

Greetings from the Class of 1961 60th Reunion Committee

By Tana Bowen Roberts

After the 50th Reunion in 2011, many committee members said that would be our last. Working on these reunions since the 10th Reunion in 1971, the 15th held at the Kennedy Center on East Lake Avenue, the 25th held at the Coconut Grove in Santa Cruz, a 35th, 40th, 45th, 50th and 55th have all been a labor of love and torture. The committee has mostly consisted of the same people and by the 50th, most were in burn out. No one realizes the worries and concerns connected with putting a reunion together unless you have been on the committee. First of all, we had no money in the class bank account. We all had to pay our money ahead of time so we could reserve an event center and pay for postage. Arranging committee meetings and sharing ideas started months before the event. Tracking and contacting classmates each time was a giant undertaking. We live in a mobile society and so many graduates had scattered across the whole country.

There was an impromptu get together for the 55th Reunion in 2016. Classmate Charlie Johnston said we had to have some sort of a reunion. We used social media and email to notify as many people as we could. There was no searching for lost classmates and no mass mailings. We held the event at the Corralitos Community Center with as little fanfare as possible. Everyone who attended brought a sack lunch and most of our time together was spent visiting and reminiscing. We were together at the encouragement of Charlie and he himself was unable to attend due to health issues.

David Leippe who keeps the class rosters of current addresses and rosters of those who have died contacted me and said he had received some inquiries about a 60th reunion. I told him that a few people had asked me if anything was being planned. After some soul searching, we decided that a survey might give us an idea about the success of a 60th reunion. Dave designed a survey questionnaire and emailed the survey to those who had provided email addresses. Work began on trying to locate lost classmates and those who had changed locations since 2011. We spent hours making phone calls and searching the internet for clues to the whereabouts of these classmates. After two survey mailings, we had a response of about 80 classmates who said they would be interested in attending. This set the planning in motion.

The problem we hit head-on was the fact the State of California was on a strict Covid lockdown and it was impossible to make

reservations at possible event locations until June 15, 2021. I contacted three locations and Severino's Restaurant/Seacliff Inn event coordinator responded and worked with me to set up the date of October 9th for the event. A day time event from 10:00 am to 2:30 pm was planned and they provided several choices of meals that we could order. Invitations were mailed by July 1st in hopes that people would have enough time to make arrangements for travel and lodging. I was in contact with Barbara Miller Holt who lives in Reno, NV who helped with the menu and agreed to make the name badges. Dave printed all the invitations and with the help of my husband and granddaughter we licked lots of envelopes and put on stamps. Some of the invitations were returned as undeliverable so I went on the hunt again trying to get the invitations sent to the right address.

We had to guarantee \$4000 in food for the day so there would be no charge for the use of the banquet room. We were hoping for at least 100 in attendance to meet the guarantee. I had to put a deposit of half the cost of the event on my personal credit card. Reservations began to trickle in and we got close to 80 reservations. Not the 100 we hoped for but enough to cover most of the cost. Then we had 7 people cancel because of health issues and Covid isolation. We had a late reservation a week before the event and another two days before the event. Class Treasurer, Sharon Kusanovich Stevinson was unable to attend but came to my room at the hotel to sign a Certificate of Recognition for Charlie Johnston who was nominated to the Watsonville High School Hall of Fame and she also brought the class banner for us to hang one last time.

The 60th Reunion actually started at 9:00 am with several classmates showing up to help set up for the event while the banquet room was being prepared by the banquet room crew. Thanks Sharon Worley Fry and Frank Seman for picking up the "61" helium balloons. We were ready to welcome the rest of our friends at 10:00 am with sweet rolls, croissants, and fresh fruit and coffee and tea to start the day.

There were lots of hugs and smiles and questioning looks at the name tags to see who was who. We saw lots of grey hair, no hair or long hair on some of the fellas, wrinkles from smiles and worries, hearing aids, and a cane or two. What did we expect? We are all getting close to the old age of 80 and I think we all looked pretty good.

Dave Leippe led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance. Everyone stood and honored the flag propped in the corner of the room. I gave a welcome speech right before lunch and Susan Pitts Dodge offered the blessing of the food.

About half way through the speech the door to the kitchen that read "Employees Only" flew open and a man pushing a walker came marching in followed by his wife. I looked at them and wondered who they were. I didn't connect them to any of the people I knew was attending. The man and woman went to the back of the room and found a seat at one of the tables. Someone sitting at that table told them to go out on the patio to get their name tag. There was no name tag for them but they did pick up a card for their lunch choice. Later in the day I saw them talking to others in the crowd and looking at the Memory Boards we displayed. I finally heard that they were from Watsonville High School Class of 1955. They were at the wrong reunion. Immediately I named them the "Reunion Crashers". It was just about the highlight of our day. Later I found out that the Class of 1955 was having a reunion at Seascape Resort and ours was at Seacliff Inn. I'll bet they were surprised when no one looked familiar to them. Not sure if they ever made it to the right reunion, but they had lunch with us.

All in all, the reunion was a success. This will be the last reunion of the Class of 1961. The class banner is being sent to Watsonville High School for their archives. We will continue to update the rosters and the class website will be maintained. Thanks to everyone who helped set up and tear down. Our class was always full of doers and helpers.

Until we meet again,
Tana Bowen Roberts