

You may have noticed in local newspapers across Minnesota in mid-August that the front page was a whiteout. In celebration of the 150th anniversary of the Minnesota Newspaper Association, more than 200 newspapers across the state left their front page white to symbolize the important role local papers play in their community. So to help with the sesquicentennial celebration of the newspaper association, I will leave 7 extra spaces in this sentence.

What I did want to write about this month was class reunions. Class reunions have been described as a time where we all get together to see who's falling apart. As many of you know, I was in the class of 1971 at West Concord High School. Last year (2016) we had our 45th reunion, the first gathering of our class in 25 years. We had about a 62 percent turnout which is apropos since the 'Class of 71' was the largest graduating class that West Concord ever had with 62. Here's the group picture we took in July, 2016.



Left to Right: Front row; Cindy Henry, Mary Kay Roberts, Denise Putrah, Betsy Crouch, Christine Sathrum, Steve Johnson, Karen Wencl, Emery Kleven. 2nd Row; Ginger Finne, Linda Gochnauer, Judy Quimby, Cheryl Finsteun. 3rd Row; Vicki Urch, Crystal Paulson, Sherrel Benson, Kay Olson, Louie Loosbrock, Steven Hutton, Joanne Meyer, Dr. David Agerter. 4th Row; Karen Hubner, Debbie Schiesser, Helen Gillard, Linda Lermon, Sue Jansen (behind S. Hutton) Jim DeFlieger, Joel Sackett. Back row; Joan Rundquist, Steve Frederick, Doug Rhodes, Dan Miller, Steve Ray, Mark Gillard, Dennis Quimby

As I'm typing out the names, I noticed the 2nd, 3rd, and 4th rows were hard to determine so I did the best I could. And for the ladies of the class, sorry I used maiden names only. Guys too!

The 'Class of 72' was 2nd largest in West Concord school history. They had 61 so these two classes epitomized the baby boomers. WWII was over and everyone was ready to raise a large family.

Our class decided that we would start an informal annual reunion for those who could make it. I know some other graduating classes of years gone by are doing this as well. My sister Karolyn's class (WCHS class of '59') has been going annually for about 10 years now. They were the first graduating class in the 'new' high school.

Speaking of the new high school, I had the opportunity to walk through the building in July. Our class was hoping to have a tour as part of our reunion but Hyland Systems of Mantorville, the owners of the building does not do tours. But I was given the chance to trace some of my steps I took as a teenager. It certainly does not look like it did back in the day. I would describe it this way; the shell is there but the nuts are gone. Hyland Systems manufactures steel buildings, corrugated storage tanks, grain handling equipment and various fabricated parts.



The only room that still resembles a classroom is where Mrs. Monical taught art for several years. This was room 125 on the very NW corner.

It was interesting to see the few things that still resemble a school. Mrs. Monical's art classroom still had the blackboard on the wall and many of the rooms still had the brown and gold intercom speaker with the red light on them. I can still hear Ken Doty when he occasionally had an announcement. The red light would come on the speaker and Mr. Doty would always start with 'Now hear this!' And we certainly did hear it.

The old library still looks like a library. The shelves are still in there along with the tables. Many of the shelves have encyclopedias on them. The patio in the middle of the building looks the same. It's a combination of some nice bushes along with very healthy weeds. In other words, it's very similar to the 70's. You can see those pictured below.



The east side of the classroom area looks very different as all the walls from rooms 131 to 136 are now gone. It's one big long room from the old concession stand to the north end of the building. And east to west it goes from the east windows to the library wall. The old study hall (room 129) has no walls on either side of it. The old checkerboard tile floor is still there, although be it dirty and a bit broken up from forklifts driving on it. Again the pictures below.



I have heard from more than one former student that asked me, ‘How do you remember classroom numbers?’ ‘Doesn’t everybody?’ I asked. Apparently they don’t. Mr. Gunhus had room 124 right next to Mrs. Monical’s room. And room 136 was Mrs. Stauffenberg’s Chemistry and Biology room. Room 132 was home to probably the most useful class I had in high school, Mrs. Peterson’s typing class. Although as I think of it now, she could have still been Miss Karel. And who can forget the electric typewriters like the IBM Selectric with that round cast aluminum ball with all the letters on it. To change fonts, you had to change the ball. Not like today when you just scroll down and select Comic Sans or Tahoma or Wingdings. Wingdings are kind of like the old shorthand that was taught in school. It’s all symbols that look like what Beetle Bailey would say when he was cursing.

Who among us doesn’t remember their 7th grade locker number and combination? Mine was locker 344 with a combination 11-19-14. I was going to go open it when I was walking through the building but it turns out I could open any locker in the building now as they took all the locks off. I guess it was too many combinations to remember. From 1991 to 1995, I had a radio partner in Sioux City, Gary Ellenbolt, who was a long-time morning host on South Dakota Public Radio. He and I were full of useless information like that. In fact, listeners would tell us we were full of it. We took it as a compliment.

Even though the old high school doesn’t look like it did in 1959 or 69 or 79, our memory of it still has it looking like it did when we went to school there. It was fun to walk the halls again and I didn’t even need a hall pass to do it.

I’ve added a few other pictures below from the old high school.



This is the old cafeteria on the lower level. Now used for screen printing and embroidery work by Midwest Signtech out of Rochester.

Below is the old gymnasium that was home to the Cardinals from 1958 through 1990.



The band/choir room looks similar to how it did back in the day. Note the signs on the wall by the old intercom

