THE HONORABLE David H. Souter ’61, L.L.B. ’66, L.L.D. ’10, testified in his fiftieth-reunion class report as follows: “I retired when the Supreme Court rose for the summer recess in 2009, and a couple of weeks later I drove north from Washington to New Hampshire] with no regrets about the prior 19 years or about the decision to try living a more normal life for whatever time might remain. As for the past, I had come to agree with something Justice Blackmun said to me years before. He remarked one day that I, like most justices, would probably have lived a happier life if I had never been appointed to the Court, but that in time I’d come to find a value in being there that was at least worth everything the Court took from me in return. He was right, and when it was time to sum up I realized that whatever the verdict might turn out to be, I was the luckiest guy in the world.

“As to life after the Court,...[I put] endless effort into revising my residential arrangements to satisfy the needs of an accumulation of books...that some would call excessive. But I hope some of those books will be the focus of what comes next: I’ve had so little chance for serious reading for the last couple of decades, as my job devoured most of the time I had. My plan is to resume an interrupted education and follow out some lines of interest suppressed as far back as college.

“The menu is mostly history: the classical period, the Carolingians, Britain up through the fourteenth century, American Puritanism as seen by historians after Perry Miller, the United States from Jefferson through Lincoln. It may be that the seemingly intrinsic attraction that past time has for me is merely a desire for escapism, as I look out at the nation and world with little optimism, but it may also be that the tug of history gathers some force from a hope of getting a better perspective on what I see around me now, maybe a perspective even as sound as one in evidence on Commencement morning last May.

“No not only did Harvard generously award me an honorary doctorate, but it gave me the great pleasure of spending a little time with a fellow degree recipient, Meryl Streep. She happened to be somewhat ahead of me in the cohort of honorends processing into the New Yard between rows of regular degree candidates, and we were just about at the corner of Widener when one senior boy reluctantly took his eyes off the eminent actress and noticed me. He smiled with diminished voltage as he said, ‘You’re no Meryl Streep.’”

Masterpiece: “Carroll E. Wood Jr., professor of biology emeritus, brought a mind of great precision to the field of plant systematics,” wrote four colleagues in a “memorial minute” presented to the faculty last February. (He died of a heart attack in 2009 at age 88, but had been hale enough not long before to hike up 6,288-foot Mount Washington in New Hampshire.) “Wood is remembered affectionately by his students for his encyclopedic knowledge and seriousness of purpose, which were leavened in the classroom by his mischievous, sometimes wry, humor, comic anecdotes, and play on words. In recognition of his editorial precision in matters of style and grammar, his associates awarded him the title of ‘Supervisor of Punctuation.’ Yet, for someone who was dedicated to sound scholarship, botanical order, and semantic precision, his office was a curious masterpiece of untidiness, referred to by his students as ‘Wood’s Hole.’”

～PRIMUS V