

Cousins August 2023

The recently held West Concord All-School Reunion was a mini family reunion of sorts for me. On my mom's side of the family, we had over the years of West Concord High School, 12 of us Ryg family cousins graduating. Four other cousins graduated from Claremont High School. I've had people over the years ask me if that was a record number from one school. Not even close I would tell them. It was not unusual for the small towns around to have many cousins go to the same school. There were some families that probably came close to 12 just from one family. And several families would have cousins from both sides of the family going to West Concord High School. All of my cousins were on my mom's side.

My dad was originally from north of the Twin Cities. He was born in Braham and completed his school there. His siblings mostly moved to the Cities, one stayed in the Braham area and another one moved to Michigan and one to California. None of my dad's sibling's kids went to the same school.

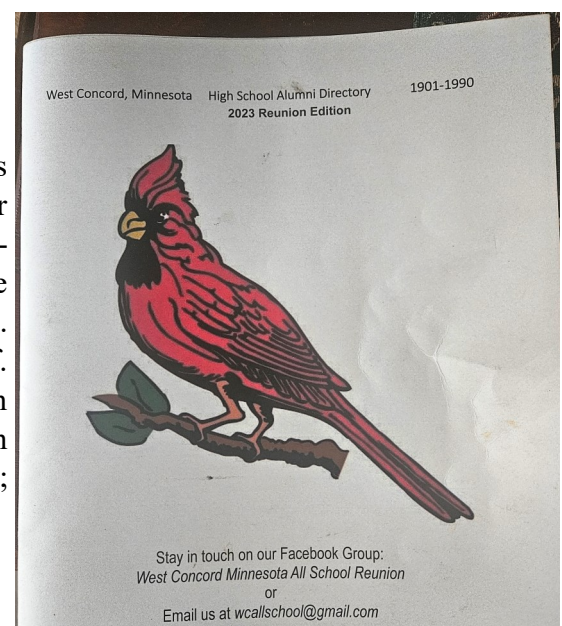
I will see on Facebook a question about did you go to school with cousins. Many answer no including my dad's side of the family. It is more unusual today than it used to be that's for sure. Even in my own family of 4 children, they graduated from 3 different schools. And when they graduated, all of their cousins were in a different state. That's my fault, as my radio career took me to 4 different states over the years and today I'm retired and live in a 5<sup>th</sup> state.

And that's why it is more uncommon today. We live in a very mobile society now. Is that a good thing or bad thing? There are arguments for both sides. In the end, you do what you got to do. But I'm glad I got to go to school with many of my cousins. And out of the 12, none were in the same graduating class. We ranged from my oldest sister Karolyn graduating in 1959 and the last of the 12, Cousin Wayne, graduating in 1981. I was the 6<sup>th</sup> of 12 graduating in 1971 and Cousin Alan in 1972 was 7<sup>th</sup>.

Speaking of the All-School Reunion, it was a huge success again. Around 330 attended this year. This was the 12<sup>th</sup> All-School Reunion that has been organized for West Concord. The very first one was in 1969 when Wendell Whiting, 1923 graduate of WCHS, thought there should be such an event. The first committee consisted of Whiting, Orpha Mosher Halla, Marie Speckeen Uptagrafft, Paul Urch, Haven Stucky and Ed Pechacek.

This started a string of consecutive reunion committees that had a Pechacek on it. When Ed left the committee, his son John started. The reunion of 2023 was the first one without a Pechacek on it, although we did consult John via the phone a few times during our planning. We honored John (WCHS class of 1961) and his wife Sharon (WCHS class of 1962) with a plaque for their many years of leadership of the All-School Reunion.

A side note from the reunion is that there are WCHS Alumni directories available at the West Concord Historical Society. If you didn't get one or need a second copy, you can stop in or call the WCHS office at 507-527-2628 to get one. I use them as reference a lot to see what year someone graduated. They also have the most updated addresses for most alumni. Dan Lulf is our keeper of the addresses which is a full time job in itself. My thanks to Dan and the other members of this year's reunion committee; Vicki Rhodes, Beth Hodgman, Ann Traxler and Colleen Hayne. The date has been tentatively set for the next All-School Reunion; June 25<sup>th</sup>, 2028.







8 of the 12 Ryg cousins who graduated from West Concord High School were at the WC All-School Reunion, June 25, 2023. From left to right: Emery Kleven, Karen Ryg Franko, Gene Ryg, Sylvia Kleven Shelstad, Barb Ryg Petit, Vicki Ryg Pirkl, Patti Ryg Krier, Karolyn Kleven Raddatz.

Emery, the emcee at the All-School Reunion, presented a plaque to John and Sharon Pechacek for their many years serving on the All-School Reunion Committee.

