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Presidential election pits Yale Class of '66 against '68

By Diane Scarponi
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW HAVEN, Conn. — This year's presidential election is going to be a class war: Class of 1968 versus Class of 1966.

"If Yalies were going to vote based on who's an alum, you'd have to flip a coin," said sophomore Alissa Stollwerk, secretary of the Yale College Democrats.

President Bush and Democratic rival John Kerry graduated from Yale University in the 1960s, a time of upheaval at Yale and campuses across the country. Both shied away from the radicalism of the day but joined the same secret society and followed similar pursuits, their paths diverging after graduation.

When Kerry graduated in 1966 with a degree in political science, opposition to the Vietnam War was building. Yale still required students to wear jackets and ties at dinner, and no female undergraduates were admitted.

By the time Bush earned a degree in history in 1968, Yale was simmering with activism against the war and in favor of labor unions and other causes. Dinner jackets were gone, and female undergraduates arrived the following year.

Both men were chosen to join Yale's top secret society — Skull and Bones. Each year, 15 seniors are tapped for the 172-year-old club, which owns a windowless crypt on campus and a private island in the St. Lawrence River.

The experiences and influence of Bonemen, as members are known, have reached mythic proportions. Their rites and membership are supposed to be secret, although initiations reportedly include lying in a coffin and confessing personal sexual secrets.

Candidates cross paths at Yale

At Yale University in the 1960s, President Bush was a born Yale and Sen. John Kerry was a jock and political junkie. Both were members of the secretive club — Skull and Bones.

Bush on Yale campus



Kerry's Yale team hockey photo



	1968	1966
DEGREE	History	Political science
SPORTS	Baseball	Hockey, lacrosse, soccer
CLUBS	Delta Kappa Epsilon (fraternity), Rugby Club, Inter-Council, Skull and Bones	Connecticut Intercollegiate State Legislature, Fence Club, Haunt Club, Liberal Party, Skull and Bones, Yale Debating Association, Political Union, Yale Young Democrats, Yale Young Republicans

SOURCE: Yale University

Presidents Taft and George H.W. Bush were members.

Classmates remember Kerry as a big man on campus who played several sports, including junior varsity hockey. As a freshman, he also dated Jacqueline Kennedy's half-sister, Janet Auchincloss.

"He had a lot of demands on his time, and for him to play hockey in winter and play j.v. — that was a fair amount of dedication to the sport, and he played hard," recalled Gordon Walker, a classmate who managed the team.

Kerry, whose father worked for the State Department after graduating from Yale, as involved in politics from the moment he arrived in New Haven. He was head of the Yale Political Union, a college debating society, and joined the Fence Club, which was popular with preppy, blue-blood students.

Bush was a born Yalie as well as a legacy. His grandfather, Prescott Bush, the future senator,

from Connecticut, graduated from the Ivy League school. His father, the former president, was a student when he was born there. The line continues this spring when Bush's daughter, Barbara, earns a Yale degree.

"He was congenial, gregarious, relatively unremarkable in a sense," recalled a classmate and fellow team member, Jim Latimer. "I enjoyed knowing him. He was entirely pleasant."

Despite the legacy, Kerry is more popular at Yale, his politics favored by the liberal-leaning student body.

When Bush accepted an honorary degree and spoke at Yale's 300th graduation ceremony in 2001, many graduates carried signs or wore emblems critical of Bush. Some turned their backs on him when he spoke.

Yet Bush won over others with his self-deprecating humor. He congratulated the honors students, then added: "To the C students, I say, 'You, too, can be president of the United States.'"

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.73	H	SI ₁	2150 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.	.51	D	SI ₁	1275 ⁰⁰ EGL Cert.
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