

GRAPEVINE HIGH SCHOOL

CLASS of 1966

JUNE 2009 (Father's Day Edition) NEWSLETTER

The summer of 2009 – I guess we could not even imagine this time when we were back in high school, we had a hard time (at least most did) of trying to figure out what we were going to do tomorrow. We are steadily closing in on our 45th year reunion – just about two years away and at the rate time is traveling, it will be in a couple of weeks...so HOLD ON!

The last few months have been quiet from a comparative standpoint over the years since we started our Newsletter. However, life continues to have surprises, twists and turns, ups and downs that we could never anticipate or understand. I am sitting here on Father's Day 2009, working on the Newsletter, missing my father who has been gone seven years in a few more days. I truly miss him, think about him very often, and wish to thank him over and over for the many things he taught me, instilled in me, and provided me during the times it didn't seem so important to thank him. Some of those things I should have thanked him for are just now coming to light (I'm a little slow sometimes). This day also brings back the loss of my daughter, Tish. I miss her too. I miss her smiling face, wonderful attitude, love of life, and her complete trust in others – some of the things I seem to not have. When your parents are gone, and when your child(ren) is/are gone, some days you feel very alone. I guess it is Father's Days and other Holidays that are the most difficult. Treasure you family.

My goal here is not to make this Newsletter a "sad" bit of info, but many of the things we deal with these days are not the most enjoyable of our lives. I do want to say something about Father's Day. We in GHS during the 1950s & 60s were truly fortunate to have been around at that time. I know that many of you shared your fathers with a lot of us. There were so many fathers that offered up words of wisdom, direction, correction, modeled actions, and were just all around good friends to many of us. I don't want to leave any out, but I am certain that I will – so, I will ask forgiveness from my classmates who know your fathers should have been included in my list – I have memory lapses you know. Growing up in Grapevine, Texas was a great experience. There were lots of role models and characters. But, being a member of the GHS Class of 1966 afforded me many opportunities to come into contact with many fathers of my classmates who had positive impacts on my life. I want to list a few, knowing I will leave some out and some that I didn't really know who would have also made it possible for a better life for me. Of course the fathers of our friends had the most opportunity to provide that sort of contact, allowing us to benefit from their modeling and direction. Many of us know and loved Bill Yancey, he was our coach, he was our friend, and he was certainly our mentor many times growing up. Elmer Ashton always took an interest in me when I was around him. Mr. Ashton took me to TI and exposed me to some great stuff that I would not have otherwise seen at a young age. Preacher Florence, was always so nice, friendly, and willing to take time to talk to a dumb kid – and later in life he was one of many who showed me an exemplary work ethic and service attitude that stands out to me. RJ Stacy was a great example of family support – he also offered up a lot of sound advice, some of which I probably didn't take as a young kid, but later realized just how right he was when he shared it. George Wilkins was a hard worker, kind, and always had time for me even when I knew he probably didn't. Jess Stockton - you have already read how important Jess was

in my life – he was a big influence. Ed Havran was always good to us, he took us the Dairy to watch them put milk into those little containers/cartons we had at school. Mr. Havran had time to talk and visit with me and he still does and it is always good to see him these days. John Cody – he was such a nice man and was always willing to talk and visit and offer suggestions even much later in my life. James Buckner, Jim Buckner’s dad (Jim was not in our class, but we were good friends and in band together) was always so very nice to me. He let me shoot sparrows at Buckner Feed Mill and was always willing to stop and talk and we were always seeing one another after high school in Grapevine and that willingness to stop and visit with me never stopped. Paul Barnes - Kathy’s, David’s, and Jerry’s dad, was always willing to talk, explain about his ham radio operations and just life. Joe Box was so willing to visit and talk about golf, the need to save money and about loans with a teenager and young man trying to grow up. There are certainly others, like Bob Lawrence’s dad, Bob Stevenson’s dad, Linda Bowden Cox’s dad, Lavoy Grider’s dad, Hank Baggers’ dad, Richard Creecy’s dad, Ellen VanDeventer Hamlett’s dad, Sandra Bible’s dad, Barbara’s, Linda’s and Butch Ethridge’s dad, Drucie French’s dad, Diane & Bill Cherry’s dad; Jean Giddien Soderberg’s dad, Ken Hughes’ dad, Kent Kennedy’s dad, Penny Parker Mayfield’s dad, Larry Robinson’s dad, and others.... I know I have left some out, but what a flood of fond memories these gentleman bring to light when I think back on so many fathers who committed themselves to us and brought us up in a way I wish others modeled today. So, as you read this newsletter, stop as I have and think about the men – the fathers who influenced so many of us in our youth and young adulthood. Then get on your knees and thank God for providing those experiences for us.

In May, we received word that Wayne Johnson, Sr. (ex-mayor Tip Johnson’s son) passed away. We also discovered in May that Lee (Eddie) Davis had five (5) stints placed in his arteries and is doing fine. Lee does face some hip replacement surgery in August. Please keep him in your prayers for his recovery. When I sent out the email on Lee’s hip replacement, Gary Cumbie sent back an email saying that as a kid he and Eddie were always looking to find a hip joint. Some things just never change.

In late March, we received word that Earl Stephens Mom passed away. Earl was in the class of 1967, but I had known and been friends with Earl long before departing high school and was in his home numerous times with he and his brothers and sisters. It was good to have an opportunity to see them and visit, but it is a shame we don’t often do that until such events occur.

Also in late March, Darrell Faglie gave me a call that Hank Baggers’ mother had cancer surgery. So many of us know Ms. Biggers, please keep Ms. Biggers and Hank in your prayers.

Another class of 1967 classmate was lost in April. Charlie Mumford passed away on April 14th. Charlie had been fighting complications of diabetes for a number of years and was in the Weatherford hospital when he passed. I still see Mickey and Anna several times a year.

In late April, while exchanging emails with Drucie French (Class of 1967) I learned that her father Tom French, Jr. had died on April 24th. Mr. French was another father who I was blessed to know as a child and who was always willing to stop and talk to me. Drucie indicated that sometime this summer she and her Mom would be in town to have an open house to visit with people.

Larry Cox continues to battle his heart condition. His wife, Sheila, tells me he has good days and difficult ones. He keeps in regular contact with his doctor and takes a lot of medication to help him. I had a chance to visit with Larry just a couple of weeks ago and he is in good spirits and looked really good. Just keep Larry and Sheila in your prayers.

These past two months, Darrell Faglie has done well on recovering from his fight with the table saw – still has some issues on knuckles with his doctor. Darrell has also had a bout with kidney stones and gall stones (I'll let him tell you – it gets to be sort of like the jumper cable joke ya know).

During an update on Larry Cox in May, we discovered that Evelyn (Dobie) Gill had been diagnosed with a heart conditions. Tests showed that she had signs of a previous heart attack and the echocardiogram shows a leaking heart valve. That along with her diabetes and neuropathy provides her with some good and some bad days. Please keep Dobie in your prayers.

Along with Dobie's response to the update on Larry Cox came a note from Randy Doty (for those who may not remember, Randy started the first grade with our classmates at Grapevine, but moved away in the seventh grade – but always considered us his classmates). Randy had a heart attack on May 14th. He had his attack driving to work. He managed to stay focused and get to work, ran in the office telling them to call 911 – he had 100% blockage in an artery. The doctor said he had minimal damage. Keep Randy in your prayers as well.

I guess one of the most difficult happenings during this last three months was the call from Gary Cumbie on April 27th that came to my cell phone. The call was from Gary Cumbie who managed to tell me that his daughter Laura had passed away just a short time earlier. There is no way to describe the rush of emotion I felt for Gary, Jane and their son Steve at that moment. Laura was 32 years old – the same age of my and Linda's daughter, Tish, when she died suddenly in November 2001. I was left speechless. There can be no complete understanding of such a loss without experiencing it. And, I pray that none of you ever have to face that day in the rest of your life. I know that Gary and Jane and Steve are dealing with this loss by the support of their Church, prayer, their family, their friends and each other. I know that those painful feelings never go away; you just don't get over that sort of loss. During the visitation there were so many friends there to help comfort them and show their love to Gary and Jane. They were also there to show their respect and love for Laura and what she had meant to their lives. It was a huge crowd. At the graveside service and at the Church Memorial Service there was such an outpouring of love and support and respect and appreciation. As I shared with Gary and Jane, it gets easier some days, but it hits you like a locomotive on other days – and it will continue to be that way. Please keep Gary and Jane and Steve in your thoughts and prayers as they move forward from such a difficult time day by day.

As we move through the rest of the summer of 2009, please keep in touch with one another; keep in prayer for those among us who need your support. It won't be long until we look toward another get-together and a possible Christmas Party and then a 45th Reunion!

God Bless each of you and the GHS Class of 1966.

Respectfully,
Larry Oliver