

**50th Class Reunion August 15-17, 2014**  
**Great Falls High School - Great Falls, Montana**

**Friday August 15**

It all began at the Best Western Heritage Inn. Classmates began arriving early to the registration desk and it was instant reunion as they, asked, "What's your name?", "Oh, my gosh it's .....", .smile, hug, and more questions. "Here's your name tag and tickets, check them over, and here is a Bison pin and your class directory". Then it was on to the next person. For 50 years everyone is looking really good!

About midway into registration a doozy of a rainstorm hit Great Falls, like nothing we have seen all summer. We could barely see across the street and cars driving by on Fox Farm sent 10 foot high fans of rain water into the air. Bedraggled, dripping classmates began walking in telling of their drive through the Wolf Creek canyon on their way to Great Falls happy to be here.

The registration area was decked out (no pun intended Judy) in bison blankets, 15th street bridge restoration banners, a huge bulletin board of class mate obituaries, photos from the past, and more. One table host told about and asked for support of fundraising to restore Great Falls High School to some of its original glory that has disappeared over the years.

Word was spread to meet at Ford's Drive In, cruise the drag, and end up at the "Meet & Greet" party. Also a tour of GFHS was offered on Saturday in addition to the Missouri River Raft Float and the Anaconda Hills golf tournament. Excitement was building!

At 5:30 the reunion committee had the Moose Club in Black Eagle ready for the "Meet & Greet" party. The walls of the Moose Club were adorned with large posters provided by Dan Dailey.

As more classmates arrived to register and join the fun, free keg beer was offered if you knew about it, the bartenders weren't telling. Appetizers appeared in abundance: spicy Buffalo wings, meatballs, smoked salmon, assorted fruits, cheeses, and crackers. The roar of conversations drowned out the exhortations of Master of Ceremonies, Channing Hartelius, but quieted for the pledge to allegiance and a moment of silence in appreciation of our veterans past and present. A special appearance was made by Clem Klemencic, truant officer and retired police officer. Class officers: Stormy Knight, Jerry Coons, and Sandra Tague were present and introduced.

Cameras were clicking as classmates grouped for photo ops, including the SOB's (Senior Organization of Boys). Soon an old photo surfaced (provided by original sponsor, Jerry Foote) showing a shot of the original group of SOB's that was not allowed in the 1964 Roundup (school annual). Copies were made available for those who wanted them. Slowly as the hours passed the room began to thin as everyone was ready to call it a day.

**Saturday, August 16**

The day began early for the golfers, and then 30+ float trippers gathered at Home Depot to head for the river, another 30+ gathered at the Senior Steps of GFHS for a tour by principal, Jane Gregoire, a 1967 graduate of GFHS.

**Float Trip:**

Enthusiastic adventurers boarded their bus at 9 o'clock in Great Falls and headed up the Missouri River for one of the most scenic floats on the Missouri. There were a total of 34 floaters. The float lasted about

four hours and covered a total of about 6 miles. They stopped midway to enjoy lunch and beverages provided for the float. The most exciting part of the float was the water gun fights between the four boats and the beautiful scenery. Ron Vihinen was in charge of the float so he started the water fights out early in the morning. To get even with Ron two of the boats surrounded his and thoroughly drenched him! After the float the wet and weary souls boarded the bus and arrived in Great Falls around 4 o'clock, just in time to get ready for the evening dinner at the Heritage Inn.

### **Golf Outing**

Saturday morning at 10am was the kick off for the golf outing. The course chosen was Eagle Falls Golf Club in Black Eagle. There were no sponsors or prizes, just 18 enthusiastic golfers, 'er duffers. They formed two fivesomes, and two foursomes and a loving, lonesome twosome. The weather was very nice and everyone said they had a very enjoyable time. The highlight according to Dave Hall was Dave Lafferty hitting his second shot on the 18<sup>th</sup> hole, a par four hole, AND IT WENT IN! Impressive eagle!

### **GFHS Tour**

About 20 classmates gathered at GFHS in the center of the main floor around a huge, life size metal Bison sculpture and were told this is the gathering place at the school. The rooms were in chaos of stacked books, tables and chairs as staff readied the school for opening day. We toured a business education room to see that conference tables and donated \$700 chairs replaced the desks we knew. Modern technology of interactive video cameras mounted on the ceilings and white boards on the walls have pretty much replaced the old black slate boards, although Jane told us that some teachers still prefer the blackboards. Mr. Buck's science labs took us back in time, complete with their wood and glass display cases of assorted biological specimens. Not too much modernization visible. The library had the three center windows boarded up in preparation for installation of stained glass windows. The old windows, although saved cannot be reinstalled. Of course computers were everywhere, note no more typewriters! The balcony of the auditorium and several other non-traditional spaces have been converted to create more classroom space.

The wood shop and other shops were moved to an adjacent brick building that is connected to the main building by an old Pullman car whose windows have been filled in with metal and the whole covered with a rust patina.

Handicapped accessibility in the form of ramps and an elevator has been added to the school.

### **Reunion Banquet**

Saturday night featured the reunion banquet at the Heritage Inn and the din of conversation was huge. Master of Ceremonies, Channing Hartelius, introduced classmate and pastor, Ira Robison, who said grace. Then Chan lead us in the Pledge of Allegiance. Several of our former teachers were present and introduced: Charmayne Glass Bell (Physical Education), Jerry Foote (Sociology), Norbert "Nobby" Johnson (Vice Principal), Vicky Toof Johnson (French), Dean Webster (Geometry/Math) and Natalie Lewis Morgan (World Geography/Counselor).

Other program highlights included a touching slide memorial to classmates we have lost over the years. Thanks to Basil Jacobson's son, Doug, and Tom Hendricks for this nice tribute. (You can see this on our website)

Classmate, Alma Wilcox, spoke about her art exhibit at the library which includes a tribute to the class of 1964. The tribute includes photos from the newspaper about the main events of 1964. A large wall hanging was created in which senior class photos of classmates are morphed to show what a child of those classmates might look like, only the viewer has to guess which two classmates make up each photo. A little help was given in the form of a list of names of the faces used in the entire project. [Check out the photo and see how you do identifying the faces.](#) (A list of the people's faces used is at the end of the article.) Another facet of the tribute was a metal memento tree showing a band sweater, a photo of the front of GFHS, and a photo of class officers. Her exhibit included a memorial to those who have died, a big Bison blue T-shirt mounted on a manikin frame and adorned with the names of those classmates, each strip with their name and a paper candle was pinned to the shirt. (A photo of the shirt is on our website).

Sandy Suek Meade recounted a story of her favorite writing professor from University of Montana, how he inspired her, then read a selection of her poetry.

Thanks go to Joe Tollus, husband of Kathy Claypoole for preparing the slide show of the Missouri River float trip which provided new memories for many classmates at the banquet.

The centerpieces by Sherry Kerr Brady, her daughter in law, Sasha Moore, and Judy Ferda Higgins were beautiful. Simple tall cylinder glass vases were filled with water, a submergible tea candle, water, and a white lily. The vase was set on a mirror with small clear and blue glass pebbles accented by gold leaves.

Two special blue and white sheet cakes were donated by Sherry Kerr Brady. They were decorated with the words "Bison Forever" and "Class of '64", the perfect dessert!

### **Sunday Brunch**

Our last function of the reunion was a wonderful brunch at the Country Club. We were treated to a smorgasbord of delectable delights and there is no way anyone would go home hungry! It was a peaceful setting where our aging ears were able to hear the conversations of everyone at our table.

Alma Wilcox encouraged everyone to see if they could match the fictitious parents to the faces on the Class of '64 quilt she created and send their guesses to her.

We couldn't have had a nicer setting as we gazed out the big picture windows at the lovely grounds of the golf course and the lazy Missouri River floating by.

It gave us all a chance to connect with a few more folks, take a few more photos, plan some more get togethers, and sadly say our good byes.

It was a wonderful reunion! Classmates came from many states, the farthest being Hawaii, Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Washington D.C. Total attendance was 274. The class directories we received show that we are spread out over three countries: U.S., Canada, and Singapore; as well as 39 states. Four of our classmates live outside the U.S., 220 in Montana, 45 in Washington, 33 in California, 24 in Oregon, 18 in

Colorado, 14 in Arizona, 12 in Texas, 9 in Idaho, 7 in Virginia, and the rest spread around the U.S. in 1s, 2s, and 3s. You might be surprised who is living not too far from you!

Thanks go to Judy Deck who has worked hard as chair of the reunion committees for these past 50 years. Thanks also to everyone who helped in ways big and small with all the reunion planning and events. Judy is stepping down into retirement from her paying jobs as well as her reunion job, so let her know if you might consider chairing the next reunion committee and certainly also please offer to help with the planning and execution. You all are needed and appreciated.

According to Channing Hartelius, the next reunion will be in five years. Hope to see you there!

### **Classmates Reflections on our 50th High School Reunion**

"I treasure the precious hours I spent with my former classmates and their spouses/guests. Some of these folks I have known since kindergarten! My 88 year old mother assisted with registration, and what a thrill it was for her to reconnect with those who grew up in the neighborhood where she still lives and to visit with those women who had been in her campfire girls. Since our class was so large and double-shifted, there were many folks I never got to know while I was in high school, and I especially enjoyed making new friends who shared a common bond to GFHS. I was particularly touched by the Great Falls Public Library tribute to our deceased classmates by artist Alma Wilcox Winberry. I do regret that several of the folks that I had hoped to see were unable and/or unwilling to participate; they missed an opportunity of a lifetime. Kudos to Judy Deck, the Reunion Committee, and our webmaster Sandra Spragg Guynn, who all worked very hard to make this reunion the best ever!"

Cheryl Reichert

"Jack and I had a fantastic time. It was wonderful seeing old and new friends. We really do believe this was the biggest and best Reunion ever, thanks to the hard work of committee members who spent countless hours on the telephone and on the internet looking for "Missing" classmates. We could not have had such a successful reunion without the help of two ladies who weren't even in our class.... Patty Hahn Schlaeger and Sandra Spragg Guynn. THANK YOU ladies, you rock!

**Also a big thank you to Jeri Brown Browne for writing this wonderful article."**

Judy Denowh Deck

**Plans and funds are available to leave our 50th Reunion website up for a year (and hopefully longer with donations) [www.gfhsmt1964.com](http://www.gfhsmt1964.com)**