

From a 1988 book by Patrick J. Buchanan :

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competition. Grading was done by letters; the dean's list was simply posted at semester's end; with few exceptions, the teachers seemed more aloof, distant, professional.

What was different from Gonzaga was ROTC. In the '50s, military service was obligatory. Every young man had an eight-year obligation — six months active duty, followed by seven and a half years of active reserve, or two years of active duty, followed by two more in the active reserve and four years in the inactive. A number of friends from Chevy Chase opted to do their six months in the Marines; they went to Parris Island the summer of graduation from high school, and were out in time for the second semester of freshman year. Others entered six-month programs in the Coast Guard or National Guard. My two brothers preceded me in army ROTC at Georgetown.

What is remarkable about those years is how little protest there was about mandatory military service. While there was no martial enthusiasm among friends or classmates, there were no demonstrations either, on campus or off. No one doubted we had a duty to serve our country. When JFK declared in his Inaugural, "Ask not what your country can do for you . . . ask what you can do for your country," he was speaking out of a tradition in which we, too, had been raised.

That America confronted in the Soviet Union the enemy of everything we believed in was not even debated. Pearl Harbor, Corregidor, Kasserine Pass, the Pusan Perimeter had taught Americans the price of unpreparedness; and Korea was fresh in the minds of many students. One of the senior ROTC cadets, a mature ex-soldier in his mid-twenties, had been wounded there, and several of the regular army sergeants and officers who instructed us were decorated combat veterans. During the fall of 1956, while we were drilling haphazardly on the field beside McDonough gym, the slaughter of boys our own age in Budapest, and the British-French-Israeli invasion of Suez — with Khrushchev rattling his rockets at London — brought home the realization that, perhaps, another war was not out of the question.

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