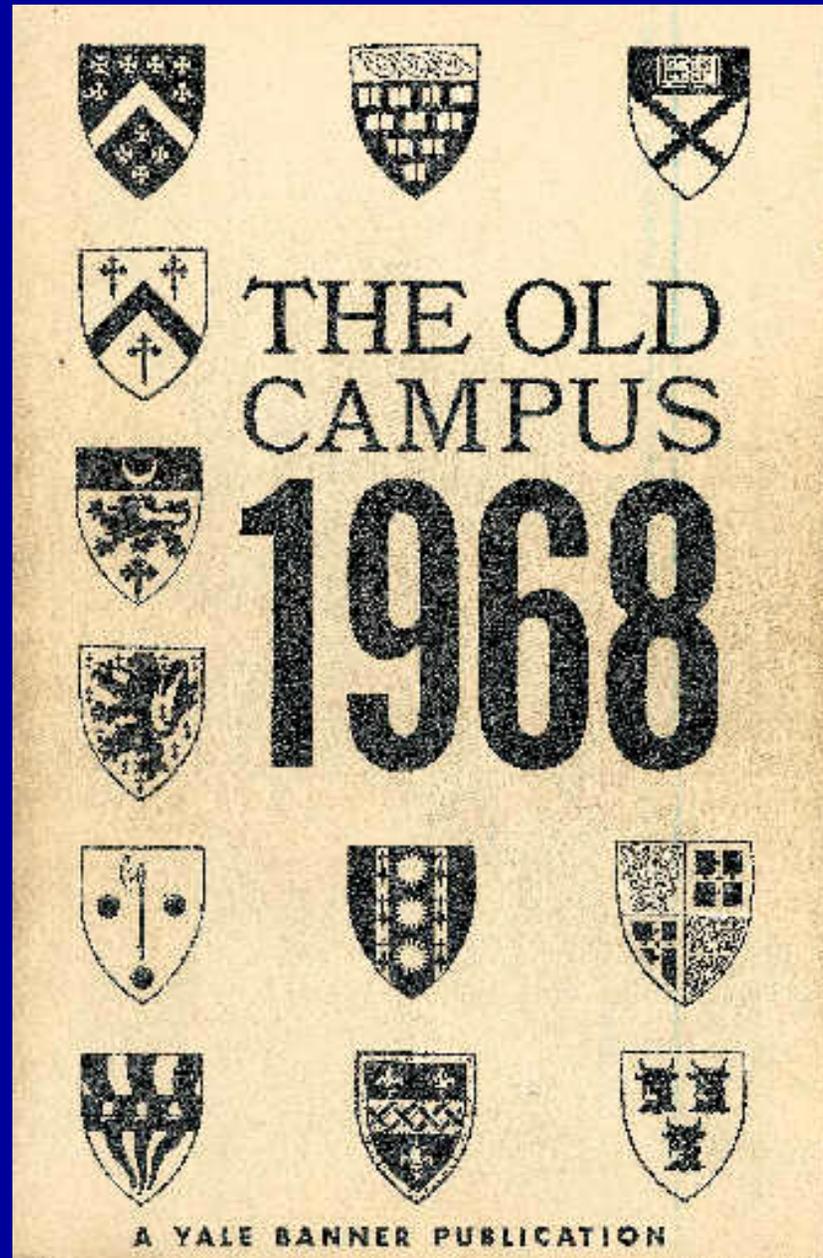
New Haven, CT

# *“Bright College years...”*

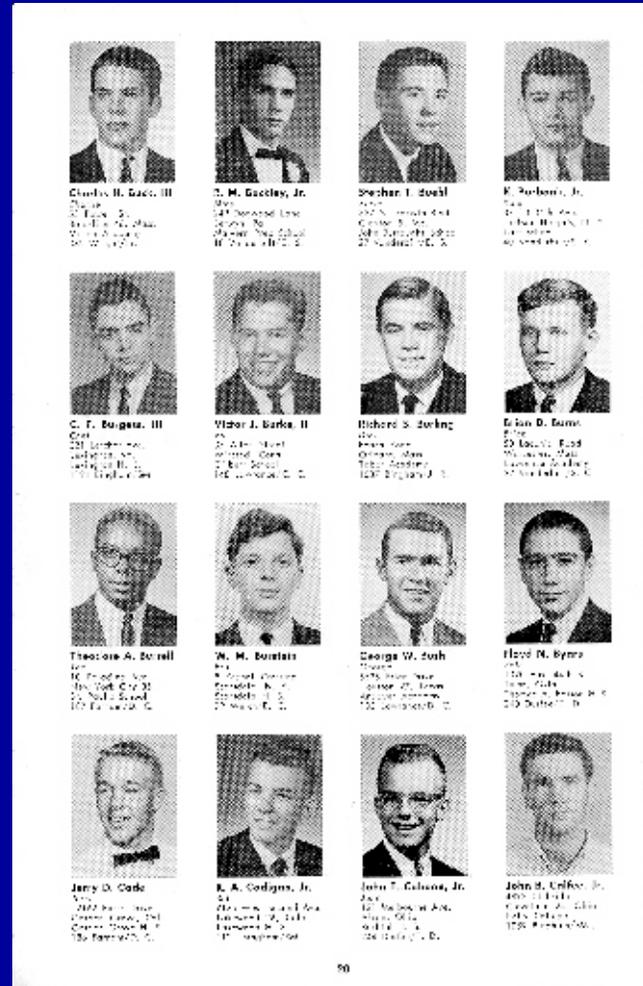


Few of us knew  
what we were in  
for when we  
walked through  
Phelpes Gate and  
into Old Campus.

Fortunately,  
we had a  
printed guide  
which made it  
possible to get  
to know one  
another.



In the *Old Campus* publication we all had “page-mates,” and we soon came to know one another. We matched faces to impressions and formed life-long friendships as we progressed through freshman year and beyond.





**C. F. Burgess, III**  
 Chap  
 321 Latchor Ave.  
 Lexington, Va.  
 Lexington H. S.  
 1121 Bingham/SM



**Victor J. Burke, II**  
 Vic  
 37 Allen Street  
 Winsted, Conn.  
 Gilbert School  
 148 Lawrence/C. C.



**Richard S. Burling**  
 Dick  
 Beach Road  
 Orleans, Mass.  
 Taber Academy  
 1037 Bingham/J. E.



**Brian D. Burns**  
 Brian  
 50 Lacombe Road  
 Worcester, Mass.  
 Lawrence Academy  
 32 Vanderbilt/S. C.



**Theodore A. Burrell**  
 Ted  
 10 Paladino Ave.  
 New York City 35  
 St. Paul's School  
 187 Farnam/D. C.



**W. M. Burstein**  
 Bill  
 8 Reynal Crossing  
 Scarsdale, N. Y.  
 Scarsdale H. S.  
 99 Welch/B. C.



**George W. Bush**  
 George  
 5525 Briar Drive  
 Houston 27, Texas  
 Andover Academy  
 183 Lawrence/D. C.



**Floyd N. Byars**  
 Pete  
 1390 East 44th St.  
 Tulsa, Okla.  
 Thomas A. Edison H. S.  
 240 Durlee/T. D.



**Jerry D. Cade**  
 Jerry  
 12162 Burns Drive  
 Garden Grove, Cal.  
 Garden Grove H. S.  
 186 Farnam/D. C.



**R. A. Cadigan, Jr.**  
 Bob  
 9125 West Second Ave.  
 Lakewood 26, Colo.  
 Lakewood H. S.  
 1121 Bingham/SM



**John T. Cahoon, Jr.**  
 John  
 121 Melbourne Ave.  
 Akron, Ohio  
 Buchtel H. S.  
 244 Durlee/T. D.



**John B. Calfee, Jr.**  
 4892 Clabside  
 Cleveland 24, Ohio  
 Kelly College  
 1089 Bingham/SM

We were a mixed group which the Admissions Office had made a conscious effort to recruit and accept from a wide variety of public schools across the country.

In addition there were students from private schools and academies, some of whom, (as we were to learn), came to Yale as “legacies,” shouldering the heavy burden of a family tradition which preceded them at Yale.

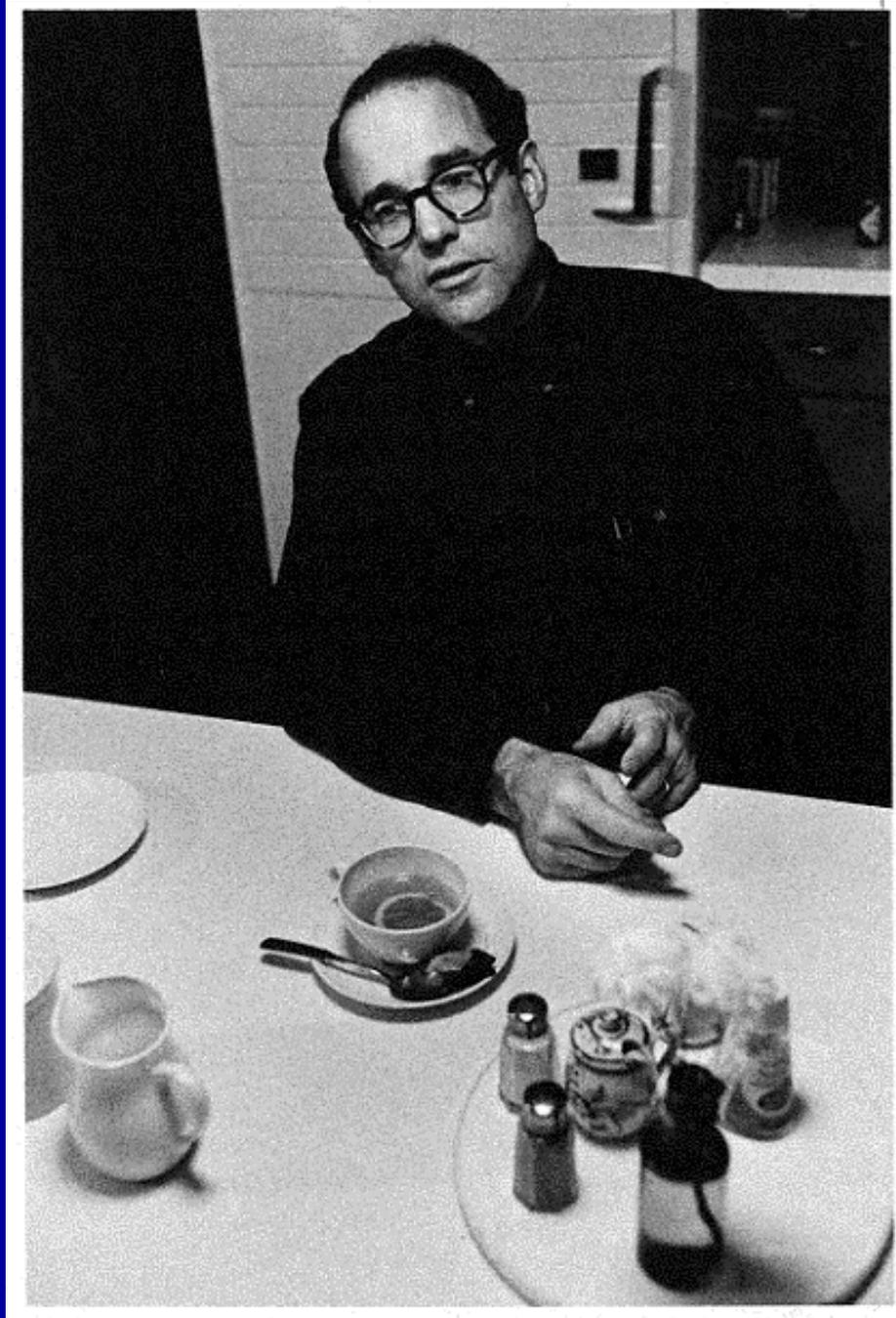


**George W. Bush**

George  
5525 Briar Drive  
Houston 27, Texas  
Andover Academy  
183 Lawrence/D. C.



Although Bill had previously been Chaplain at Andover Academy and Williams College, when he started at Yale, he looked almost as young as we did....

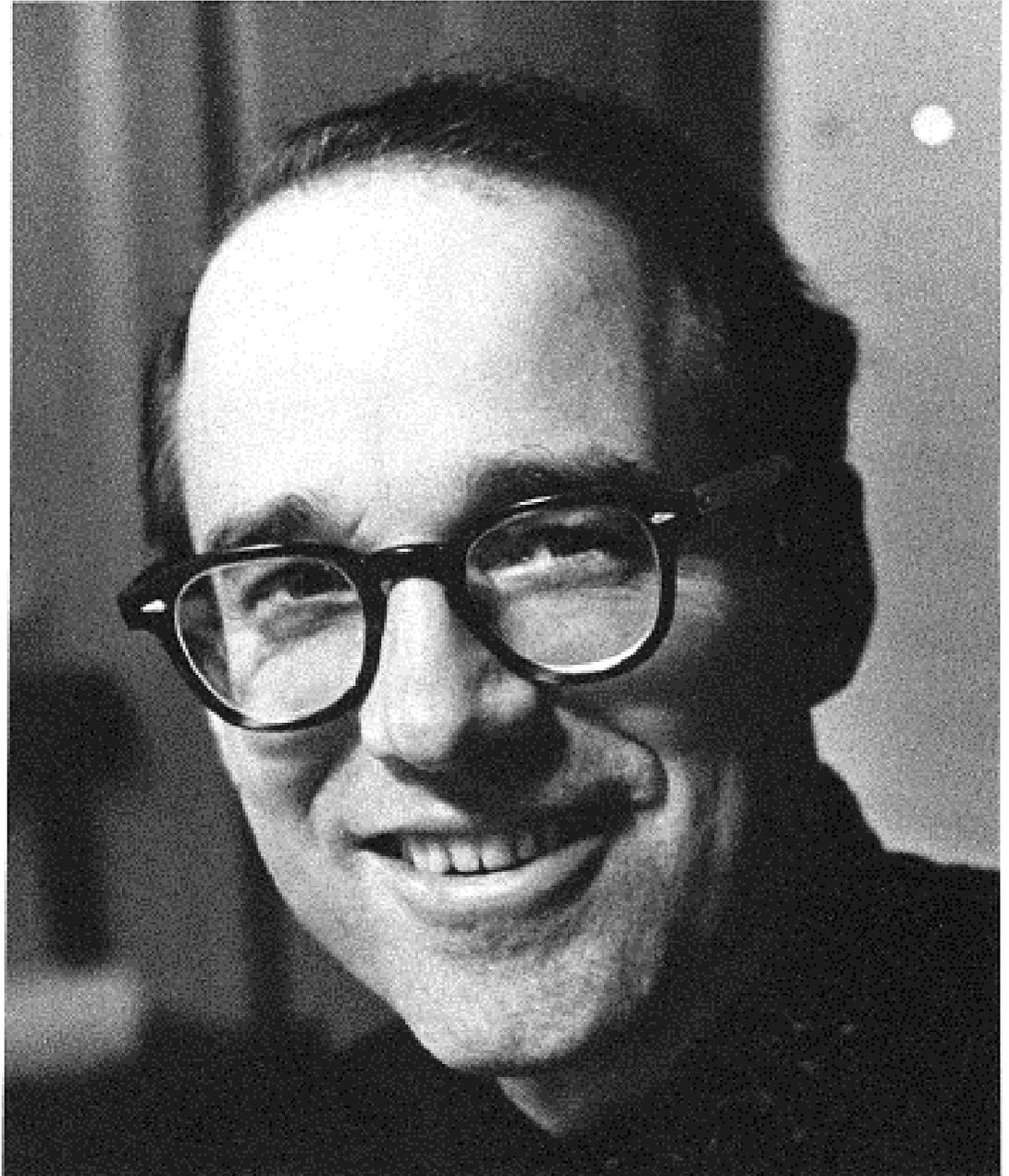


At Yale he was unstintingly generous with his time and concern.

We spent many meals and many evenings at his house on Wall Street.

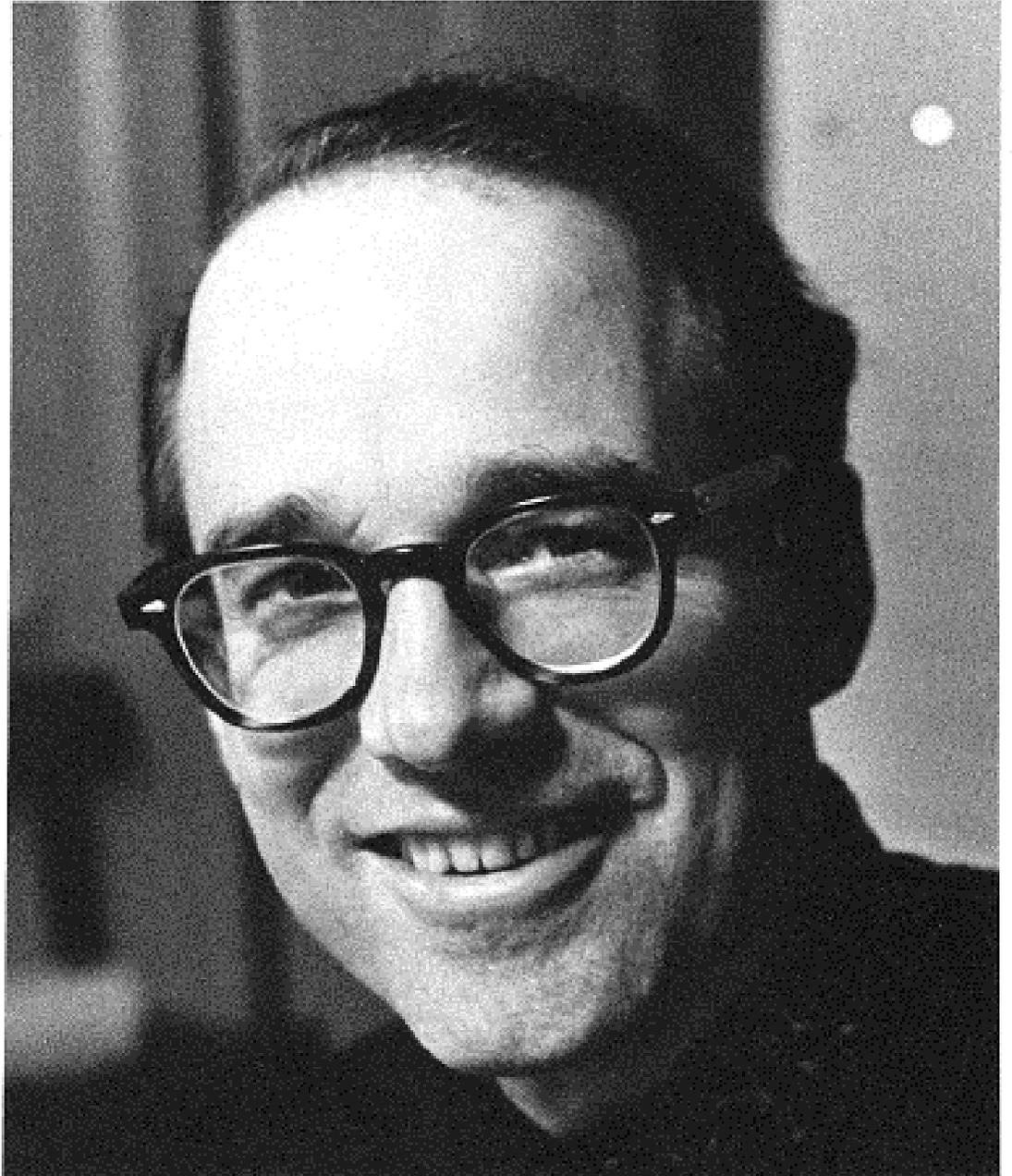
If you had an  
argument with Bill,  
you could rarely  
“win.”

This could be  
irritating --  
especially when  
you were right and  
he was wrong....



No matter how wrong he was, his winning smile, and turn of phrase left you wanting for words, speechless.

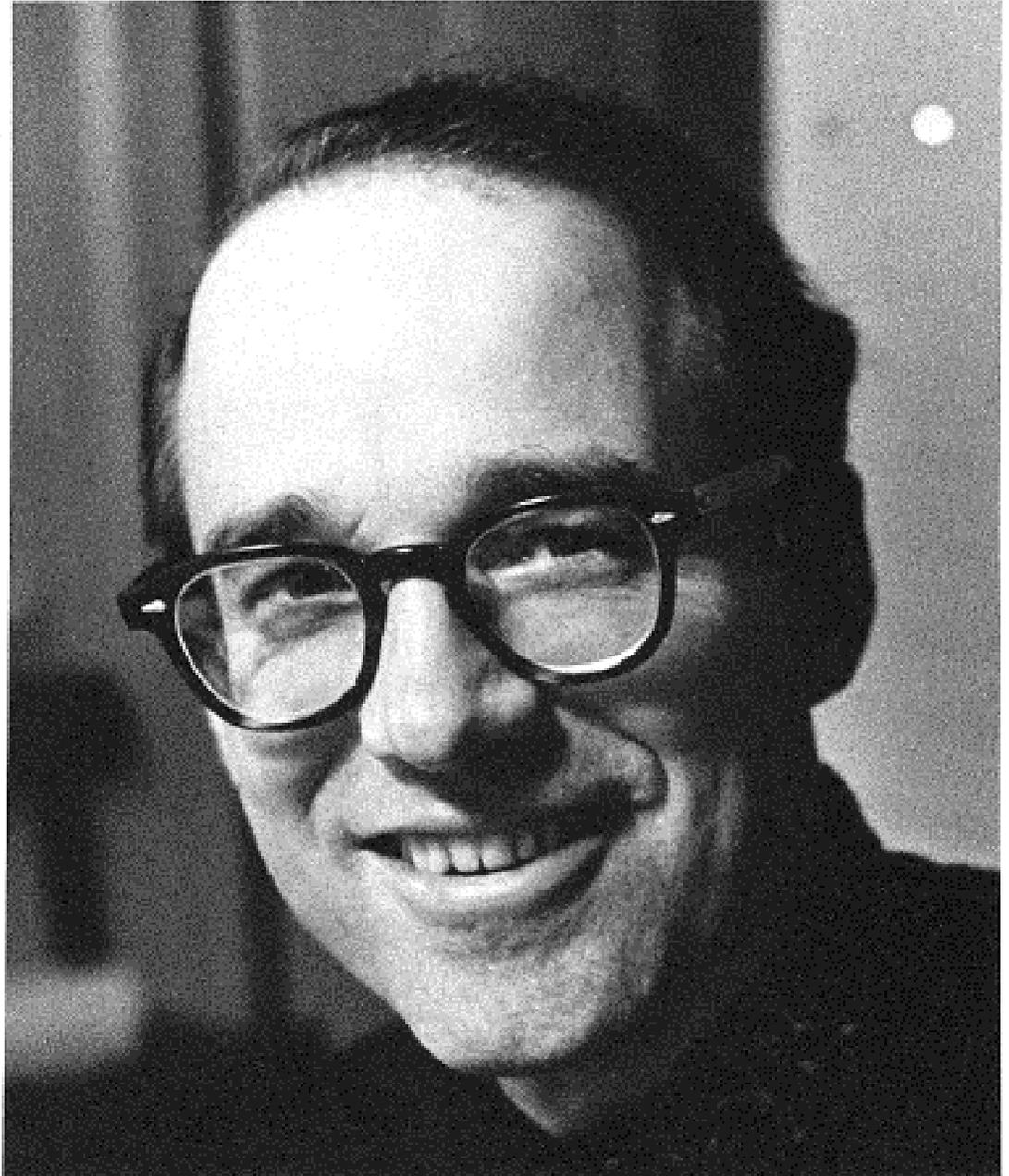
You felt enveloped, embraced by a large and magnanimous soul.

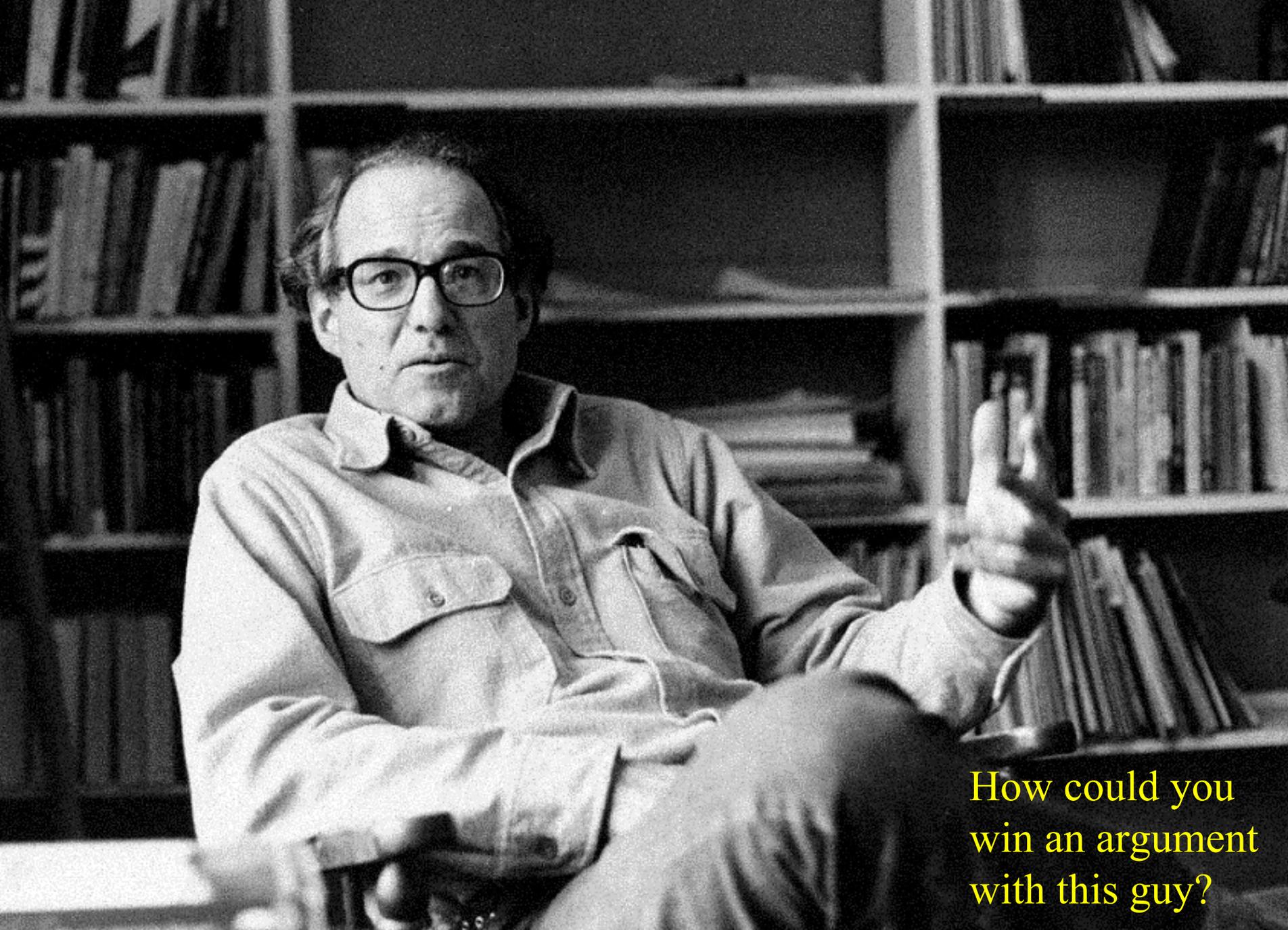


You knew he was more than just a “nice guy.” He was a *good man*.

His manner exerted a kind of magnetic pull on you.

You sensed he was a force of nature toward whom you could not help but be drawn.





How could you  
win an argument  
with this guy?



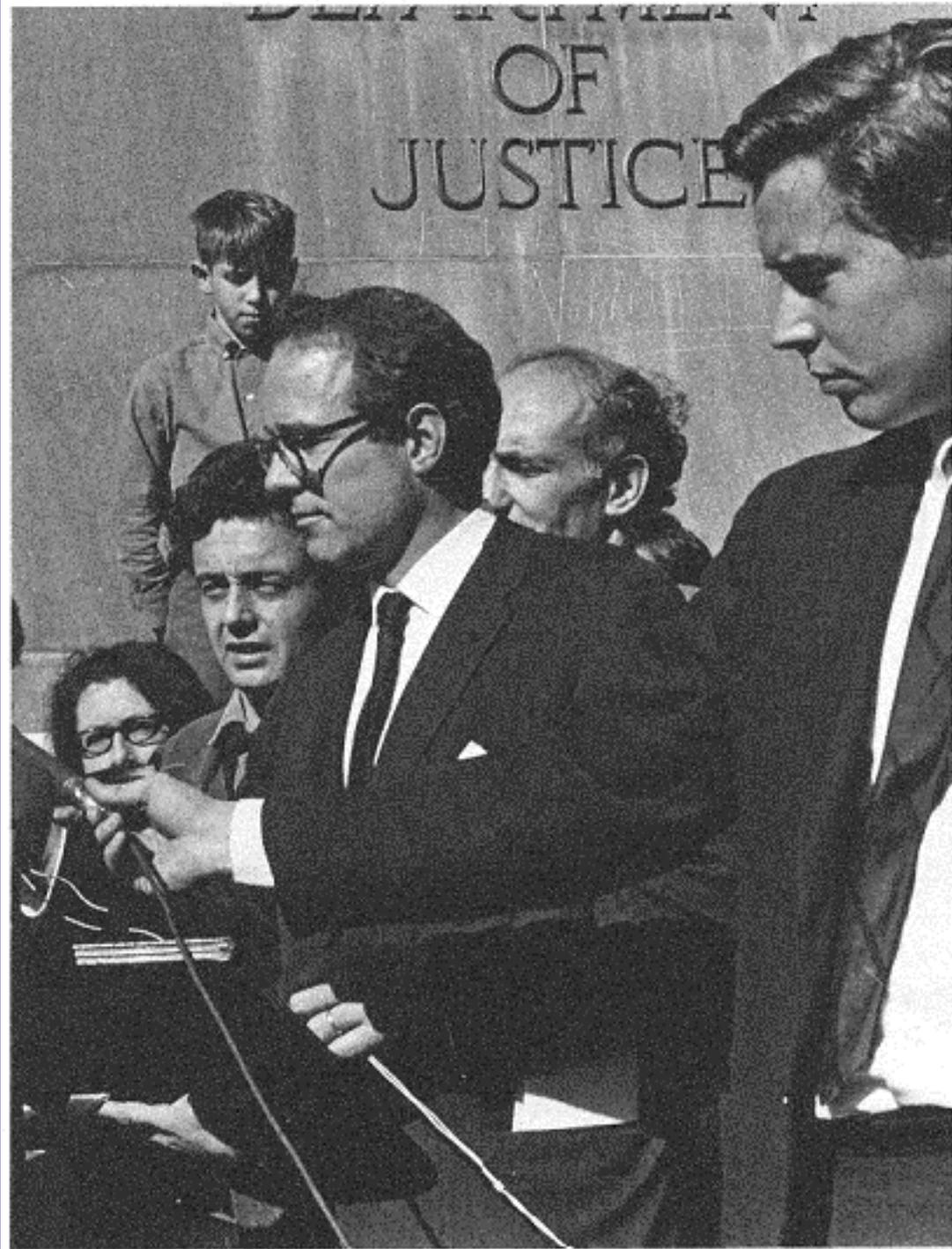
He influenced us in ways we didn't fully realize at the time.

Bill smoked a pipe at the time...

...many of us took up pipe smoking.

Most importantly though, Bill spoke courageously for many of us at Yale. On 20 October 1967 the nation heard what he had to say.

We were just starting Senior Year....when we picked up the newspaper, and saw a troubling sight.



There was our  
Chaplain -- in  
Washington, D.C. --  
getting arrested.

He was later  
indicted, tried and  
convicted for aiding  
and abetting those  
who chose to resist  
the draft.



Statement before the Justice Department. Rev. William Sloane  
Coffin, Jr.

October 20, 1967

What we are here to do is not a natural, easy thing for any of us. We are writers, professors, clergy, and this is not our "thing." But it must have been with precisely such people as we in mind that the poet Peguy wrote: "The worst of particularities is to withhold oneself, the worst ignorance is not to act, the worst lie is to steal away."

So we have come here to be with conscientious men in their hour of conscience; and because like them we cannot stand around with dry feet while wisdom and decency go under for the third time in Vietnam.

This week once again high government officials described protesters against the war as "naive," "wild-eyed idealists." But in our view it is not wild-eyed idealism but clear-eyed revulsion that brings us here. For as one of our number put it: "If what the United States is doing in Vietnam is right, what is there left to be called wrong?"

Many of us are veterans, and all of us have the highest sympathy for our boys in Vietnam. They know what a dirty, bloody war it is. But they have been told that the ends justify the means, and that the cleansing water of victory will wash clean their hands of all the blood and dirt. No wonder they hate us who say "There must be no cleansing water." But what they must strive to understand, hard as it is, is that there can be no cleansing water if military victory spells moral defeat.

We have the highest sympathy also for those who back the war because their sons or lovers or husbands are fighting or have died in Vietnam. But they too must understand a very basic thing--that sacrifice in and of itself confers no sanctity. Even if half a million of our boys were to die in Vietnam that would not make the cause one whit more sacred. Yet we realize how hard that knowledge is to appropriate when one's husband is numbered among the sacrificed.

The mother of a son lost in Vietnam once told me "My son used to write how much he and his company were doing for the orphans. But I used to answer 'if you want to help the orphans, son, you must stop killing their fathers and mothers.'"

Like this mother we do not dispute the good intentions, the good works of endless good Americans in Vietnam. But we do insist that no amount of good intentions nor good works, nor

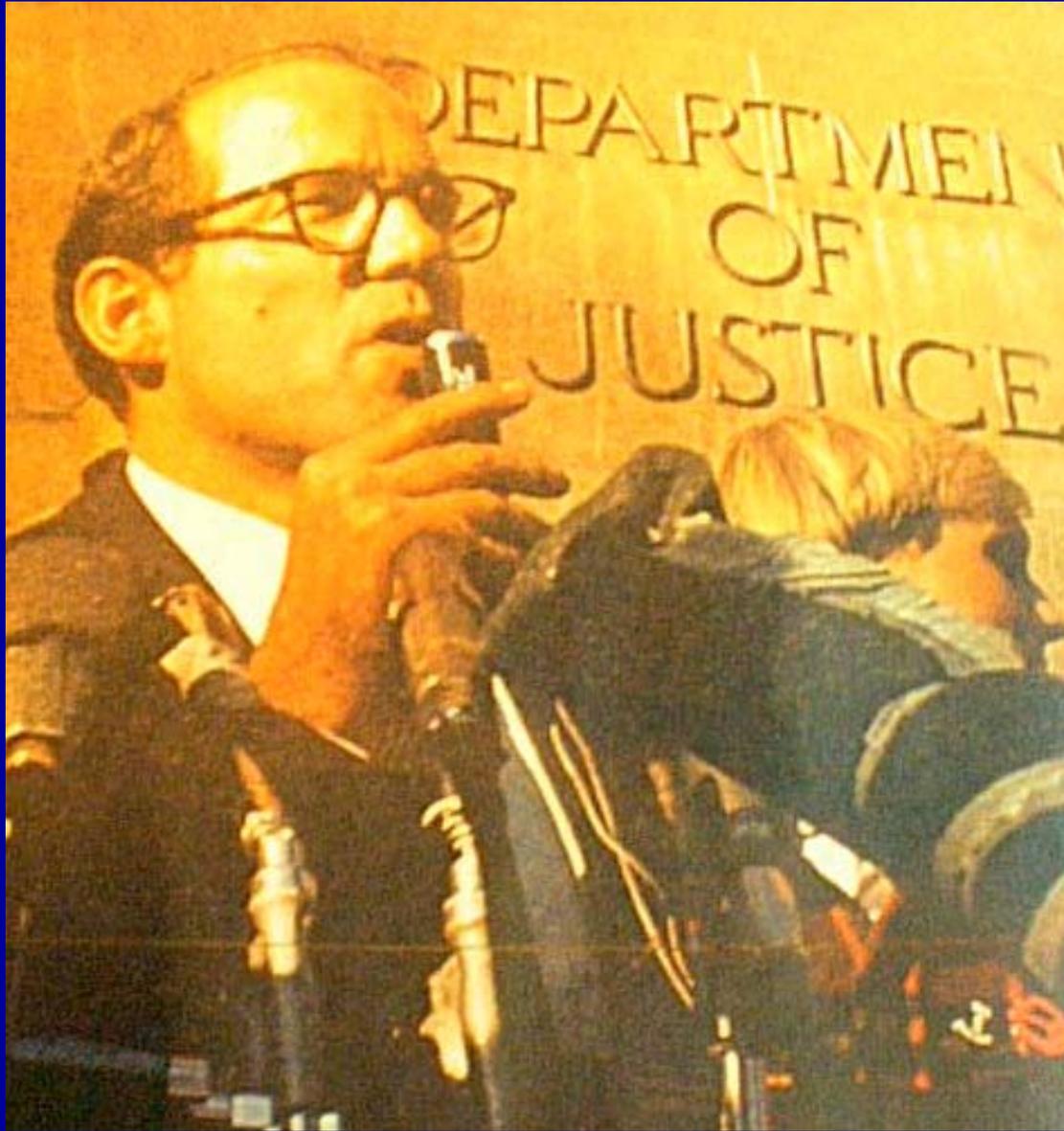
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Bill continued to speak out both off campus and on campus throughout our senior year.....

Some of his comments were directed straight to the Yale faculty, who he felt should apply their best insights to the crises that students were facing.

To the Faculty of Yale University:

The expansion of the Indochina war takes place today under a system of deceptions proffered by the administration to the American people. The transition to an automated air war, a technological reign of terror over the peoples of Indochina, is masked by the periodic announcement of American troop withdrawals. In the face of an increasingly aggressive and vicious military policy, and the simultaneous attempt to isolate the American people from this reality, the need for a public reaction, an application of pressure through all available channels, is greater than it has ever been.

The People's Peace Treaty is an organizing tool to help bring about this pressure. It came about through the efforts of a group of American students from the National Student Association and North and South Vietnamese student organizations. The American students went to Hanoi in December 1970 to negotiate with students there and though denied visas into South Vietnam one American student managed to enter and meet with students there for a short time. The final negotiating of the treaty took place in Paris with Madame Binh of the Provisional Revolutionary Government of South Vietnam. The treaty is supported by businessmen, Buddhist organizations, and other civic groups of South Vietnam.

Now the treaty must be and is being taken to all sectors of American society, to individuals and organizations offering people the occasion to declare a separate peace with the people of Indochina, to "take themselves out of the war." The treaty is not a petition. It is a set of principles prescribing the conditions for peace in Indochina and can involve people in a process of real questioning which will help them make an active commitment to bringing an end to the war in Indochina.

We are asking you as the faculty of Yale University and as individuals to make this active commitment. You can carry out your commitment by taking the treaty to other groups and individuals with whom you have contact, by participating in the extensive lobbying campaign being waged in Washington this spring or by organizing your own forums for expression of your dissatisfaction with the administration and military policy on the war. It is only the accumulation of what seem to be small efforts that will bring mounting pressure to bear.

Contributions to our office are much needed and would be greatly appreciated. Make checks payable to People's Peace Treaty.

For more information and copies of the treaty call or write:

People's Peace Treaty Office  
Room #7 Dwight Hall  
436-1430 Ex. 7

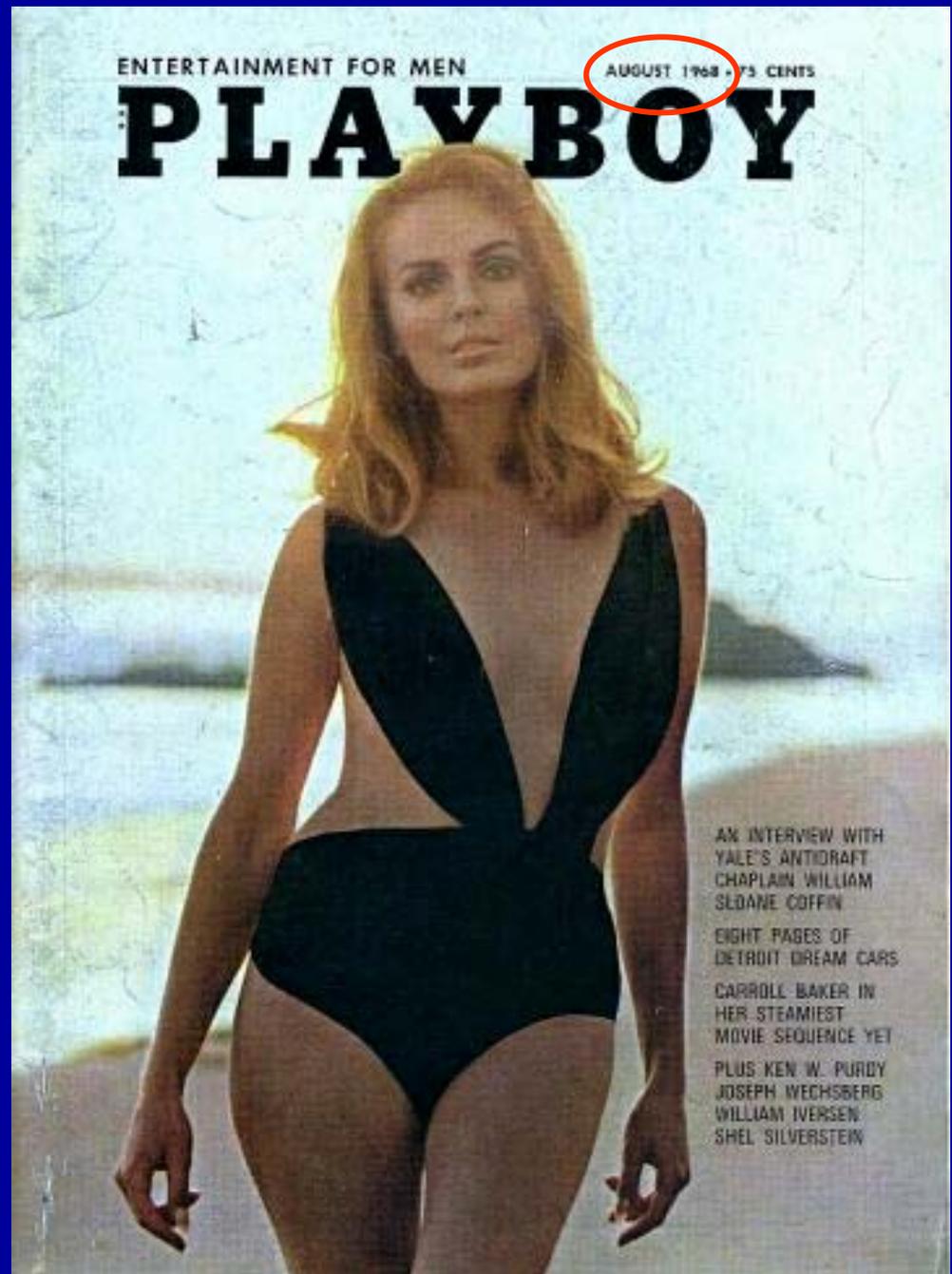
Thank you for your attention.

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Some other  
statements  
were made to  
a wider  
audience.



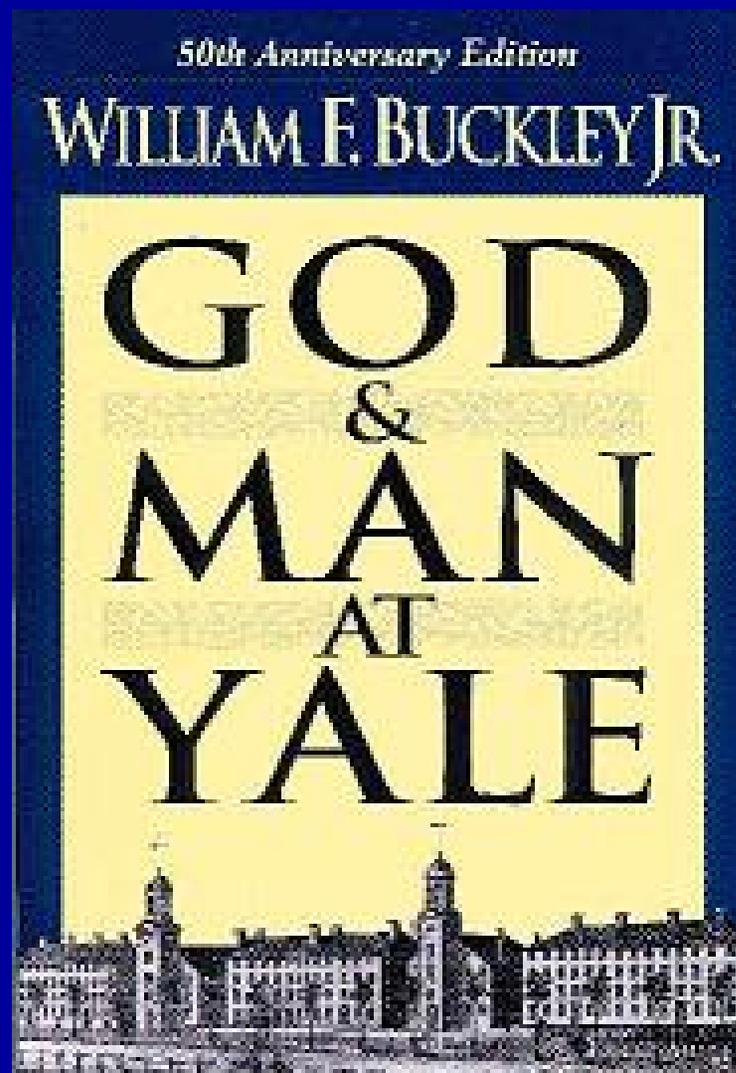
The Class of 1968 was one of the last of the all male classes before Yale became a co-ed institution.

Whether or not we were particularly broad minded, our Chaplain was willing to reach out in a daring manner to new and unfamiliar audiences.



Other Yale graduates of Bill's era who were more adept than Bill at self promotion tried from time to time to speak for "God at Yale" -- without convincing success.

Nevertheless, they continue to reprint the same material again and again, suggesting, perhaps, that their Theology has not evolved very much in fifty years.





**Charles H. Buck, III**  
*Charlie*  
 53 Powell St.  
 Brookline 46, Mass.  
 Milton Academy  
 385 Wright/3r.



**R. M. Buckley, Jr.**  
*Mike*  
 249 Dogwood Lane  
 Berwyn, Pa.  
 Malvern Prep School  
 18 Vanderbilt/E. S.



**Stephen T. Buehl**  
*Sieve*  
 327 N. Forsyth Blvd.  
 Clayton 5, Mo.  
 John Burroughs School  
 27 Vanderbilt/E. S.



**K. Burbank, Jr.**  
*Kerk*  
 87 10 34th Ave.  
 Jackson Heights, N. Y.  
 Taft School  
 40 Vanderbilt/S. C.



**C. F. Burgess, III**  
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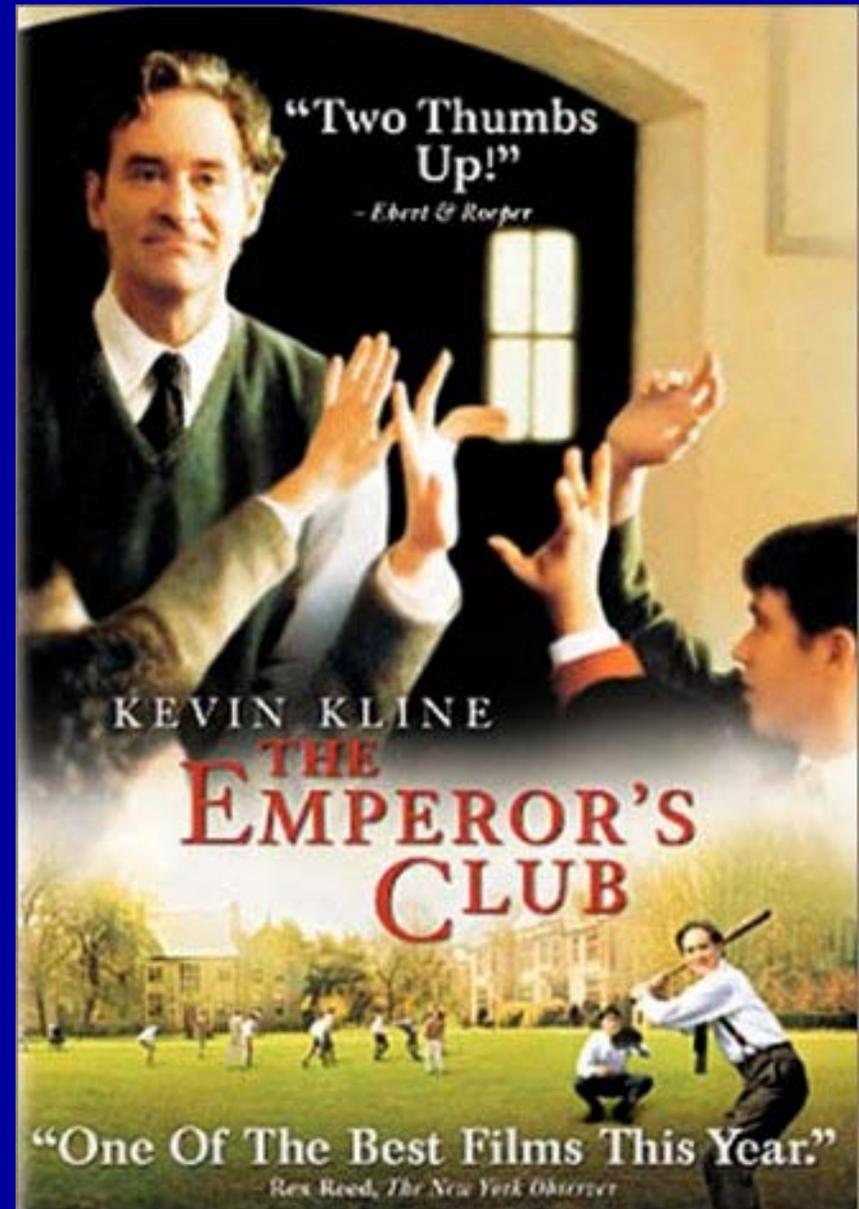
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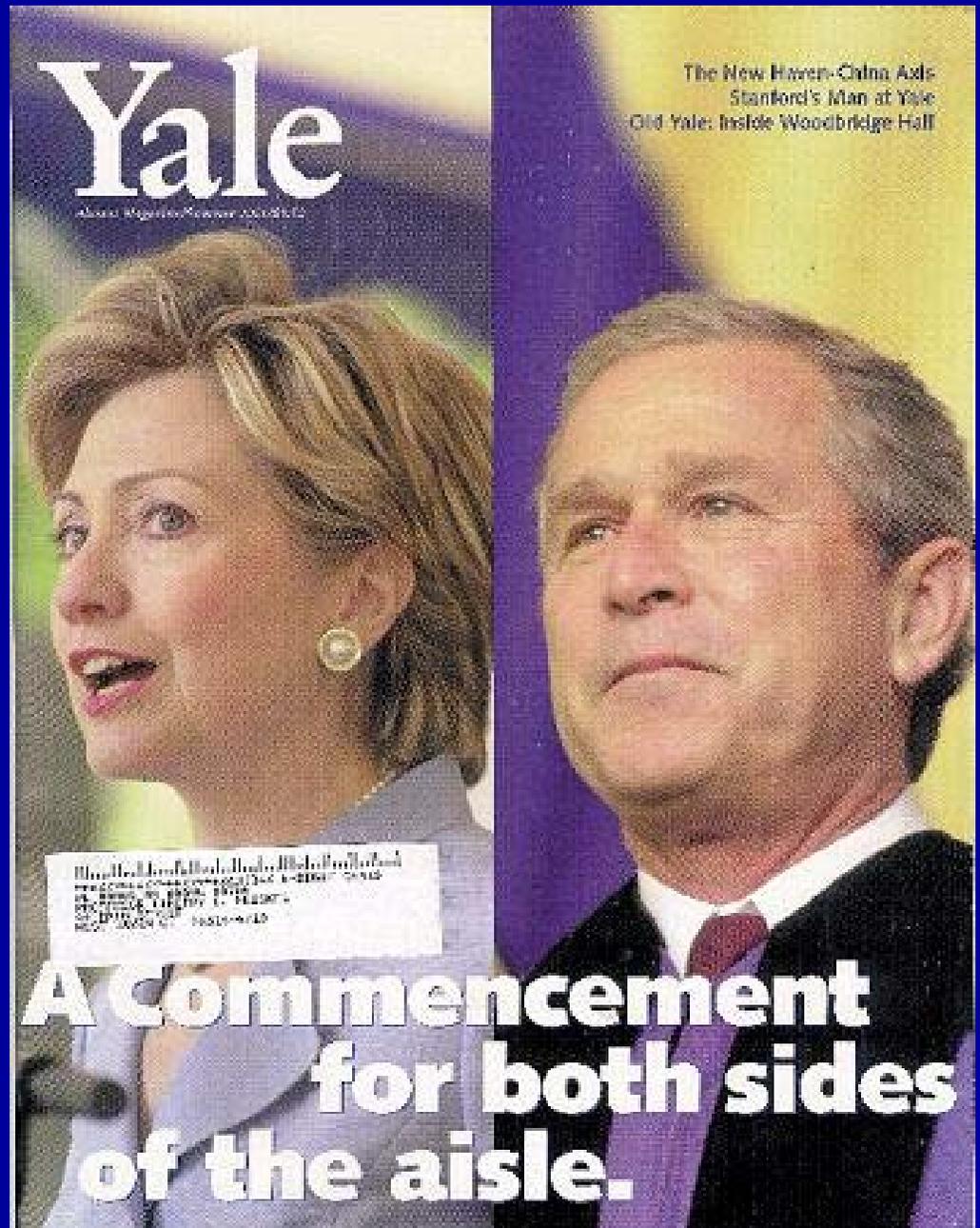
**John B. Calfee, Jr.**  
 4892 Clubside  
 Cleveland 24, Ohio  
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Over the course of 4 years, our friends and “page-mates” in the *Old Campus* directory developed and revealed their essential character to us all.

And, as popular movies sometimes suggest, basic friendships and elements of character formed in school years often last a lifetime.



Some in our class  
-- as in other  
Yale classes --  
went on to do  
things in the  
“public eye”  
when they left  
Yale.



As for Bill, after leaving Yale, he continued to talk and write on burning problems of “Public Morality,” including civil rights issues, global economic injustice and world wide environmental devastation caused by corporate greed and misguided public policy.

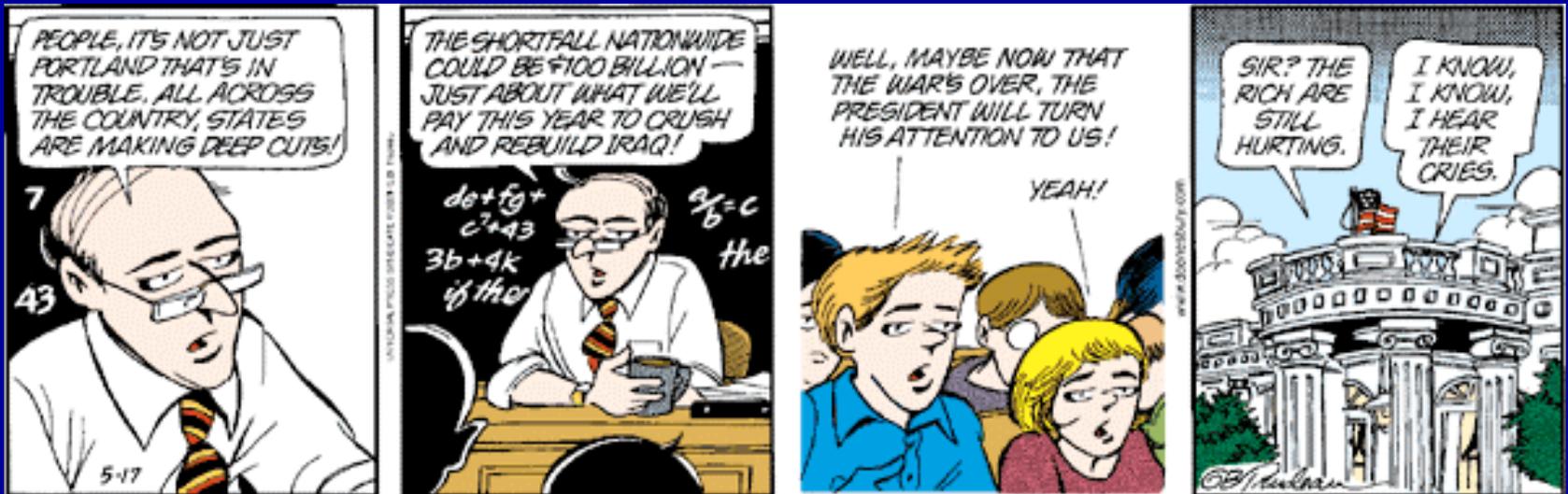


THE  
HEART  
IS A LITTLE  
TO THE  
LEFT

ESSAYS ON PUBLIC MORALITY

William Sloane Coffin

Bill's messages were interpreted differently by each of us. Some classmates seem to be trying hard to redouble their commitment to new levels of compassionate conservatism.



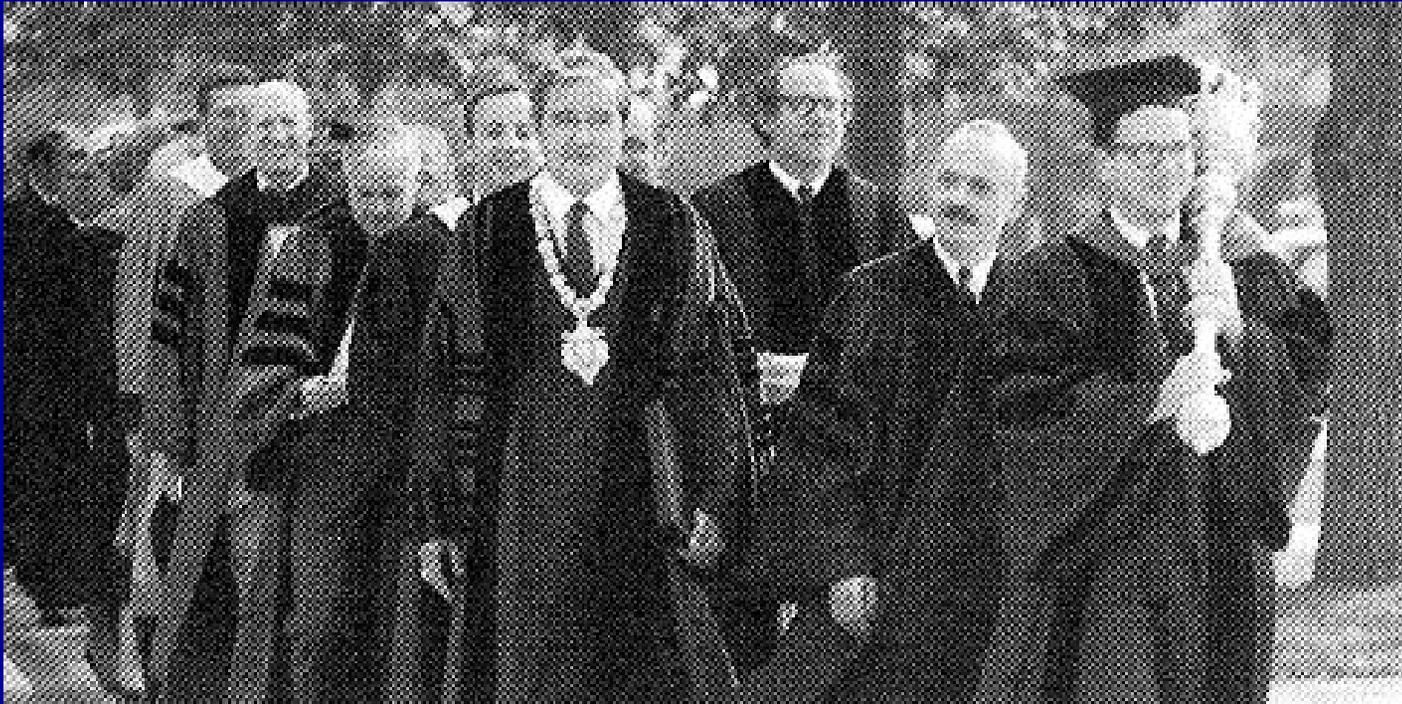
Copyright, ©, Gary Trudeau. *The New York Times*, 28 May 2003

But, as Bill has pointed out, since 9/11 the administration's roving advisors have missed the point. They seem to want us to believe that the needy are greedy and the greedy are needy.

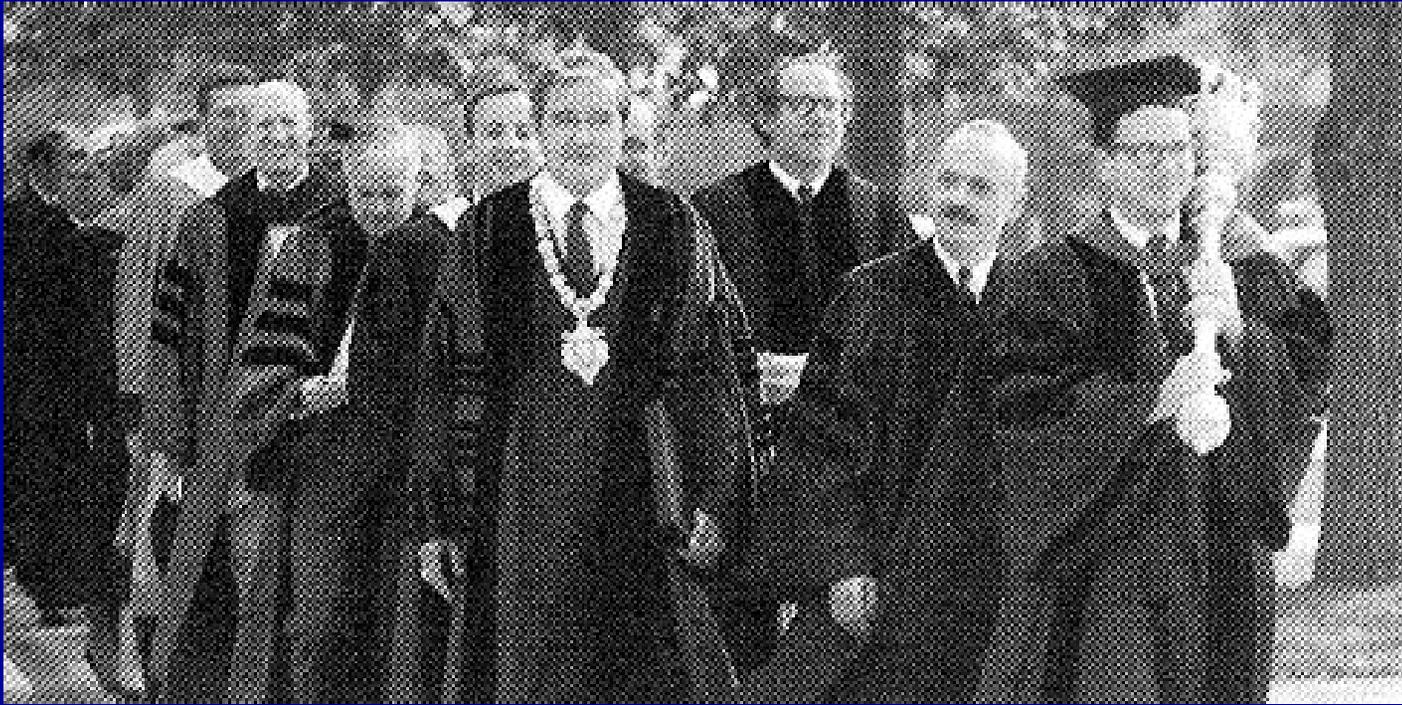
In any case, at least some of Bill Coffin's insights have apparently endured in the minds of other members of the Class of 1968. And today -- just as in 1968 -- these ideas can have costly personal consequences....



Copyright, ©, Gary Trudeau. *The New York Times*, 28 May 2003



Despite disagreeing with Bill at times, President Brewster -- to his infinite credit -- ultimately supported Bill against the criticisms of many alumni. Had he failed to support Bill it is likely he would have faced a major student revolt from the Class of 1968.



Having presided over many degree ceremonies, Bill Coffin has now earned a unique diploma of his own from the Class of 1968 for his life-long commitment to matters of conscience.

# Class of 1968 Diploma presented to Bill Coffin, 31 May 2003

*Since "Higher Education Can Kill by Degrees," This is Not a Customary Yale*



# Diploma



*Rather, It Is a Public Declaration that We Do Hereby Witness and Affirm That*

## *William Sloane Coffin, Jr.*

*Has Earned the Highest Degree of Enduring Esteem in Our Hearts As*

### **Permanent Chaplain of the Class of 1968**

*For His Sterling Memorial Sense of Humor, His Unparalleled Generosity During His Years on Wall Street, His Unstinting Love Toward the Poor Little Lambs Who Have Gone Astray, And His Unflinching Public Declaration of Moral Principles in Human Affairs.*

---

William H. Baker  
Reunion Chairman, Yale Class of 1968

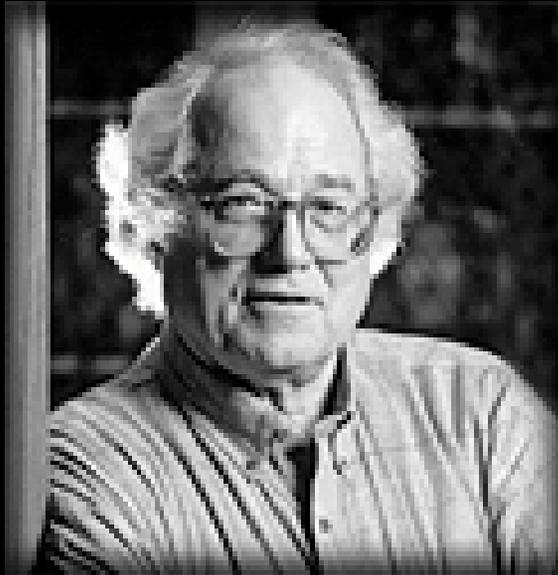
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James R. Latimer, III  
Secretary, Yale Class of 1968

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*May 31, 2003*

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The Reverend

William Sloane Coffin, Jr

Permanent Chaplain to  
the Yale Class of 1968