

## PCHS ALL-SCHOOL REUNION

WORDS FROM THE CLASS OF 1961 – David McCasland

Sunday - October 30, 2011

Good afternoon and thank you for this opportunity to say a few words on behalf of the Class of 1961.

When we walked off the football field after graduation, I don't recall anyone saying, "You know, I just can't wait for our 50<sup>th</sup> reunion." But here we are, and it's great to be here today.

In 1976, Ralph Keyes wrote a book titled, "Is There Life After High School?" His premise was that for decades, high school was the common experience of teenagers in America. Although the schools varied widely in size, location and student population, almost everyone growing up in the United States went to high school somewhere. We went to high school here.

When this new building opened in September 1958, we entered as the sophomore class who benefited from an academic or administrative act of fate. The previous year we had been "9<sup>th</sup> grade seniors" in junior high and with the change to a four year high school, we escaped ever being the freshman class at Putnam City High School.

Like every group of sophomores, we set about trying to discover who we were and who we were going to be. Our successes were not on a grand scale, but they were important to us – an athletic victory, an A on a test or gratitude for a passing grade, a greeting in the hall from an upperclassman and finally, a long awaited driver's license.

Our disappointments and heartbreaks, no matter how deep and painful, often remained private and personal, unknown to others and not shared with them. It would be nearly a decade before a new generation

rejected the motto “Grin and bear it” in favor of “Tell it like it is” and “Let it all hang out.”

Like most teenagers, our world was not the world of our parents. The war in Korea had ended when most of us were ten years old. When the Russians beat us into space with Sputnik, we knew we were supposed to be alarmed but we weren't sure why. Most world or national events escaped us, but we were stunned and saddened when a plane crash in February 1959 took the lives of Ritchie Valens, Buddy Holly and the Big Bopper. A dozen years later Don McLean recorded “American Pie” and sang about – The Day the Music Died.

As juniors we spent a few days answering questions about what we knew, how we felt and where we hoped to go in life. Project Talent tested some 400,000 high school students – the largest research survey of high school students ever conducted in the US. I doubt that we recall much of what we said about our hopes and dreams, but how could we have possibly known the roads we would travel, the twists and turns over the next fifty years.

We remember teachers who applied the board of education to our seat of learning. Others shaped us with a word of encouragement, a love for their subject and having the patience to hang in there and help us grow up.

We were eager to be seniors and finally we were. And it was fun. Each day was a step closer to the doorway into a wider place. Was difficult to clean out our lockers and leave it all behind? I don't think so. If we had been given the opportunity to have another senior year, I don't believe any of us would have stayed.

In the book “Is There Life After High School?” Ralph Keyes goes on to say that for almost everyone, high school was not a carefree, happy-go-

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lucky time. Rather, it was filled with a lot of angst, uncertainty and anxiety. His research found that to be true for people all along what might be called the popularity scale.

Recently I read an article written by a woman after attending her 30<sup>th</sup> college reunion. At first she and her friends talked only about what everyone looked like after three decades and how they had changed. But as the weekend progressed, she said this: “When we realized that time had taken something from each of us, and given some of it back in places we didn’t particularly want it, we stopped talking about looks and began talking about life.”

And perhaps that’s why we are here. To renew friendships and talk about each others lives. Not only where we’ve been, but where we’re going. The past is a great place to visit – it’s not a good place to live. Neuritis, neuralgia and nostalgia can become a heavy burden

A man I respect a great deal often said: I’ve learned two things in life: First, the longer I live the older I get. Second, If it’s not one thing, it’s the same thing.

What have we learned? After 50 years, I suspect that we’re still learning. Still working to figure it out.

Learning that there is redemption in life, there is forgiveness from God and from others.

There is forgiveness that we can and must give to others. Dr. Lewis Smedes said: “To forgive is to set a prisoner free and then discover that the prisoner was you.”

Learning that there is reconciliation and healing in the most difficult situations.

And there is hope.

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Perhaps the most important work remaining for us may be with our families, friends and those who need a kind word and a reason to go on living.

Myra Brooks Welch said it so well in her poem:

'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer  
thought it scarcely worth his while  
To waste much time on the old violin,  
But he held it up with a smile.  
"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,  
"Who'll start the bidding for me?  
A dollar, a dollar, then, two! Only two?  
Two dollars, and who'll make it three?  
Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;  
Going for three . . ." But no,  
From the room, far back, a grey-haired man  
Came forward and picked up the bow;  
Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,  
And tightening the loosened strings,  
He played a melody pure and sweet  
As a caroling angel sings.

The music ceased, and the auctioneer,  
In a voice that was quiet and low, said:  
"Now, what am I bid for the old violin?"  
And he held it up with the bow.  
"A thousand dollars. and who'll make it two?"

"Two thousand! And who'll make it three?  
"Three thousand, once; three thousand, twice;  
And going and gone." said he.

The people cheered, but some of them cried,  
"We do not understand, what changed its worth?"  
Swift came the reply:  
"The Touch Of The Master's Hand."

And many a man with life out of tune,  
And battered and scarred by sin,  
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,  
Much like the old violin.  
A 'mess of potage,' a glass of wine;  
A game - and he travels on.  
He's 'going' once, and 'going' twice,  
He's 'going' and almost 'gone'.  
But the Master comes and the foolish crowd  
Never can quite understand  
The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought  
By the touch of the Master's Hand.

On behalf of The Class of 1961, thank you, God Bless you, and GO  
PIRATES!!

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