

Farewell Faber

David Macchetti enjoyed his days as an undergraduate at Faber College. You could say he enjoyed them too much.

Dave graduated high school in 1964. That was the spring following President Kennedy's assassination. Looking back, most folks would agree that this incident marked the end of the innocence and optimism of the Eisenhower Era and began the separation of the youth counter-culture in America from the traditional underpinnings of those over 30 at that time.

One thing that's pretty universal among young people coming of age, though, is their ability to make believe the Big Bad Wolf is not *really* at the door. So those that graduated high school ahead of Dave ignored the Cold War, the Russians, and the Bomb. They concentrated, instead, on Cars, Beers, Rock 'N Roll, and Sex as a way to distract themselves from these more somber concerns. During Dave's time at Faber College a tectonic change took place in the Big Bad Wolf. For him and his brothers at the Faber Chapter of the Alpha Delta Phi the problems were Civil Rights, the Shooting War in Vietnam, and the Draft. Being a traditional, co-educational, liberal arts college in New England, though, the boys and girls there induced amnesia with a self-administered blend of Cars, Beers, Rock 'N Roll, and Sex. Toward the end, in fact, this mélange received additional spice from the increasing presence of Marijuana.

Dave Macchetti was always a realist, though. He went to Faber because his father and mother both had before him. As a 'Legacy Student' his admission was all but assured. As a Macchetti he was expected to study Finance & Accounting so that upon graduation he could take his place in Dad's successful, if predictable accounting practice.

"Just think." His father had intoned with almost sacred reverence. "When you get settled in the firm we can even start thinking about expanding into Brokerage!"

The thought of it was enough to turn young David in the direction of the A.D. Phi party room, to pull himself a draft beer. After all, why did he pay \$2.00 a month dues for the privilege unless he meant to get his money's worth? Early in his Freshman Year he'd pondered the question of how to avoid this foregone fate, albeit with a bit of foam on his nascent mustache.

I could 'Take a Year Off,' he thought, and hitchhike to California to find myself? As soon as he said the words to himself he knew that his father would never permit such lunacy. Dave had been well cared for and well reared. He knew he didn't have the standing to buck his Dad that way.

So what would work?

Religious orders? Dave and God had always gotten along. Ordained ministry would have brought with it an implied responsibility to be a pillar of society, however. David knew his real interests lay with that Coming of Age process he was studying so diligently at Faber. How could he council others adequately without first having made his own way through polite circles as a bull in a china shop, thus learning from real experience whereof he spoke? Deep down he knew that his old friend, God, would not completely agree with this logic – but it made perfect sense to Dave, himself. And anyway his other Father wouldn't have bought into it for a second.

Medical school? On a Finance & Accounting degree? And, by the way, medical school is like indentured servitude in terms of having any time to yourself. Let's stay focused on the real objective here, shall we. That cockamamie idea was quickly tabled.

C'mon, Dave. He said to himself. You gotta give me something I can work with here. The Law? Better than med school, maybe, but still a direct path into the accounting firm. Engineering? Can you do that without having to deal with mathematics? Sales? That sounded like a job he could do, but not one he could sell to the Old Man. "You want to take a Commission Plan at the bottom rung of some corporate ladder over a good salary that's only a heartbeat away from the corner office – in a privately held company, no less?" He could already hear him saying. "In a pig's eye!"

Dave's options were narrowing by the minute. In the end he hove a sigh of resignation and trudged glumly down to the ROTC Office to sign up.

Service to the nation was unassailable. He could point directly to the National Defense Education Program, in effect at the time, which forgave loans in the amount of One Third of his tuition, room, and board once he spent four years on active duty. He could argue that future political aspirations (if any) would be materially improved if he was a Veteran. He could argue that there was a war on and he felt it his duty as a citizen to answer the call – just as his father had twenty-two years before. He didn't have to even mention that being a Cadet would forestall any thoughts of ignoring the barbershop or, worse, considering even more facial hair.

So every Monday, starting in November of Freshman Year, Cadet Macchetti wore the blue suit of the United States Air Force as he went to class, and later to drill. ROTC taught him to march in formation. It gave him a couple gut courses his Junior and Senior Years. It made him the default apologist for the Johnson Administration at every beery late night debate on the War. This last assignment became increasingly difficult as his undergrad career progressed. His unease with the assumption that he agreed with the hundreds of weekly US deaths and thousands of weekly US casualties peaked in February of his Senior Year with

the Tet Offensive. By then he'd passed an eye test, though, and was looking at orders to flying school. That meant at least another year Stateside so the plan was not completely derailed.

In early April of that year, just over a month before graduation, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. suffered the same fate that had befallen Jack Kennedy. It was one more assault on the traditional belief in the order that everyone hoped would be enjoyed by America. It was one more insult to naïveté and optimism, and one more reason to retreat into the self. Like many Americans, Dave couldn't compute what had happened. He couldn't believe that for all the vile rhetoric someone would actually resort to violence. Like many of his countrymen he responded by keeping to himself about it.

In the end, Dave's time in the Reserve Officer Training Corps achieved its primary objective. Upon graduation he became a newly minted 2nd Lieutenant. His Mother cried. His Father's heart swelled. Both of them were able to give the needle to the two or three of their Faber Classmates who were also Faber Parents at the 1968 Commencement Ceremonies. There was Pride in abundance and, for David, Salvation.

Less than two months after the King Assassination, as Dave was wiring up his gear to leave for flying school, Senator Robert Kennedy was murdered. A latecomer to the Presidential Sweepstakes in '68, the Senator had all but sewn up the nomination of his party by winning the California Primary convincingly. He was on his way to the podium to claim his prize when an unplanned detour through the kitchen of his headquarters hotel gave Sirhan Sirhan a target of opportunity. Once again the world was changed by chance. Once again Americans were psychologically bludgeoned and forced to question some of the precepts that had always governed the conduct of their civil society. Once again many younger Americans walled off any consideration of the ugly truth of what was going on in the country. Instead they retreated into some escapist pursuit or other.

Lt. Macchetti's excellent adventure in the US Air Force began shortly thereafter when he packed up his new little roadster and began an overland trek from the green hills of New England to the arid, windswept plains of Laredo, Texas. Getting there, alone, was no small feat in the days before GPS and Cell Phones. Once he arrived, though, he was swept into the vortex of the latest in a long line of classes in the military flying school at Laredo AFB.

When he checked in Dave felt vindicated. Not only had he avoided the solitary confinement of chartered accountancy but the Bachelor Officer's Quarters he and his single classmates had been assigned was directly across the parking lot from the Officer's Club.

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