OPINION

GUEST COLUMNIST

YURII STASIUK

Home address: 68 High Street

I received my Yale acceptance letter weeks after Russia started bombing Ukraine.

I had just turned 19 when the war started — one year past the threshold that determined, at the time, which Ukrainian men could leave the country during wartime. I was already studying abroad at the time. And so, for four years, I kept choosing not to go home — with a brief exception this year, when a change in law temporarily allowed me to visit Ukraine twice without being unable to leave — so I could continue attending Yale, so I could later use this privilege to help my country. So I told myself.

For four years, Yale has been my literal home, the only constant I have had.

I wrote 68 High St. on every form asking for my home address. Every winter break, when Yale closed its dorms, I found another friend to crash with, usually in a basement room. Since I couldn't go home, every summer I got to live in another country — Poland, Georgia, Belgium and yes, one New York summer — and always worried I'd hit a visa-free stay limit, or that a temporary rental would end before I found another one. I always looked forward to returning home to New Haven.

Yale gave me a bed to cry on at 5 a.m. when I learned someone I knew had been killed or when my city appeared once more in war headlines. Yale kept my water and electricity running when another Russian air strike left my family without them.

Sometimes I had to pretend to be fine; it felt obscene to grieve on Yale's campus while people at home were actually dying. I was not the victim, I told myself, and wouldn't behave like one, at least not in public. Over time, my expressions of joy became increasingly sincere. For better or worse, Yale and its people had also provided me the luxury to forget about war, if only for brief moments.

I started writing in a language I barely knew just a few years ago, and soon found reporting on New Haven's budget and student protests more meaningful than writing papers on Said or Spinoza. 202 York St., the building of the very paper you are reading, became my second home. Junior year, I worked Goldman Sachs hours for free, editing stories through the year when Yale and the United States both got new presidents.

I have met wonderful people who challenged and supported me through war news and 20-page papers, partied and pulled all-nighters with me. I got high on High Street; stayed past midnight to talk about religion, ice cream flavors, Iran, love; grabbed coffee at Koffee; swore a blood oath to my secret society. Not all late nights were spent crying.

My four years in the safety of New Haven — yes, war at home really puts its purported danger into perspective — had helped me become who I needed to be. I never stopped questioning whether I should be here at all, staring at the leave-of-absence form every semester. But I stayed, and whatever I owe to that choice I intend to pay back.

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Soon, I will no longer be able to write 68 High St. as my address on official paperwork. My country is still at war.

I don't yet know what my next permanent address will be or how much constancy my future holds. I choose to believe that Yale will still remain a constant to a degree — I will call my college friends, maybe watch the Bulldogs crush The Game, or once again go to March Madness. Every once in a while, I will open the News to read about another student service getting cut. And I will cherish the four years when my Jonathan Edwards dorm felt like home, even as my rooms kept changing.

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GUEST COLUMNIST

TRISTAN HERNANDEZ

Getting it right

The first day I was the editor in chief of the Yale Daily News, I felt completely unprepared. All I knew was my own experience from my sophomore year: interviews with Dean Lewis, copy editing shifts every Tuesday, reports on sorority disaffiliation and Coke-Pepsi wars in the dining hall. Suddenly, I was sitting in the Berkeley College common room with the managing editors while protesters set up an encampment on Cross Campus. My new reality was answering calls and fact-checking updates, all while I still had to learn how to simply upload onto our website. I was out of my league, but people depended on me to do my job. Even though I was not sure if I was making the right calls, decisions had to be made, and the News still had to publish.

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In time, I learned what the job would require of me. I would give up my junior year to dedicate myself to the paper, writing class assignments ten minutes before the deadline and completing problem sets at 4:00 a.m. after the News' print production finished. I knew more about McInnis' administration and Yale's racial demographic data than I did about my own classes. It was the year of a presidential election, federal attacks on university funding and international students, new policies on institutional neutrality and the aftermath of mass student protests. It was the closest I ever got to understanding this place.

But while I experienced Yale from 202 York St., life went on without me. In retirement from the News this year, I nod along as my Pierson College friends recount stories from junior year and I pretend to understand. I lived off campus with a nocturnal schedule while they threw suite parties I could never make it to; my job asked me to be present for everyone else's experience while I was absent from my own. I also reflect on the News itself in my tenure's post-mortem — whether I did enough or if I made the correct choices. I find myself wondering what it meant to be a Latino editor in chief at a paper where you could count the non-white editors on one hand, what it meant to be a queer person given massive responsibility to shape narratives around our community. I don't know if I did it right, and I doubt I ever will.

As I reintegrated into campus life, the News kept going. I was happy to retire, leaving the work to a set of incoming editors who had new ideas and energy. I came into my senior year hoping to cram every Yale experience into the 40 weeks I had left in New Haven. I attended Feb Club every night, went back to my favorite carrel in the stacks, and spent more time in Pierson's Lower Court than my own suite. For the first time, I felt like I was experiencing Yale, the one advertised to me in admissions brochures, even as I missed the newspaper work that had defined my first three years.

Leaving Yale now, I don't know what comes next. For four years, I went through college with a set of benchmarks I needed to meet—the News, FroCo, society. I knew what classes I wanted to take since I got admitted. But the best parts of Yale were the unplanned moments: New York trips made two hours before we left, impromptu hour-long conversations in the newsroom, showing up in the Pierson dining hall and finding someone to eat with.

At the end of this year, I was talking to some of the first years I counseled as a FroCo. They're younger and use slang I have never heard of and freak out when there's a mouse in Vanderbilt Hall. The news I covered as a reporter happened when they were in high school. They make changes to their Yale plans constantly. On some level, I feel unqualified to give them advice because I had all these plans yet never knew what was the right decision. Now that I'm done, I find that I no longer worry about the right choice. My path was made, and maybe that's enough.

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Yale is 325 years old, and we're only here for four of them. People will fill the gaps when we leave, and this place will keep going when we're gone. Someone will be sitting in the News building covering what comes next. They will feel unprepared. They won't know if they're getting it right either. The News will still have to publish.

I spent four years planning Yale. When I leave, I'll only remember the parts I didn't.

TRISTAN HERNANDEZ *was the 147th editor in chief and president of the News. He is a graduating senior in Pierson College studying political science. He can be reached at tristan.hernandez@yale.edu.*

STAFF COLUMNIST

MILAN SINGH

So long, and thank you for reading

When I came to Yale, I had no idea what I would do after graduation. I thought I might go into management consulting. Four years later, I'm taking a fellowship as a journalist; we'll see how long that lasts. In a way, this is a bit of a full-circle moment for me: the first extracurricular I joined in college was the Opinion section of the Yale Daily News.

I suppose now, as a graduating senior, is my time to dispense a little bit of advice to the class of 2030. I'll try to keep things brief.

Take your coursework seriously. There is an instrumental reason to do so: A high GPA is often a necessary but not sufficient condition for future employment or educational opportunities. But no less importantly, there is an intrinsic reason. College is one of the few times you will have in your life to focus solely on absorbing knowledge and learning things, particularly difficult things.

Self-driven study and independent reading are valuable, but nothing will motivate you to drill a fact, equation or theory into your head like studying for an exam. You're surrounded by top-notch teachers and brilliant classmates; you ought to try to soak up as much as you can from them.

Really engage intellectually with your peers. Not just in the seminar or in the dining hall, but in public — in reading groups, or debating societies, or in one of the many campus publications, though preferably in the pages of the News.

When I've asked classmates whether they'd be interested in writing an op-ed, the most common response I get is some version of "I want to, but I'm worried about potential backlash." I think this particular fear is overblown, and it deprives the university of fruitful conversations.

Take, for example, the last piece I wrote for the News. In response to a classmate's article, I contended that the relative lack of conservative students and faculty at elite universities could, at least in part, be chalked up to conservatives having slightly lower IQs than liberals on average. That piece was probably my most provocative column for the News, and it was intentionally somewhat snarky. I received some emails from readers who did not agree with my argument, and a couple of my right-leaning classmates wrote op-eds responding to me.

But that was pretty much it. I wrote down an opinion. Some people disagreed with it. I enjoyed reading their responses, and after a few weeks, everybody moved on.

One thing I learned when I edited this section was that Opinion pieces receive by far the most views of anything that the News publishes. Publishing an op-ed lets you, in whatever small way, influence discussions over how this university is run. The recent report of the Committee on Trust in Higher Education includes citations to eleven articles published in the Opinion section of the News, including one of my own.

After exams finished, I rewatched Sir David Attenborough's masterpiece documentary series "The Life of Birds" in honor of his 100th birthday.

"Now, we have taken over the Earth, the sea and the sky. But with skill and care and knowledge, we can ensure that there is still a place on Earth for birds, in all their beauty and variety. If we want to — and surely, we should," Sir David says at the end of the final episode.

I first watched the series when I was in kindergarten. It has probably influenced my life more than any other piece of literature or film. I wrote my college essay on the question of what makes a species "invasive" or not. And while these days I mostly write about politics, my interest in the subject came about as a result of reading National Audubon Society emails comparing Mitt Romney and Barack Obama's environmental platforms in the lead-up to the third-grade straw poll.

There is a moral undertone in Attenborough's closing monologue: With great power comes great responsibility. As Yalies, we have a similar obligation. Fairly or not, attending this small college endows us with outsized economic, political and cultural clout. Contrary to the University's newly pared-down mission statement, I believe that "improving the world" is and should be a part of our core mission.

We are extraordinarily lucky people. On average, Yale graduates tend to hail from wealthy families. Most of us have the enormous privilege of having grown up in the richest nation in the history of our species. We get to learn from the best scholars in the world for four years. And then we enter the labor market, and we face a choice.

Take it from an economics major: Capital allocation is an important and socially valuable undertaking. It is also a very lucrative line of work. But the marginal Yale graduate who goes to work in investment banking or management consulting or at a pod shop isn't making capital allocation that much more efficient.

Our educations and upbringings have given us the skills and the knowledge to improve our country and our world, provided that we care enough to want to. And surely, we should.

I will close out this last column with some thank yous.

Thank you to James Prud'homme '26 and Luca Girodon '26, my two closest friends from my graduating class. Thank you to Josh Kalla '14 GRD '14 and Akhil Amar '80 LAW '84 for being such excellent teachers.

Finally, thank you for reading. I hope I had something interesting to say.

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