

Cullen laughs as she recounts her first foray into protesting. “We led a campaign to preserve the tradition of the freshman beanies,” she says, referring to the blue and yellow hats that had the wearer’s graduation year embroidered on the front. “They were going to eliminate them our sophomore year, so we started a letter-writing campaign, but we were on a sinking ship by that point. We lost.”

Drucker and the other students opposing Nixon’s honorary degree did not. Though Nixon spoke—on academic freedom—at graduation, Wallis’s office circulated a press release beforehand, saying that Nixon’s acceptance of the invitation to speak was not contingent on receiving an honorary degree, and that, in fact, it was his policy not to accept them.

As for Nixon’s speech, “everybody was really respectful of him,” Drucker says.

But most student demonstrators were respectful while still making their case, notes reunion cochair Larry Cohen ’66, who majored in general science and took part “in a fair number of protests.”

“There were hundreds of us,” says Cohen, a Los Angeles resident and a radiology professor at the Keck School of Medicine of the University of Southern California. “We didn’t storm the dean’s office or do anything crazy like that, but there were all kinds of sit-ins where we blocked traffic on River Boulevard—what is now Wilson Boulevard—to protest the Vietnam War. We wanted to be heard and seen

and to show that we knew things were going on in the world and we didn’t like it.

“We’d shut down the campus, and if there was traffic, that was just too bad. You had to find another way out of there.”

For all the turmoil of the times, there were a lot of changes to celebrate as well. For Cohen, who married Jane Zimelis Cohen ’67, one of them was the chance to live in the Towers. “You were on somewhat better behavior, and you cleaned up a lot more because you never knew when someone was going to pop into your suite,” he says. “It just changed our whole lifestyle. That’s one of my favorite memories.”

Hundreds of members of the Class of 1966 will exchange memories at their reunion during Meliora Weekend.

“What we’ll do is stop time, turn back the clock for a few days,” says Cullen.

Back to a time when freshmen, still largely anchored in the more staid 1950s, emerged in 1966 as seniors living on the cusp of great social change.

“It was a very challenging time to be alive, especially as we moved farther on into the ’60s,” adds Cullen. “But everything still felt gradual.

“When you’re in college, a year is a long time. When you’re in your 70s, like I am, a year goes very quickly.”

Recalling a ‘Golden Past’

Since the late 19th century, Rochester students have sung about “many fair and famous streams” as they give voice to “The Genesee,” Rochester’s alma mater. Most know it by heart.

But Jocelyn Trueblood ’66 keeps a copy tucked away in her general papers. That’s because she is the great-granddaughter of its musical arranger, Herve Dwight Wilkins, who graduated from Rochester a century before her, in 1866, and became a church organist and music teacher in Rochester. He based the tune on an old English melody, and it has ever since accompanied the words of poet Thomas Swinburne, a member of the Class of 1892 who spent five years at Rochester but didn’t complete his degree.

Trueblood’s mother told her about the family’s musical history shortly before Trueblood left for college. Since then, she has read an account of Wilkins—written by his daughter, and her great-aunt, in November 1913, the year Wilkins died—from which she learned of his belief in the “expressive power of music as a vehicle and aid to worship.”

You could say it struck a chord. “I see music as an aid to meditation, to peacefulness within me, and in that way, I feel very connected to him, this creative force,” says Trueblood, who majored in English and minored in psychology. “I feel very grateful to him for passing that on.”

In 2009, she retired from a 30-year career in mental health in New York City. And now, as it has for years, music suffuses her life. For all four years on campus, she sang in the Women’s Glee Club, and she took piano lessons at the Eastman School of Music for



FAMILY HISTORY: Jocelyn Trueblood ’66 shares the musical bent of her great-grandfather, Herve Dwight Wilkins, Class of 1866. He arranged the tune for “The Genesee,” Rochester’s alma mater.

credit. Now living in Tappan, New York, she continues to sing in a local choral group, although she says other members don’t necessarily share her reverence for timing, dynamics, and diction—a rigor honed at the University by Ward Woodbury Jr., the first director of music on the River Campus. She also once was directed in one of his own works by the legendary Howard Hanson—famed as a composer, conductor, and music educator, he led the Eastman School for 40 years.

“It’s a joyful seriousness,” Trueblood says. “I love to be in the zone and not thinking about anything but the music that’s in front of me.”

Her great-grandfather likely knew that feeling well, too.

—Robin L. Flanigan

