

# THE 1955 TROJAN Alumni PRINTS

(& Mid-50s Classes)

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## FOREVER YOUNG

Random Thoughts about the 50th PHS Reunion (and the US Grant Grade School Reunion!!)

First of all, I want to thank Gene Lucas, and his tireless reunion committee for a truly memorable weekend. You did a fantastic job planning the reunion activities, and it totally exceeded all my expectations. It's very touching that each five years, so many classmates return for this celebration. As Darlene Riddlebarger Hobbs shared with me, "We come back to see our extended family!" It's true!

Kudos also to the planners of the Grant Grade School Reunion. I believe Shirley and Bill Meade, Kenny and Liz Lane, Donna and Larry Boren were the driving forces behind our breakfast at the Southern Moon BBQ Pit. I felt somewhat guilty, because I had made the suggestion for this event 5 years ago, and then never lifted a finger to "make it happen". But I was reassured by a Christmas caller from Owensboro KY that plans were proceeding!

Could anyone believe that 50 classmates would attend the breakfast? Or that the members of the undefeated 8th grade football team would locate and deliver Coach Bob Bender to breakfast!!! This gathering was particularly emotional because our beloved school was recently demolished. The last physical reminders of the building (classic Grecian urns and column capitals) have now been incorporated into the new high school. The boy's football team reserved the head table, but the girls in our class were also well represented: Jackie Buffington, Gwen Mowery, Eileen Nolan, Donna McCally, Nancy Bower.

Each year I hear more "Tales of Portsmouth" that I've never heard before. Bill Meade collapsed the group with his story about Roger Miller siphoning gas from a police car outside the Policeman's Ball one night. When Roger was apprehended in the act, he told the police his name was "Bill Meade"; then called Bill and instructed him to deny all knowledge of the incident, if the police came to his home!

Later that afternoon, Charlie Jett, who was one of my closest friends in grade school, asked if I wanted a tour of the Portsmouth area. We jumped in his bright red rental Ford Mustang, and cruised around Scioto County. After thirty minutes, Charlie commented that Portsmouth should be renamed "The Town of Usta" ...Kobacker's used to be here, the LaRoy theater used to be there, Selby Shoe used to be there... you get the idea.

We drove down Chillicothe and Gallia Streets on Friday afternoon, and hit our first traffic congestion in NEW BOSTON!! As we passed the site of the old steel mill, Charlie told me a fascinating account of his many years at the mill. Finally we stopped at the last standing structure (the old Coke plant) for a few historic photos. The plan-

ning, permitting, demolition and environmental cleanup has taken more than 10 years and the job's not finished!! When the site is approved for new construction, the Portsmouth area will have a mega sized Walmart. At peak production in the 1950s I'm told the plant employed 15,000 workers. I think we grew up in Portsmouth when the City had reached it's economic pinnacle. Weren't we lucky!

The Portsmouth Brewing Company was the scene of our Friday night informal get together; and even an early evening rainstorm couldn't dampen the enthusiasm and energy of the Class of 1955. I arrived with Gerry Warren, Nancy Bower, Jackie James Evans, and Ginny Belle Smith, and we ordered a beer and four chardonnays. Good thing we were early...we drank the only bottle of white wine in the bar! As the young bartender told me later, "Don't you know this a brewery!" Then he asked me if I was with all those other old people, and I replied "I AM one of those old people". Needing to have the last word, he said "Are you guys all winos?" I knew I was back in Portsmouth!

Gene and his Committee put out a great spread, and the crowd continued to swell. Bob Cook and Doug Holling rolled in with their "Harem from The Hill" (Martha Cook, Betty Bierley, Eva Strauss, Karen Williams, Connie Yuenger, and Sharon Queen). Sorry folks, no chardonnay left in the house! Jim Gardner (a svelte 210 lbs) and his wife Joanie from North Carolina, Mary Gail Drake (cutting her legal calendar back to 60 hours/week) and Jerry Korsmeyer from Pittsburgh PA, Bob Otworth and Nancy Cox (celebrating 50 years of blissful marriage) from Florida. I met Gary Albrecht and Marilyn Mucha at the end of the evening. They were leaving the following morning for a grand tour of Europe. How could you choose that destination over a Portsmouth High Reunion? Are you serious?

Saturday morning Charles "Mac" McKelvey and I met, after an early breakfast, to play tennis. You may recall that Mac, Allan Oxley, Frank Hunter, Tom Stone, Fred Ramsey and Terry Kouns and I were members of another sports dynasty at PHS...the undefeated tennis team of 1955. I believe our morning re-match was a classic example of "living in the past", but very pleasurable, nonetheless. We reminisced about driving to matches in West Virginia, Kentucky and Ohio crammed into Coach Chuck Lorentz's tiny 1948 Studebaker. Good thing we were young. Today we probably would have suffered fatal blood clots in our legs!! Our opponents always laughed when we stumbled out of the car wearing our TROJAN warm ups, but we did our talking with our tennis racquets.

The class reassembled outside the new high school / middle school at 10 AM, for a wonderful tour of the building (to be completed before Sept 2006) led by Ralph Applegate. Ralph

really deserves a pat on the back for doing such an outstanding job, representing the citizens of Portsmouth; and nurturing such a collaborative working relationship with the architects, contractors, and School Committee. Having practiced architecture for more than 40 years, I can tell you this is no easy task.

The new 2006 school is similar in physical size to the old 1912 model. That's where the similarity stops. This structure has it all... cafeteriums, audoterias, resource centers (aka libraries), 42" plasma screens in each classroom, total air-conditioning, two gymnasiums, and a magnificent community room above the main entrance, with a panoramic view of the new elementary school, our beautiful public library, and the Kentucky hills. Let's all hope that PHS enrollment will grow in the future, and that the community will embrace this fantastic resource.

Bob Mohl joined us for the morning tour. I had not seen him in 50 years, since we met on the street in Cambridge MA. And if you want another "small world story", Jane Dever Ramsey told me that she had recently visited her niece in Sudbury MA, a stone's throw from my home! Donald & Carolyn Snively (another Grant School alum), Patty Webb and her mother, and Gene Lucas, also toured the new facility. It was a bit discouraging to hear that there were only 91 graduating seniors in the Class of 2005. Quite a drop off from the 300 plus in our class 50 years ago!

OK guys, where are we going for lunch? We grabbed all the available tables at Portsmouth's newest "Irish???" pub (used to be Gallaghers) next to National City Bank (used to be First National). The usual suspects....Oxley, Hunter, the "Over the Hill Gang" (Hollings, Cooks, Williams, Strauss, Yuenger, Ginny Smith, Queen), Jackie James, Patty Webb, her astonishing mother, Darlene, & Bob Arthur. Patty entertained us during lunch with her "rags to riches" stories as nurse, realtor, and restaurant owner. They deserve a chapter in "Tales of Portsmouth" especially Bob Otworth's discharge from the hospital after a false appendicitis attack. Bob has neither forgotten nor forgiven this experience more than 50 years ago! (see story on back page... ed)

One of my special moments during the weekend was a visit with Irma Stone (Tom Stone's mother) who is doing well at 89 years old at Hillview. She was so emotional five years ago when I visited her, but we had a memorable chat this time. She still misses Tom so much, and we were able to talk about all the good times we shared on Third Street when we were kids. She has a wonderful picture of Tom and Deanie (Harrison) in her living room. She told me their trip to Egypt was to be their last trip abroad, and that they would then travel in the USA. How ironic that they perished on that flight. A reminder to all of us how fragile life is.

Saturday evening we all converged at the beautiful Friends Center for a social hour, sit down

## Bombing Berlin

I was 6-years-old in the summer of '44 and caught up in World War II. I listened carefully to the V-mail letters read to me by my parents from my two uncles who were serving in the Army: one in Europe and one in the India-Burma theater.

My Wilson Elementary School chum, Jimmy Benner, and I had constructed a "bomber" out of old wooden lettuce crates in my backyard and we flew many missions that summer over Berlin. Jimmy, who was a little older, was the pilot, & I was the navigator/bombardier/gunner.

Pinned proudly on my T-shirt were Aerial Gunner Wings sent to me by our third serving family member, Uncle Paul Bierley, who was training in the Army Air Force in Texas (I still have them!). Jimmy had a genuine fleece-lined aviator cap and I had a home-made set of flying goggles made from canning jar lids. I used a 1940 Shell Oil Co. map of Ohio to figure the critical navigation problems of getting us from Charles Street to Germany.

As Jimmy taxied our plane down the runway and took off, we settled ourselves for the five minute flight to Berlin. We had very strong tail winds in those days. Invariably, we encountered several swarms of German fighters on the way. "Look out! Messerschmitts at ten o'clock," Jimmy would scream into a soup-can microphone as bullets ripped into our fuselage. Staccato gunfire rattled from my broomstick machine gun, and soon an enemy plane would burst into flames. "I got one!" I would yell. Realizing that they were pitted against a crack shot aerial gunner, the remaining Messerschmitts turned tail and headed for safety.

The actual bombing mission was usually accomplished with superb precision. We hit our target (Hitler's Headquarters) with just about every one of our bombs. I was surprised that this didn't end the war sooner.

After we had dropped our bombs over Berlin, Jimmy would pick up his soup-can to relay the word of our achievement: "Pilot to base. Mission accomplished." Jimmy would listen for a moment, then say, "Roger-Wilco-over and out." Then, he turned to me and said, "I'm taking her home. Keep a sharp eye out for more fighters."

I can't remember how many missions we flew that summer or how many medals we were awarded by a grateful country. But, I'm sure that we played an important part in winning the war. At least in our mind's eye. *Blaine*



## Golden Anniversary

A year ago, on our 49th anniversary, I told my wife that we could either go to Europe or to Hawaii on our 50th (her choice). Some months later, having made no decision, as I was leaving for our local High School football game, I saw an advertisement on TV about a trip to Hawaii. I made a statement that if we could get a deal, we would take our three sons and their families with us. By the time I returned from the game, Shirley had called our sons to see if they wanted to go and could all get off at the same time. Finding that it was possible, she called AAA and made arrangements for all sixteen. Some of us left from Columbus and the rest we met in Denver. We were all together for two weeks. While on a dinner cruise, the MC had us come up front and for the first time in my life I actually danced. Even with all our kids and their little gremlins it was a great two weeks. Larry and Shirley Dailey



## Carolyn Sparks Skelton

Founder/Director. Spouse and Family Caregivers Support System. Some Awards and Recognitions received: 1991 - Golden Rule nominee. - WONN Woman of the Day. 1992 - Eight on Your Side Award, - Outstanding volunteer, - Golden Rule nominee, - Congratulatory letters from President Bush, 1993 - Golden Rule nominee, - Nominated Lakeland Woman of the Year. 1994 - Girl Scout Council award. - initiated National Family Caregivers Week, 1995 - Started Family Caregivers Appreciation Program, 1996 - Co-chaired first Family Caregivers Conference 1997 - Golden Rule nominee, - founder of Spouse and family Caregivers Support System



### Departed Classmates

One of the most profound memories I will have of our 50th class reunion will be the memorial display of pictures of our departed classmates created by Clayton and Linda Howerton. They also have done a beautiful job on the '55 Class Web site [www.PHS1955.com](http://www.PHS1955.com).

As one especially interested in history, I hope we will continue to remember our classmates who have gone on with pride and reverence. As I sat at the dinner table with classmates and their spouses, I could see in my mind's eye these departed classmates sitting at tables in about equal numbers as our spouses and guests. I saw them as I remembered them in the halls of Portsmouth High School - ever young and enthusiastic.

Through our great good fortune, in our youth our hearts were touched with fire and passion. It is sad to know that the fire and passion were extinguished far too early for many of our friends.

Let us continue to honor and respect those who have entered the Class of 1955 Eternal.

*Blaine*



dinner, and dancing. What a turnout! I believe we were more than 140 (which included 85-90 classmates) plus spouses. Thanks to the decorating committee the setting really looked festive, and the guests took the invitation for “dressed casually” to a new level. Gene Lucas was an excellent Master of Ceremonies. Suddenly I realized that the reunion was coming to a close shortly, and began “table-hopping” to chat with friends I had missed earlier. I was so pleased to see Sam and Joan Pollock (from Marathon FL) and hope they were out of harm’s way as Hurricane Rita roared through the Florida Keys! Fred Stone (another childhood Charles Street buddy) and his wife Mary Ann Carter came over to greet me, as well as Nick Huston, Mike Williams (a playmate on Second Street and Micklethwaite Rd and Suzie, Blaine Bierley (the author and steward of “Tales of Portsmouth”) and his wife Carolyn, Patty Conklin Newsome (who sat at my table), Judy Cramer Litteral & Frank (another of our classmates celebrating a 50th wedding anniversary!) Linda Howerton (our newest classmate and official class photographer) and her husband Clayton, who looked fantastic (maybe not as stunning as Linda!!) and wins my vote for Profiles in Courage.

Jackie Brown was swirling around the room, and introduced me to her three younger sisters. Another “Tale from Portsmouth”: Jackie told me she was born during the 1937 flood (as were many in our class), and she and her mother stayed in the hospital for two weeks until the flood waters receded. Elsewhere in the city, Jackie James mother was in heavy labor, and her father said “It’s time for us to go to the hospital.” She said, “How are we going to get there. Our house is surrounded by water.” Her husband replied “We’ll take you to the hospital by boat!” Need I tell you more. . . Jackie James was born at home!! I assume you both were born under the sign of Aquarius??

We were honored to have Lea Duschinski at our table. I believe she has attended every reunion since who knows when. Lea shared a cute story with me: On her retirement after 43 years at PHS, she met John Baker (who provided the evening’s live music) on the street. John quipped. “Lea, when you took that job at the high school, I told you, you would never last!!” Gail Miller was also at the gala, and naturally there were many good stories about the entire Miller clan, including a few I’ve never heard. Connie Smith Enlow came up to say “hi”, TJ Dupuy (now a Colorado resident), John and Judy Eby, John Henderson (from the Bay area) and Don & Lois Wallace.

I had an opportunity to talk briefly with John Stetzing, and I knew this must have been an emotional evening for him, as his wife Opal died only 4 years ago. Our class memorial photographs always sadden me. There are so many close friends we have lost. In fact, 5 of 15 members of our National Honor Society are gone: Bill Trone, Jerry McColgan, Deanie Harrison, Norma Ray, and Dave Wagner. Did we really graduate 50 years ago?

I enjoyed seeing all of you so much (my sincere apologies if I didn’t mention your name), and

thanks to those who boosted my ego by telling me that I am so tall, handsome, and youthful, and only “wished they had dated me in high school”. Let me set the record straight. I was absolutely the shortest in our class, I always had big ears and a big nose, but I will admit I was the youngest! Or so I thought until I met Jane Taylor Rogers (also born in 1938, but six months after me!) I feel like a fraud after all these years! Jane, you are officially the youngest unless someone else steps forward. Doesn’t that feel great!!

It was late in the evening when the party ended (Late in Portsmouth means 11 PM! Last call!)

You probably thought this was the end of my novella, but there’s more. I didn’t fly all the way from Boston to leave early on Sunday morning. I shared breakfast at the Ramada with Billy Irwin Kirby and Bob Kirby, married 51 years, and was fascinated by their many trips to Ireland. What a coincidence that we both love the same old (est. 1607) inn/restaurant in Galway, “Moran’s on the Weir”. We heartily recommend it to all classmates on your next trip to the Old Country. I guarantee the ambience and food is better than the Irish Pub on Chillicothe Street. Dave and Gerri Teeters also joined us (also married 50 years), and we shared stories about children and grandchildren. I’m fascinated that so many classmates have great grandchildren. I guess my wife, Gittan and I just started too late. We’ve only been married 40 years, and have 2 children and 2 grandchildren.

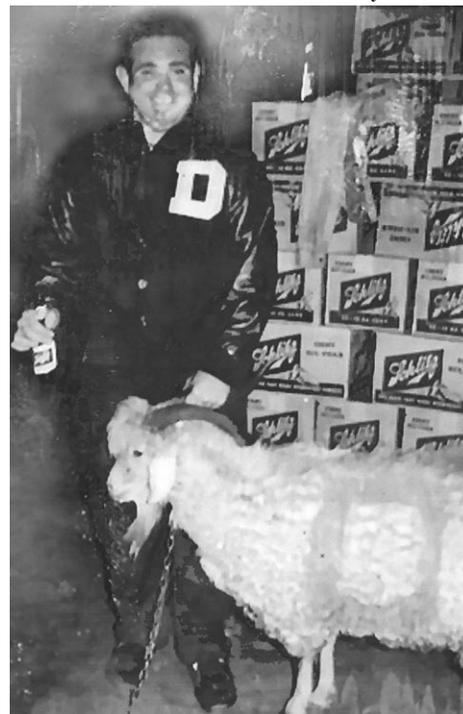
No trip to Portsmouth is complete without a trip to Billy Clifford’s Patsy’s Restaurant. That area of town is pretty depressing. The fire station is shuttered, Harold’s Restaurant is gone, and Williams Shoe is empty and a sad reminder of Portsmouth’s past glory. But Patsy’s is booming!! I had to take a seat at the counter; the place was packed!! I ordered Patsy’s burger (I like those Portsmouth prices) and sat back to watch Billy directing his friends to tables. Jackie Buffington and her husband were having lunch there, and so were Leroy and Dee Bryant. While I was trying to finish my burger, Bob Wilson, came over to the counter, and sat down. More stories, more laughs! Bob also went to Grant, and his father “Buzz” Wilson was our scoutmaster. Bob, who is retired from Ohio Power, told me that he chaired a group of volunteers, and “pro bono” contractor, that have totally restored Camp Oyo, including the complete restoration of the swimming pool. People in Columbus said it couldn’t be done. Bob proved them wrong. Gene, let’s put a visit to Camp Oyo on the Schedule of Events for 2010.

Reluctantly I steered my car up Old US 52 towards Cincinnati on a lazy warm late September afternoon. I had forgotten the beauty of the Ohio River valley, the Kentucky hills, the languid, benign river well within its banks, the old historical river towns like Ripley (and the tobacco auction barns), Rankin House (site of the Underground Railroad), Point Pleasant (US Grant birthplace), Higginsport (and the speed traps), Manchester (and the Killen Power Plant where Charlie Jett topped out the stack at 1025 feet). It was a nostalgic trip along a river of memories.

I clicked on the car radio, and suddenly was singing “Forever Young” along with Bob Dylan. I’m sure you all know the tune.

May God bless and keep you always  
May your wishes all come true

*Marty Lehman*



## **The Perfect Crime?**

One of the tales told by Jim was his daring feat while a member of the Duke football team. Prior to the big game with Army, their mascot was left unwatched as Jim and others plotted to kidnap said mascot.

The kidnapping of the Goat was a success as evidenced by the photo Jim had taken as he guarded both the Goat and the Schlitz in a Duke “safehouse”. Perhaps this is something learned not at PHS, but with some of his PHS Cronies.



## **The Enema Story**

Perhaps Bob Otworth is relating his now public story of an un-needed enema back when he was in the hospital for appendicitis. Seems it may have been the wrong hospital for his surgery when you consider that so many PHS girls were nurses there. As Bob was recovering, nurse Patty Webb enters his room with the appropriate stuff and tells him that the doctor had ordered her to administer an enema. Panic stricken, he finally relents and rolls over, gown high. At this point, Patty simply leaves the room leaving Bob exposed to the laughter of a few of his old classmates. Remember Bob, you said I could print this....