

OPHS-50 Year Reunion Speech

Stu Siefer, Pres

Welcome all. Great to be here. At our age its “Great to be anywhere.” Thank all for coming!

Especially spouses and dates of alumni. What sacrifice you are making by ruining a perfectly good evening having to listen to your partner share hilarities with a bunch of old friends you don’t know, as you wonder which ones they slept with back in the day. If you feel left out, I suggest you open the Reunion book, and pick the name of one of the people who didn’t show up-preferably your same sex- and introduce yourself around as that person. Since none of us recognize each other, everyone will believe you. You can make up an entire fictional life. No one will know. “Yeah, Justin Bieber is my grandson”. Or “ yeah that was me with Kristi Alley on Dancing with the Stars”..

Another special welcome to all of you who travelled from out of state to be here. Who travelled the longest distance? Thank you to Karen Shackman Runbenfaer who through a private party at her beautiful house. Some are still there. You spent a fortune on airline tickets, weight loss programs, teeth whitening and skin tightening. All this, so you could impress your old best high school friend, who will look you square in the eye and not know who the hell you are!

And special guest-Harry Weberman-who stayed healthy all these years just so he could come here tonight to harass us one more time. Kenny Joseph wants to know if you will please return the switchblade you took from him in 10th grade.

Help me thank the hard working Reunion Committee who made this evening possible: Roger Morenc for the website, Mike Corman-poet laureate and class philosopher,(poem) Hazel Katz Nakisher Chair of the Dinner and Decorations committee: Dodie, Janice, Sallie Franchi Pine, Susie Taisch,, Judy Liner Siegel, Jackie

Now close your eyes:

Its June 15, 1961, it was a hot and muggy Michigan summer as our sweaty, little gown-clad bodies, filed into the gym bleachers for Commencement. Hormones churning and hearts thumping with anticipation, speaker after speaker attempted to inspire us to face the world with hope and enthusiasm. We proudly swaggered across the stage to the dissonant strains of Pomp and Circumstance, a smile of relief on our pimply faces as we received our diplomas. With a figurative slap on the butt, we were sent off like a herd of black and white penguins about to be set free into the open arctic ocean. We faced our new adventure with a mix of fear and excitement over how we would meet our new challenges and how our lives would turn out. Some of us knowing just what we wanted and how to go about getting it-more of us entering the forest of life without a compass or binoculars but a strong urge to explore.

And off we went. We entered careers, raised families, fought wars, faced challenges of health, personal setbacks, etc. Many of us accomplished great things- we were judges, doctors, teachers, lawyers, engineers, architects, sales people, writers, lawyers, radio personalities, musicians, performers, did I mention lawyers?. Yes, the graduates of OPHS, Class of 1961 made their mark. The world is indeed a better place because of us!. I think most will agree that OPHS prepared us well for the challenges before us on that Summer of '61.

*So here we are, 50 years later, and for many of us, at a new crossroad in our lives-once again faced with a mix of anxiety and excitement over how we will deal with what's ahead.

*Some of us are already retired, and are adjusting to a new life style and a new relationship with our families and partners. Maybe all that extra time with our spouses was not something we were prepared for.

*Others are considering retirement and perhaps to follow those dreams that tugged at your souls for 50 years. Maybe you are ready to write the great American novel or a cookbook or become an artist or musician, climb Mount Everest, or run a marathon or god forbid, open a restaurant.

*Some, for economic necessity or just to maintain your sanity, will continue to work for many years to come. Others just love your jobs and have no intention on leaving any time soon.

*And how many of you endured decades of getting your own children through school, college, careers, marriage--once, twice maybe 3 times? You finally get them out of the house-you take a deep breath and guess what? Theeeeeyre back. With grandchildren. I know—you love your grandkids. They are great—they're your revenge against your own kids for driving you crazy. But face it, now you have to learn a whole new set of skills just to communicate with them and share their world: I-phones, Ipods, Androids, Play Stations... Its enough to make you yearn for the good old days in the '50s, when all you had was 3 channels of distorted viewing on your old Magnavox-and something this generation may never understand: books.

*Some of us are faced with setbacks in health, business or family diverting our attention from the easy retirement we were hoping for.

*And we are all coping with the loss of loved ones-our own family members, and our dear friends from OPHS. And let me encourage you to visit the memorial board.

No matter where we find ourselves in this broad spectrum, what we all share in common is that our ability to navigate through the last 50 years of our lives was largely shaped by our shared experiences at OPHS. On that June of '61, when we left OPHS, our tastes, talents, senses of humor, hobbies, social skills, indeed our personalities were strongly impacted by our experiences with our friends and the faculty. These influences are part of who we are today and what we as a group will always share in common-Nowhere on

this planet is there a group quite like us! And those of you who decided to attend this reunion, are here to honor and acknowledge the importance those years have been to our lives.

Like that summer 50 years ago, we are once again surrounded by our dear friends who like family, were there to support us as we entered a new life. Tonight is a good time, as we look to another new life, to rekindle that same spirit.

This is not the time to “hang it up”, but to reopen our lockers and lace up our Ked’s and approach our futures with that spirit of the Summer of ’61!

Have a great time tonight!!