

Jim's Perspective...

Memories - Timeless Treasures of the Heart

It was a special gathering a couple of weeks ago. Six men, now all about 74 years old, got together and reminisced about our time together when we were 15 - 16 years old. I have known one of the six men since kindergarten! Four of us (including me) get together from time to time here in Lincoln. One of our group came back to Lincoln from Portland, Oregon to attend a University of Nebraska College of Architecture event, and he suggested the six of us get together for an afternoon of socializing and fun!

At some point during our conversation, one of the men shared how lucky he felt to be friends with six young boys who all stayed together and were just a lot of fun to be with for many years. He said the companionship amongst the six of us is what helped him so much as he found his way through life in junior high and high school. All of us expressed the same feelings about our time together as boys. Everyone in the group affirmed how helpful our friendship was in living day-to-day in junior high and high school. This kind expression of friendship amongst us, was one of the highlights of our afternoon party.

Football Practice

Traditionally, Pius X High School (this was the only Catholic high school in Lincoln, which we all attended) football always held a scrimmage between the varsity squad and the junior varsity, or reserve squad. It was held early in the football season so that the younger junior varsity players could get a sense of what they needed to do, to be a starter on the varsity football team. All of us played football. We were laughing about what we remember when we were on junior varsity and had to play the first-string, varsity football team. Two of our group were in the defensive line, and once the ball was snapped, the offensive tackles simply ran over or picked up the defensive linemen and threw them to the ground. We were all laughing about how badly we felt after that scrimmage! Easy to look back on it now, and laugh!

Our first automobiles

One of us had an old Nash Rambler which we called "Mabel" because somehow, some of the metal wording on the outside of this sedan had been scrambled around so that it spelled the word "Mable." My friends were laughing at me, because I had a four-door 1964 Chevy Corvair. Consumer activist, Ralph Nader, declared this GM auto as "unsafe at any speed." There was a metal gear shift stick that stuck out from the dash board which is what was used to shift gears. My car was an automatic transmission, so I didn't have to use this gear shift contraption too much. None of us wore seat-belts. A lot of the old cars didn't have seat belts. One of the guys in our group was laughing, because his old car had two front seats in which the upper part of the seat could be dropped down backwards so that it was level with the bottom of the back seat. Of course we were all laughing about how useful this was when out on a date with your girlfriend!

PCCW

We had a secret term that only our group of guys knew what it meant. We always laughed about our invention of this symbolic term! I don't think I am violating any of our "group rules" or our secrets that we have maintained over the years by revealing what this means. So, PCCW means, "Pretty Cute Catholic Woman." If we were talking about a group of girls, of course the last word would be "Women."

The Holies

Back in the 1960's cigarette smoking was very common. It was a habit resulting from World War II. New military personnel were given free cigarettes while on duty in combat. They had access to all the cigarettes they wanted. My information about this comes from my dad who was a heavy smoker and explained that he started smoking when he boarded his U.S. Navy destroyer, the USS Hopewell. He simply had access to all the cigarettes that he ever wanted. So many boys my age in the mid to late 1960's took up smoking too, just like their fathers did, although we had to pay for the cigarettes. However, my group of friends at Holy Family Grade School (now Cathedral of the Risen Christ Grade School) never smoked. None of us! Because of this peculiar position about smoking, soon after we started school at Pius X High School, the girls started referring to us as "The Holies." This description of us was further encouraged by the girls because we were also the only boys' choir at any Catholic church located in Lincoln and in the Lincoln Diocese. The other Catholic churches in Lincoln all had a girls' choir. At our get-together recently, we all laughed about this, knowing that we did drink alcohol before we reached the legal age to drink. So maybe we weren't quite as holy as the girls suggested!

It was a lot of fun to see, and visit with all of these long-time friends! It was so interesting in that I immediately remembered many of the mannerisms, personal traits and characteristics of my wonderful friends from long ago. How amazing that all of these men still behaved, looked and sounded just as they did in the 1960's! Each of them unique! Isn't it amazing how every individual human being is composed of their own characteristics and that no two humans are the same. I guess one could argue that maybe twins are the same, but I think that is more applicable to physical appearance than how they speak, laugh and their mannerisms exhibited when socializing with a group of their peers. I just think life itself is so unique to each person. I guess it keeps things interesting!

Our afternoon together included many quick comments about life in the sixties. Men with long hair, Hippies everywhere (bell bottom pants, flowered shirts), all of which was a rebellion against the concept of "military bearing." Pay phones; cruising in cars down South Street between Kings Drive Inn and Dale Brook Drive Inn on a Saturday night; hitchhiking; 30 cents a gallon for regular gasoline; full-service gas stations (a gas station employee who filled your car with gas); going often to a busy library; three T.V. channels; black and white T.V.'s; the first super bowl game; "Jumpin' Jack Flash," by The Rolling Stones.

To conclude, I want to mention one other aspect of life that is so interesting and fulfilling. Each of us, from time to time, will reminisce about the past. How amazing that the brain can dredge up so many of our past experiences! In the gathering of our group, reminiscing about the past

was the main source of our conversation together. But it also arose for me at a recent event involving our granddaughter Anne. She is in a dance studio and the studio held a dance recital recently at the Orpheum Theatre in downtown Omaha. As you may know, the Orpheum Theater was built a long time ago, and it is a very unique and ornate theater. Sitting there, I am suddenly reminiscing about being there at past events. I remember going to the Orpheum Theatre with Janie's sister and her husband to see the play Phantom of the Opera. I remember too, going there once with my parents, but I can't remember what performance we saw.

And so, sit back, relax, and drift back to many years ago, and reminisce about times gone by. Smile. How much fun we all had - once upon a time - and how many more fond memories await us! Life is good!

The Young Boys - The Holies - Together Again - Hooray!



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