

“A Senior Perspective”

by

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Judy and I just got back from celebrating our 50th High School Reunion in Charleston, WV. The class of 1958 of DuPont High School in Belle, WV pulled out all the stops this year to make our 50th into the mother of all reunions. Months upon months were spent in preparing for the “Big 50” and the labors of those on the reunion committee were not in vain. Many of our graduates had not bothered to keep anyone up-to-date on their whereabouts or condition health-wise so we had to go seeking them.

After finding them by “Googling” or “White-Paging” them they said if we thought enough of them to search them out then they cared enough for us to attend and renew our acquaintances.

More than just a couple of our graduates had never been back to any of our reunions, and they were primarily those who live right around the corner (figuratively speaking,) from the school. Those attending were from all over the country and were excited about getting back to see everyone. Those coming the farthest away were from California. At our 10th reunion in 1968 one classmate traveled from Saudi Arabia just to attend. That’s dedication. Of course he was the one in high school that weighed 110 pounds sopping wet and wore Coke bottle thick glasses. Boy, had he changed...by the time he returned for the reunion he had added another 50 pounds, all in the right places and had seen fit to get contacts. Naturally, the girls loved the new version.

Our graduating class consisted of 208 individuals of various sizes and personalities and some of them were impossible to really get to know. Of the 208 who graduated 39 had died along the way which left us 169 from which to solicit attendees. Unbelievably, we were able to get 107 to commit to return and after the dust had settled the final count was actually 102. Two had fallen and broken arms... one of them came anyway... one had to undergo Chemo and couldn’t make it, and several who felt they would feel better by the time of the reunion, didn’t, so they stayed home. One of our group just had her third heart attack in two years that mandated a stint be inserted just two weeks before the reunion, but still came.

So many times as our hair gets more invisible, our stomachs more visible and our backs a little more stooped, we tend to think we've become just fodder for the grim reaper. We closet ourselves in front of a TV somewhere to watch the History Channel, The Discovery Channel, or America's Funniest Home Videos, ad nauseum... only leaving the house to go to the store for weekly necessities... and even then, forcing ourselves out the door.

We get this idea in our head that we're of no use to anyone and could care less about seeing a roomful of old friends who look and feel the same as we do. What we don't realize is those other people need to see us and we need to see them... to remind us of who we were and WHO WE ARE! There is a synergy that is created when friends come together and re-live some of the derring-do from their past.

Friends of mine related things to me that I had done or said, which naturally I had forgotten, that had made a positive impact on their lives. I couldn't believe how much better their comments made me feel about myself and, of course, I remembered several times when classmates had positively influenced and affected my life as well, and I told them. We were all the better for the exchanging of these past interactions.

Our reunion lasted 4 days and nights and everyone expressed their gratefulness that they had come the distance, however far, to be with us all. Some who had never been stated this was the best time they had experienced for many, many years, and they seemed to walk with a lighter step than we they arrived. Many of us were staying at the same hotel and the ladies would gather, after all the planned festivities, with their PJs, a blanket and a pillow in a meeting room we had rented for the duration, and had a very informal slumber party... lasting until the wee hours. What a great time they had.

So... if you've been contemplating to attend, or not attend, your reunion, do it! You'll never know what's waiting for you among your former friends and classmates... maybe an entirely new lease on, and direction for your life.

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