



Musings on a 50th Reunion

BY MICHAEL SHINDLER, PRESIDENT

I recently returned from my 50th high school reunion. That trip (to New Orleans, where I grew up and attended Isidore Newman High School) has caused me to reflect on a few things, stemming from the celebration of the 50th anniversary of a fairly significant event and some reconnections at the event itself.

Of a class of about 75 or 80 (some “alumni” are considered to be part of our class though they did not graduate or, even, attend high school with us), about 40 were present for some or all of the weekend’s festivities. That kind of turnout strikes me as fairly high (considering that only 5 people signed up for the celebration of our 40th law school reunion).

I spoke with some people more in one weekend than I did through four years of high school, caught up with old friends and acquaintances and realized several things from the point of view of a 67-year old. Fifty years provides a good deal of perspective and the evening of most playing fields. We have lost but four members of our graduating class, and they were missed at the reunion.

The pettiness and inanity of 17 and 18 year-olds and the attendant issues that high schoolers have – boys and girls, girls and boys, jocks, nerds (though that term was not quite ascendant in the late ‘60s), hippies and stoners, rich and, well, for Newman, less-rich – were simply absent during the reunion. At our ages now, we are more alike than ever -- either in or considering retirement; mostly all on Medicare, some on Social Security; likely taking one or more meds, statins or steroids for blood pressure, cholesterol, thyroid (hypo- or hyper), arthritis or heart disease. Some or more have had hips, knees or other joints replaced. And, we are or are likely to be grandparents; there is nothing like a three-year old banging on your door asking, **“Poppop and Didi, where are you?”** to provide perspective on how insignificant those challenges of being 17- and 18-year old children were, though, admittedly, not at the time.

Walking the same grounds – though largely expanded in 50 years – that I trod then, even the old boys’ locker room, which smells no better but, surprisingly, not much worse than it did in 1969, invites reflection on how prepared we might have been for college and, in my case, law school (some 50+% of our class became either doctors or lawyers). The answer: **quite well**. Whether it prepared us for life over the last 50 years is a deeper question, whose answer is far more related to our parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings and cousins and friends made and lost over 50 years. However,

one answer to that question is simple – if we expected a high school to prepare us for adult life, then our expectations were misplaced.

Perhaps, being a graduate of a small, private (some would say “elite”) college prep school is itself a signpost for how we’d turn out 50 years later; others might say that the entry requirements those many years ago selected people expected to be achievers, and we were merely fulfilling the expectations that such selection imposed upon us. Regardless, though high school may seem to denote idyllic times, I expect to have many more productive years ahead of me, I feel as if I still have something to add to the world I inhabit, and I don’t plan to stop working anytime soon.

I’d like to think my halcyon days remain in the future.