

Lincoln Class of 1957 set to Reminisce



Lincoln High School

By Suzanne Weiss

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MANITOWOC — The boys of Lincoln High School's class of 1957 sported white buck shoes and corduroy pants.

The girls wore poodle skirts, saddle shoes and ponytails.

"We were the 'Happy Days,'" said Jerome Dick, comparing his high school class to the classic TV program. "Life was good. We weren't at war."

He took the TV show analogy one step further: "We even had a 'Fonzie,' who rode a motorcycle and wore jeans."

Dick, class historian and a reunion organizer, shared his memories as the class gets ready to relive those halcyon days at its 50th reunion.

A reception is slated from 4 to 7 p.m. on Friday, July 13, at the Wisconsin Maritime Museum and a reception, dinner and dance will be held from 5:30 to 7 p.m. on Saturday, July 14, at the Holiday Inn Manitowoc.

The only Manitowoc high school at the time, Lincoln graduated 381 students in 1957; organizers expect 146 classmates plus guests, for a total of about 250 scheduled to attend the upcoming reunion, Dick said.

Former owner of the downtown Manitowoc store, Memories, The Gift Shoppe, Dick has saved a treasure-trove of class memorabilia, including a copy of his trusty 1957 yearbook, the Flambeau, and copies of the school newspaper, Hi-Tower Flashes. There also are three-ring notebooks filled with yellowing newspaper clippings and black and white photos of high school sporting and social events. His notebooks follow class members through the years with more newspaper clippings and colored photos of get-togethers.

For Dick, who lives in Florida and keeps an apartment in Manitowoc, reunions help bind the classmates together.

"We're one of few classes who had reunions every five years since we graduated," he said. "We love to come back. It's like this bungee cord that brings you back to Manitowoc."

Class president Gerald Meister has been a big factor in the success of the reunions, said class member Thomas Frieder, who will be the master of ceremonies for the reunion.

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"He's kept us together. That guy really deserves a lot of credit," Frieder said.

"We were a close group and we've remained that way," Meister said. "I had a lot of good friends who are still good friends."

Added Robert Burtard, reunion committee treasurer: "Everybody got along. They were good friends no matter what side of the river you lived on."

One group of 12 women, some who have known each other since kindergarten, have remained friends since their high school graduation in 1957 even though most of them moved away, said Gail (Buerstatte) Meindl.

One of the women organized a "girls reunion" in Arizona and they have been getting together regularly at various locations ever since, she said.

During their high school days, class members enjoyed bonfires at Red Arrow Park during homecoming, Frieder recalled.

Late's restaurant was a popular hangout, Meister said.

"It was pretty much the quiet, laid-back town that it still is," Frieder said.

The community wasn't insulated from outside influences, however.

The Marlboro Man, an advertising icon, was popular with teens, Frieder recalled.

"Those who smoked would be like James Dean and rolled their cigarettes up in the sleeves of their T-shirts," he said.

The music of Elvis and fast dancing revolutionized popular culture locally as well as nationally.

Dick recalled one day when a boy he remembers only by his nickname forever changed the popular dances at the local Elks Club.

"Stoney from Sheboygan crashed the dance," he said. "We were all shocked at the moves and his feet. By the end of the summer, we were all dancing the fast numbers because they were in."

Six couples in the class ended up getting married, Dick said.

They included JoAnn (Kraft) Weinert, editor of their high school yearbook, who married fellow classmate Robert Weinert, who is now chairman and treasurer of Crafts Inc.

JoAnn Weinert and Dick shared names of other classmates who became well known in the local business community.

Robert Welnetz, who was a head photographer for the high school yearbook, is a professional photographer whose name graces countless local high school graduation portraits.

Kurt Damm, the high school football team's halfback, is president of Damm Corp.

James Schaus is co-owner of All States Rigging and former owner of Schaus Roofing and Mechanical Contractors.

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Robert Burtard, a state winner in track during high school, was a Manitowoc firefighter for 32 years and in 2006 was inducted into the Wisconsin State Fire and Police Hall of Fame for helping save a woman's life during a fire.

Frieder, a retired junior high school teacher, was a long-time city alderman.

The list goes on, but members of the class of 1957 can continue their reminiscing when they get together this later week.

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These women, some who have known each other since kindergarten, have remained friends since they graduated from Lincoln High School in 1957. They enjoy holding regular "girls" reunions. Pictured in the row at left, front to back: Emily (Hagen) Anderson, Carol (Boyd) Johnson, Joan (Worel) Madsen and Bette (Kuffel) Kluge. In the middle row, front to back, are Suki (Ohde) Vance, Gail (Buerstatte) Meindl, Joan (Radl) vonGermeten and Lila (Sullivan) Hinz. In the row at right, front to back, are Lynn (Schroeder) Theisen, Sally (Murphy) Morris, JoAnn (Kraft) Weinert and Marileigh (Weber) Patterson. Submitted by Jerome Dick