

Speech at the annual dinner of the Harvard Class of '65

I grew up on an alfalfa and barley farm 90 miles from Yellowstone in Wyoming. My wife Amy grew up on the Upper East Side of New York.

After we were married, I took her home to meet friends. Three of my teammates entertained her with a play-by-play of our football championship season. After which she told me that she was never, ever coming back to this place, and then had the strength of character to keep that promise to herself for 30 years.

But four years ago she returned to watch a geologist friend tap on a rock to expose a perfectly formed sea shell that he said had not seen the light of day for 60 million years. She became a fossil hunter at that very moment.

I asked my friend how old the dirt was on our farm. He said it has been the way it is for 20 million years -- wash and fill that had come down from the Big Horn Mountains 35 miles away.

Classmates, we now have a precise meaning for the expression "Older than dirt."

Someday Amy and I will become part of Wyoming dirt, covered perhaps by a foot or much more of volcanic ash from the Yellowstone Caldera, now 36,000 years overdue. The entire prospect is not one altogether unhappy for us.

One of 70 one-minute speeches given by the 70 members of the class attending