

Huskies Trails

The Official Newsletter of the Reno High School Alumni Association

This year's Golden Huskies— Class of 1956

Written by Dick Tracy

There we were, 306 of us, seated in the Reno High School gymnasium that evening in June of 1956, dressed in caps and gowns and waiting to cross the stage and receive a diploma

And, it's probably safe to say that not one of us was thinking of where we would be some 50 years down the road, or what twists and turns lay ahead on life's pathway. Charged with adrenalin and hormones, most of us hadn't planned past the day after tomorrow.

Everything we'd done in the past four years—sports, academics, social clubs – was to become a memory overnight. We'd start with a clean slate. Some of us were headed for college, which was not nearly the certainty it is for today's Reno High School graduates. And in many cases we'd be the first person in the family to go on to higher education. Then, meeting as the freshman class at the University of Nevada, we'd be told by the head of the school: "Look to the right of you and to the left of you. Those people will not be graduating with you." And he was right. Many of us entered the workforce just as soon as we could. Some joined the armed forces, aiming at the possibility of getting the G.I. Bill to help us through college after being discharged. Growing up in Reno then was a wonderful time, but there was one catch: People routinely came to "The Divorce Capital" for a short time, bringing their children along. They would come to school a little shell-shocked at the prospect of their parents splitting up, disheartened at being pulled away from their schoolmates at home, and desperately in need of friendship. We'd give it and

form a bond...and suddenly they were gone again. And it hurt.

While 306 of us were there for graduation, there are 422 names of people on our class list, some of whom were with us for short periods of time. Nonetheless, we exploded from graduation and headed in every direction. We became doctors, lawyers, judges, athletes, journalists, bankers, authors, teachers, actors and actresses, dancers and probably most importantly, mothers and fathers, intent upon making life easier for our children than it had been for us.

One of us has been immortalized on a whimsical television comedy about shipwrecked tourists; another has made the NY Times Bestseller list with a little book about peaceful grandmas that started out as a long letter to her infant granddaughter; one man set the world speed record on skis in South America; another man became a military pilot and went on to fly commercial aircraft; a couple lived an exotic lifestyle with their children living on a 53-foot schooner in St. Croix; one of our class members was with the West German border police while the Berlin Wall was built to divide Berlin; several of us became professors at prestigious universities; one man parlayed what he learned in an occupational program that sent him to work at a bank to eventually be president of his own bank; one spent 30 years as a reporter, photographer, columnist and editor at a major metropolitan newspaper in California.

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One man became a professional boxer while another took his lumps as a professional rodeo cowboy; one classmate served on the Board of Directors for the Tautphaus Park Zoological Society in Idaho Falls, Idaho, and among those who joined the armed forces, one of us served in the 1st Special Forces Group (Airborne) in Vietnam.

When our class biographies are published for the class 50th reunion book, many of us will be astounded at the paths we've taken.

Barbara Swart Courtney and Judy Buck Bogich gathered together mementoes for the display case honoring the Class of '56 in the Link Piazzo Alumni Center (itself undreamed of 50 years ago). Seeing it will be a trip to the past for those class members who visit the building.

Among the items on display, including a copy of the Re-Wa-Ne yearbook, there's the A Cappella Choir sweater of Betty Jane Johnson; a picture of the Huskiettes Drill Team (a now-deceased friend told me of her longing to be on that team, and the pain of not being chosen remained even during our 40th reunion); there's a photo of the Girl's Athletic Association basketball team (back when girls were only allowed to dribble three times, then pass!) and GAA Bowling team. Then there's Dick Belaustegui's band sweater, a snapshot of girls attending Girls' State and a picture of Bill Haley and the Comets at the Golden Hotel. Remember our parents' bewilderment at, "Rock Around The Clock?"

There's a Filibusters' gavel (We all remember the armloads of awards won by Roger and Patty Joseph at the annual awards assembly) and a cheerleader's silver megaphone on a silver chain. Atop the case is the trophy won by the football team for beating Las Vegas for the state AAA Championship. There's also a picture of the Nonettes (nine girls, thus the name) singing group and it's permissible to get misty-eyed listening to the CD player version of "Moments to Remember."

Another of the trophies is the large one won for her speaking prowess by Ann Warren (my friendship with Ann goes all the way back to 4th grade at the old Anderson School on South Virginia Street! She could talk the paint off a wall!)

There's also a picture of a group of girls as freshmen, wearing red and blue ribbons in their hair for "Frosh Week." Boys (shown in another photo) had to roll up their pants to their knees and wear ties.

Silly? Yes. Remember Dick Dorworth's trip to Idlewild Pond for not taking part?

And topping it all off is a menu from Ray's Drive-In in Sparks, where we drank malts and milk shakes and shared good times with friends. Plus, we kept an eye on the student teachers who did their socializing in the adults-only confines of the bar! .

Books and movies mostly portray high school years as a happy time, but for most of us nothing could be further from the truth. As we matured our responsibilities grew, and with raging hormones and terrible diets (remember eating those sugar-laden "Cow Pies" in the cafeteria?) we were all fighting a losing battle with acne. The social pressures were intense. Oh, yes, and then we had to go to class and study!

Nevertheless, we made lifelong friends. After four years of being seated behind Sandy Thompson (Bowser) I'm sure I could recognize the back of her head in New York's Times Square on New Year's Eve. And she'd turn around when I called, and give me a hug.

Golden Huskies 50-year reunion show case

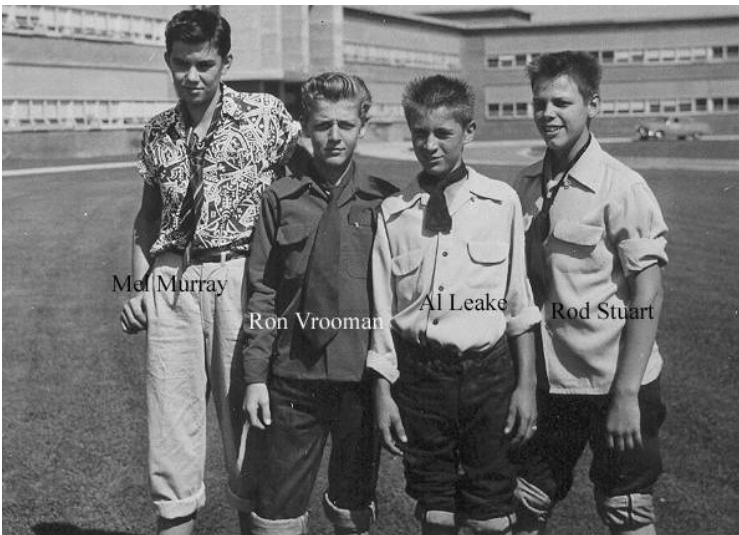
In the Alumni Building



Ray's Drive-In – The early days



Left to Right -
Mel Murray, Ron Vrooman, Al Leake & Rod Stuart



Frosh Week – Class of 1956

Front row Left to right – Harlean Haddock - Sharon Sorensen

Middle row Left to right – Barbara Humes – Charlotte Red – Sandy Greene – Denease Stillmock

Back row Left to right – Deanna Pincheon – Glenda Bankofier Barbara Humphrey

The boys had to wear the beanies and the girls had to wear red and blue ribbons in their hair.

Looking Back

In the last newsletter, I wrote about the Lincoln Highway. It was an article that seemed to be of interest and it brought back memories from the responses I received.

Well, looking to the left, I see a picture of Ray's Drive-In and that brings back memories to me. Ray's was the turn-around spot for the nightly cruises through Reno and Sparks. A place to meet your friends, have a hamburger, sip a soda or milkshake, and listen to good doo-wop music, usually through your AM radio or in my case, a wind up record player that I had in my Ford Model A, and old vinyl records music such as "Shake Rattle & Roll" or "Doggie in the Window"

I remember leaving Ray's and heading back to Reno down Fourth Street following the trolley car tracks all the way to Virginia Street being very careful that those skinny wheels from the Model A didn't pull me one way or the other after crossing the tracks.

There wasn't much between Reno and Sparks in the early fifties, the Half-way Club, lumber mill, a few houses and a couple of bars. Head down Virginia Street to Bud's Burgers or the Eagle Thrifty parking lot, or if we were in the mood, way down Virginia Street to Wayne's Drive-In before we decided to make the return trip to Ray's.

How many of you remember that you had to make sure you did the speed limit once you crossed the Sparks city line, because the only revenue for the police department was from speeding tickets.?

And as you passed the Chuck Wagon, you raised hell to get the attention from the Sparks guys who hung out there. But everything was OK, because you ran around with the Sparks guys and girls too.

Now, if you cruise, you get a ticket. They say these are the good old days, but those good old days were better!

A TOAST TO OLD FRIENDS

Picking my grandson up from school, we were sitting at a stoplight in Grass Valley when he said, "Look at the neat old car, grandpa!"

Facing us was a 1956 blue-and-white Chevy, in immaculate condition. The white-bearded man at the wheel even had a pair of "Fuzzy Dice" hanging from the rear view mirror. The light changed, we passed and I raised my hand in salute to the driver of my dream car. He smiled and waved back.

I remember thinking, back in 1956, that if I could have one of those cars the world would be my oyster. But how would I ever save up \$2,300 working for \$1.35 an hour at the Regal Gas Station? (Well, I never really cared for oysters much, anyway.)

Life was so simple then, and the future stretched on forever. I had my best pals and we were going to the university in fall. Who knew what lay in store? Gene would become a pharmacist; Gary would be an engineer. And I'd do something with newspapers. Big dreams.

At our 45th class reunion, one of the girls who went on to being a teacher at Reno High said that our class (up until then) had the highest grade point average in the school's history.

With my "C" average, I certainly didn't contribute much to that achievement. My friends Don Shevlin and Garth Sibbald and best pal Gary Cooper did. And Lord, I wish they were still with us. I was in the army in Germany when I got a telegram from Eugene Coalwell that our best friend Gary had died following a tragic auto accident, and I sat on my footlocker and wept. Gary had NEVER had a sick day in all the time we were friends.

Why am I here and he's not? How many of us have asked that question?

We learned a lot at Reno High School. We had good teachers and a beautiful campus and lived in a great little city.

But instruction I wish we'd had as seniors was a class on, "What lies ahead?"

Ideally, the school could have asked some recent graduates – people we looked up to - to come back and shed some light on the paths that lay before us.

They might have been able to talk frankly about what it's like to be married, have a baby that wakes you up in the middle of the night, hold down a job, pay bills, attend college classes or pursue career goals.

Instead, we had classes like "Boys' Health" taught by the elegantly-coiffed Ray Cable, whose only venture into the subject we boys wanted MOST to hear about was the warning, "Never play with a girl's herbie!"

I hope that makes you laugh, too.

But, we had to learn all the hard stuff by ourselves, and you can read all about what we've done in the class biographies.

I remember Richard Woods, teaching advanced English, saying he would not repeat his high school years for anything because they were so filled with anxiety and uncertainty. I agree. The reason I was so skinny then (my belly weighs more now than I did in high school) was from being wound so tight by the pressure to belong and be accepted.

But, through it all, I made some friends that I'll be profoundly happy to see again at our 50th reunion. Let's raise our glasses to each other, and to those who can't be with us.

Dick Tracy



DO YOU REMEMBER THESE?

By Karl Breckenridge



Why in the world would the RHS Alumni Association ask a guy who came to the school as a lowly freshman in 1955 to write about the Class of '56? "Take a 1956 Re-Wa-Ne home and come back with 960 words, double-spaced, 12-point in Garamond type. Mention a few names and the joints we went to. You'll follow Dick Tracy's column and he's damn good, but try anyway."

Yeah – mention a few names, like I want everyone I *don't* mention to be hot at me, the freshman kid writing about the mighty seniors who got to stand around at the end of the cafeteria hallway every morning before 1st period. And like I can sort out your ladies' married names after 50 years. I could mention Jim Blakely, my lifelong friend as dear as a brother, who beefs that I never mentioned him in a column. Well there it is, Jimmy, now reading this by his pool in Redwood City. My childhood neighbors, like Hugh Barnhill and John Brown and Mary Morton and Linda Barton and Danny Lindeman and John Metzker – one of the brightest writers I know, even to this day. And Lauren House, the Music Man. We can't Skip Robley Hansen, the Thespian, back then president of the Pep Club. Fritsi Hancock and Charlotte Jones who ran the Huskie Haven, our late '59 classmate Tom Jensen on that board as a freshman.

Betty Chism, possibly the only Class of '56 member to appear on a local billboard. Dale Record was the Snow Princess in your Senior Assembly; I have a vivid memory of a shadowy photo of Dale and Mickey McBride dancing a graceful *pas-de-deux* in a ballet production. The '56 Huskiette Assembly might have been the last at RHS to feature dancers in blackface (hell, we couldn't even sing South Pacific's "Nothing like a *dame*" in our Senior Assembly in 1959.) You put on "Magnificent Obsession" as the Senior Class play; I can't tell from the yearbook who played the Jane Wyman and Rock Hudson roles. Two powerhouse ladies were Jeanie Freeman and Nina Freedman and we young frosh had trouble keeping their names straight (Nina was the Red & Blue editor that wisely never let me write in it.) Alex Kanwetz, Cal Pettengill and Larry Pizorno, now tireless workers on the Alumni Association. In the sports section of the yearbook, a ski team photo with no Dick Dorworth pictured – how come? We have to include coach Ham Robb, a great guy; I see Dick Trachok and Bob Benson frequently, Bob looking like a 50-year old thanks to heavy time at St. Mary's Gym, hope you see them both at your reunion.

Cars...cars...how 'bout Dee Slaven's roadster, whatever it was that her dad built for her, custom from the ground up, or Dawn Wells' robin's-egg blue '51 Chevy convertible with the plaid ragtop? Or Bob Collup's chopped-and-channeled '48 Mercury? Were they predestined for a Hot August Nights poster or what, with a Sammy Kane-type dude driving and a Trish Seifert-chick in a poodle skirt alongside... In the '56 Re-Wa-Ne, another neat ride: Delivering football queen Kay Gadda to the halftime award ceremony was a black-and-white Buick Riviera ragtop (All-American fullback Tom Clark, sidelined by an injury, crowned Kay; the Class of '59 remembers Kay as one of the friendliest seniors in her class, making us welcome in our early weeks at RHS.)

Anybody remember the "talking page" of your yearbook, the first such ever done? Anyone still have one? Teachers John Marean (physics), John Tellashia (music) and Roger Joseph (speech) put that little gem together, 50 years before the current Re-Wa-Ne's photo CD, a yearbook that goes for about \$85, I'm told. Roger's son, Roger the Younger, was a superstar at debate and forensics, and I have to include his sister, Patty Joseph (RHS '57), another great speaker. Remember the Hi-Fi's quartette (Paul Smith, Lauren House, David Osborne and Paul Campbell)? Remember when *Hi-Fi* records was the hot buzzword? Or do you even remember *records*? (As I write this Tower Records, about to bite the dust, is getting even music CDs off their shelves – go download your Bill Haley and the Comets off the web.)

Loni Gravelle ran the 3-Arts Club, Loni one of several seniors including Judy James, Barbara Swart, Anita VreNon, Olivia Forsythe, Darla Aimone and Barbara Ruark who many frosh guys would have liked to invite us to the T.W.I.R.P Dance – The Woman Is Requested to Pay – a Huskie Haven Sadie Hawkins-type affair at the California Building early in our freshman year. Dream on... On that score, your '56 ladies nominated Fred Black and Russ Pike as the Best Looking; the aforementioned James and Hancock joined Jim Gardner and Jerry Greensweig as having the Best Line. We have to include Dan Sobrio, a great guy who excelled in the ROTC program, because he's included in your yearbook as Commissioner of the Student Patrol. What in the world was that? And, who was Togar, the Huskie mascot in the yearbook, that we never heard of since? Togar? We can't go to press without including Noel Manoukian and Tom Sloan, your fall and spring class presidents, and should note that in an old basketball team photo Alex Kanwetz was seen, or not seen, hiding behind Tom. Go figure.

Well, I've done what I didn't want to do and used names – but 'way too few names at that – to help bring back a few memories, the view from the freshman class toward a wonderful group of friends. And I'm sure my Class of 1959 joins me in wishing all 306 of you a Golden reunion with many reunions on the horizon, and we thank the Class of '56 for the memories that you forged for those of us who followed. (*whoops...Karl remembered after writing this yarn that Kay Gadda and Alex Kamwetz were in the class of 1957!*)

And thanks to The Statler Brothers' for this column's head



President's Message

At the risk of repeating myself, there are lots of exciting things going on in your association. This newsletter will bring you up to date on all the activities.

Our Board of Trustees is now up to it's full compliment with the recent and very welcome addition of Cal Pettengill. However, the terms of five members are completed in December of this year. Four of those trustees can stand for re-election if they choose to do so. Trustee Gloria Garaventa has been chosen to chair the Elections Committee. It will be up to them to select a list of candidates to be presented to the board for elections in November. If any of you readers are interested in running for a trustee position, please contact Gloria at 826-4950.

After several years and many hours of endeavor on the part of Jerry Fenwick and his By-law Committee, we finally have an up to date set of by-laws and a new manual on policies and procedures.

Daryl and I have attended the Reno High Convocation Night in May and were happy to present scholarship awards to Milad Oliaee who will be attending the University of Nevada in the fall, and Skylar Dillon who has decided to begin her college career at U.C. in Berkley. The present awards are seven hundred fifty dollars each. However, our goal is to increase that amount. At a recent Board of Trustees meeting, they voted to put the proceeds from donations received for yearbooks, T-shirts, and caps into our scholarship fund. So, if you are in the need for any of the above items, please contact us.

Our curator Grace Fujii and her group of volunteers continue to put in many hours cataloguing and working on all the memorabilia that is coming into the building.

We still need volunteers to help us on Fridays and Saturdays. It's fun and easy! Please contact us if you are interested in helping. We are attracting more former members and visitors all the time. Are you aware that to our knowledge we are the only high school alumni association in the United States lucky enough to have our own separate building to house memorabilia and conduct meetings?

This is the summer of class reunions. A large portion of this newsletter is dedicated to the

Class of 1956 who is celebrating fifty years in August. The classes of 1946, 1951, 1966, 1976, 1986, and 1996 are also getting together. Please urge returning members to join our association and visit the Alumni Center while they are here.

Special thanks go to our former president and trustee Joe Granata, and Neal Cobb, Chairman of the Communications Committee for working on this edition of "Huskies Trails."

Please call me if you have any comments or suggestions for improving our association. I always enjoy hearing from you.

RHSAA President
Betty Jo Baker

Educational Humor

A Reno High School English teacher gave an impromptu test one day. He gave the students a sentence to write told them to punctuate it properly. The boys wrote, "Woman, without her man, is nothing." The girls wrote, "Woman, without her, man is nothing."

A young student reported for a final examination that consisted of only true/false questions. The student took a seat in the hall, stared at the test for five minutes, removed a coin from his pocket and started tossing the coin and marking the answer sheet. Heads meant true, tails meant false. The young student finished the exam in 30 minutes, while the rest of the class was sweating it out. Suddenly, during the last few minutes, the young student began desperately throwing the coin and sweating profusely. The moderator, alarmed, approached the student and asked what was going on. "Well, I finished the exam in half an hour," said the student, "but I thought I ought to recheck my answers."

Was there a ghost in the basement of Reno High School?

By Joe Granata



Kookie, the head custodian, would walk through the basement of Reno High School and many times, he felt like something was amiss. One day he was looking for that box he saved for the alumni building, and he knew that he had put it on the shelf above the trophies, but it wasn't there. As Kookie searched for the box, he found it in another room. This isn't the first time this has happened, so he wasn't too concerned. In a joking manner, he said to me, "I wonder if there is a ghost down here. I laughed and that was the end of it.

A couple of months later, I found an article on the web that was interesting. Lets take a walk back through time to September 11, 1931. Reno Police Officer Ross Peterson was serving as watchman at Reno High School on West Street during the first few days of the school year, when he encountered two suspects that had broken into the school building. As Officer Peterson approached them, the suspects opened fire and Officer Peterson responded in an ensuing gun battle. Officer Peterson was hit, but managed to shoot both suspects, killing one and wounding the other who managed to escape never to be found. Officer Peterson died in that gun battle on that fateful day in 1931.

How, you ask, would that ghost have any connection to the new Reno High School? Maybe this is how it happened.

In September of 1951 when the new school was opened, many artifacts, books, supplies and memorabilia from the 1912 school were brought over and stored in the basement of the new Reno High School. When the new Reno High School Alumni Building opened, we brought much of that memorabilia over to our museum to showcase for the future alumni.

There have been times when strange things have happened in the new building, like cold soda's missing from the refrigerator on a hot day!

Could that surreal old ghost be haunting the Alumni Building?

Maybe!

Life Memberships

RHSAA members are taking advantage of a new payment option, in which they may simply check the appropriate box on their dues letter, then write a check to cover one, two, three or five years.

Not only does the new system reduce paperwork for members, but it will "save a ton of data entry," according to VP/Membership Chair Len Crocker.

Life Memberships apparently are becoming more attractive, too, with registration at that level by 1955 graduate Leonard Mardian of Las Vegas and his wife, Susan. They have become Life Members number 96 and 97, just in time to fill the slots on a brand-new display board mounted just inside the main room.

Number 95 just was assigned to affable Kaz "Kookie" Rekucki when he retired from his post as head of maintenance at the Booth Street campus. The Life Membership was voted to Rekucki by the Board in recognition of his active support of the Association that began with occupation of the Alumni Center/Museum in December 1999.

"Kookie" stepped forward almost immediately to incoming President Joe Granata with an offer of scholastic and academic trophies and plaques that were in storage in the school, including that great collection of large class photos that adorns two facing walls of the Alumni Center.

The Association's database now contains 11,450 profiles listing the men and women who have attended Reno High School or served on its faculty or staff. Although many of the earlier profiles are still "bare bones" with little more than a name and class year, more and more now being completed as paid membership rose to 737, as reported during the Board's June meeting.





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