

Many Special Things about the Class of '54

We kinda' knew we were a special group of kids, but now that we're all grown up, it's pretty clear we're a special group of adults also. Several classmates have written following the first newsletter asking for "more" and we'll try to come up with enough information to help make our 50th reunion well worth attending.

As you know, the gathering of Flying Eagles at the Eagles' Landing in our hometown will be October 1 – 3, 2004. Several people have been working on different parts of the plan for the past few months and there are high hopes a lot of folks will find their way back to Beckley for that weekend.

Plans for the reunion weekend

Planning is underway for several activities for the reunion weekend. Part of the planning is "structured" but most of it is left open for informal gathering and mixing.

At reunion central.....

Hotel rooms have been blocked at the Country Inn (20) and Microtel (5), next to each other at the Harper Road exit of the interstate. There are several more hotels in the area, all convenient to the Country Inn and to Tamarack, where the Saturday night highlight dinner and dance will be held at 6 p.m. Local musicians who form The New River Jazz Band, most who are former WWHS band members, will provide music.

Hosts for the evening will be Larry Hawks and his recent bride, Shirley Williams.

Saturday afternoon will provide a neat opportunity to visit our old school; WWHS now is Park Middle School, in case you didn't know. They will open the school for us to roam the halls.

A hospitality room will be open at the Country Inn beginning at 3 p.m. Friday Oct. 1. There will be snacks and soft drinks, and plenty of room for chatting and reminiscing.

It's kind of amazing how we've spread out during these years, and the different paths we've taken show that we have collectively made a great contribution to our generation. Looking back on our times, it makes the mind spin to think we graduated just nine years after the end of World War II, and yet it seemed so distant back then.

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Reunion weekend highlights

Friday – Check in starts at 3 p.m. with socializing at the Country Inn hospitality suites. Light refreshments provided.

Informal dinner and entertaining evening at the Black Knight Country Club.

Saturday afternoon – tour our school

Saturday night – Dinner/dance at the Convention Center at Tamarack. Music provided by local musicians, most of who were graduates of WWHS.

Sunday morning – Dutch treat breakfast at Tamarack. The hospitality room will remain open after the breakfast.

Friday night is for memories and some fun

Friday night will be hard for you to forget because it is planned around remembering! It will be an informal evening (including how you dress – jeans are fine) at the Black Knight Country Club where we'll have an evening of pasta in an Italian restaurant setting – checkered table clothes and all.

We'll have memorabilia tables, videos of games our teams played, some sports memories from our championship seasons, the trophies we won, and some informal comments. We will also recognize our classmates who have passed away, some 40 or so of them are deceased.

And we'll have a couple of surprises!

The memorabilia tables will be open for you to place some things you might have among your collections to remind you of those years. Please bring pictures or other items you'd like to show your classmates.

Classmates with special hobbies and skills are being asked to donate items for a silent auction. The funds collected from the auction will be donated to the Beckley Area Foundation in memory of our classmates who have died and in the name of the Class of 1954. If you have an item for the auction please let us know.

Jessie Davis Dew is coordinating the evening, assisted by Agnes Reeder Keatley, Jim Bryson, Betty Sallack Wilson and Norm Haddad.

This is a very casual night.... dress accordingly.

(See page four – **What is a silent auction?**)

News about our classmates....

Dom Gaziano and his wife, Rosalie, are the proud parents of five sons, four are physicians, one a lawyer with the Heritage Foundation.

Among the boys there was a Rhodes Scholar, two Truman Scholars, and now two Cardiologists at Harvard. One son won a Presidential Award for being one of 14 individuals in promising research careers..

Dom has been Chief of Medicine and Clinical professor in Pulmonary Diseases, and now is semi-retired. Rosalie has written two books, and was named National Mother of the Year in 2002, which makes family very important to both of them. They have 9 grandchildren, and all 20 family members gathered in the Charleston family home last Christmas.

It was a pleasant surprise to receive the Eagles' Landing! We certainly enjoyed reading and hearing about our classmates. Pleased to hear several are in Florida. So says **Raymond Fields**, and his wife, **Shelba (Minks)**. They will celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary September 19 this year.

They lived in Hanover, Pennsylvania 1954 - 1998 (except 6 years in White Sulphur Springs, WV with Hanover Shoes (Raymond) and at the Greenbrier Hotel (Shelba). They retired in 1998 and moved to Sun City Center, FL, and are in good health and enjoying the sunshine. They have a son, 35 years old who lives in nearby St. Pete, just over the bridge from Sun City.

They plan to be at the reunion and they go to Beckley at least once a year to visit family.

After high school **Delsie Hatcher Zornes** moved to Cleveland, OH and within a few years on to Springfield, Missouri. There is no place like home, so she returned to Beckley in 1968 and was fortunate to obtain a position with the federal government. After a successful career with the Department of Veterans Affairs in Beckley, she retired in March 2003 and now enjoys the "retirement life". She stays active by bowling, traveling (cruises), gardening, and cake decorating.

Norm Haddad is one of the many grads now living in Florida, where he has lived for most of the past 43 years. After graduating from Marshall, and having a tour in the Army, he went into the business world in sales, employee communication and human resources for Chrysler, General Electric, Eckerd Drug, and the West Company.

His last business years were owning and operating his own HR consulting business. He was also instrumental in getting a Major League Baseball team to come to St. Petersburg, the Tampa Bay Devil Rays.

Norm married Jo Anne, a FL native, and they have two sons and five grandchildren. They travel a lot, and escape the St. Petersburg heat to enjoy cool summers in the NC mountains.

Several classmates gathered for a celebratory dinner May 25 at Black Knight Country Club. What were they celebrating, you ask? That was the anniversary of our graduation ceremony – 50 years ago, do you remember that night? They had a nice crowd, and just enjoyed being together and chatting. Patsy Herrald took the ball from a suggestion from Nancy Carol Culicerto and organized the event.

Gloria Vila Tucker, like the rest of us, finds it difficult to believe that we've been out of school for 50 years. She and her husband, Wayne, have been retired for five years. She worked at Beckley-Stratton Middle School for 28 years.

Gloria spends time in her yard working, and with her grandchildren, playing. They have two daughters.

She sees a few classmates once in a while, but is amazed that she doesn't run into more while living in a small town. She hopes to see them at the reunion.

You can't beat the Flying Eagles....

You can't beat the Beckley team

Agnes Reeder Keatley is known as the "Shady Lady" tho her heart is still in Beckley, and is being considered a "historical landmark" of the area.

She spent 20 years in banking, eight as a realtor, and owned a Ladies Consignment shop for four years. Now, she still works a lot but she's quit working for pay and does it for free – including room and board. She spends a lot of time with her church, and at the hospital doing volunteer work, as well as taking care of home and the dogs, with husband, Bunk.

Agnes went back to school at Mountain State University and is studying writing, which has become her hobby and her newest challenge.

More stuff about some of us –

Ann Richmond Rodgers (husband Buck) is the mother of two and grandmother of three. After being a stay-at-home Mom, she embarked on a career, working at Sunset Memorial Park and Highlawn Memorial Park, retiring last year. Recently she made a huge move - from a large house to a cozy apartment.

Patsy Talbert Herral and her late husband, Lionel, have three children and had eight grandchildren, one is deceased. Patsy received a BS in Education in 1980 and was a substitute teacher for 14 years. She now spends her time socializing with family and friends and recently became a great-grandmother.

Nancy Carol Forren Culicerto, married Pete Culicerto (Class of '53) and is the mother of nine children, grandmother of 30 and great-grandmother of one. WHEW! Counting in-laws, she has 51 each year for Thanksgiving. Since Pete's retirement as coach at WWHS, they spend time with their children; spend time in Florida and at their retreat in Nicholas County.

Connie Sue Boitnott Ball worked as an RN at Pinecrest Hospital for 30 years, retiring in 2000. She and husband (Jack, deceased) have one daughter, Dana. Connie has returned to her "roots" and now lives in her childhood home on Vine St.

Anne Springer Miller, (husband, John Earl, deceased) is the mother of three, grandmother of 10 and great-grandmother of four. She retired from the Red Cross, and now works part-time at a local clinic and is proud that she earned her LPN degree at age 58.

Jenny Webb Snuffer and husband, Tom ('52) have 2 children and 3 grandchildren. They are both retired, and spend a lot of time traveling. They have been married 50 years in July and proudly built their own home.

Dorothy Sweeney Brown is widowed and the mother of four daughters and grandmother of four. She works at a local Chevron station and moved to Beckley in 1977 from her Sweeneysburg home

Tom Connoley caught us up with the past 40 years of his life. He was a design draftsman for Architectural and Engineering firms when his eyes gave out and caused him to make changes. He became a dispatcher for the Monroe county sheriff's department for 4 yrs.

He built fiberglass bodies for 18-wheelers and then worked in marketing underground utilities for a couple of years before retiring. He's also involved with the volunteer fire and rescue department in Monroe County.

"I sure hope you are feeling well. I talked with Tommy Bibb this weekend and we had a good time going over old times," he reported.

Ann, is there something about Teentown that you'd like to share with us? "

Phyllis Brown retired as director of The Wheeling Civic Garden Center at Ogleby Park where she worked for 37 years. She returned to this area in 1997. A Master Flower Show Judge for National Garden Clubs, she does creative flower arranging programs in WV and surrounding states.

Dayton Lilly taught music for 33 years in public schools in Baltimore County, Md. before returning to Beckley when his mother became ill. He also served as church organist and choir director in Maryland. Dayton now spends his spare time working in his garden.

Teddie Stanley Sepkowski, is the mother of two sons and grandmother of four, and has been employed at Raleigh General Hospital for 31 years. At present, she is admissions coordinator in the compliance department. Her husband, Dick, is retired from the VAMC.

Phyllis Lowery lives in Lowell, IN and is retired, although she still works part time as a substitute teacher there. She has four married daughters and 10 grandchildren, with a "great-one" due this year. She lives near Chicago, but returns to Beckley often. She has also spent some time with the US Army and in Real Estate.

Bob Neye reports in from Orlando FL where he lives. He didn't tell whether or not he has made friends with Mickey or Pluto, but his e-mail address indicates his interests – HOTROD40!

Bob says he's doing ok except for some "old age" problems – anyone identify with that?

One of the interesting stories of a recently located classmate is Carl Gilliam, as we knew him, but his actual name is **Coogie Gilliam**.

He and his wife, Laverne, live on a large spread in the George Washington National Forest in a really nice log home. They have 3 boys, 1 girl and 9 grandchildren.

He graduated VPI with a BSME, entered flight school in Pensacola, became a flight instructor at Pensacola, He was aboard the first aircraft carrier that went to Vietnam, flew airborne radar aircraft, and retired from the Navy in 1968, then joined the Navy Reserve.

He worked for both Piedmont and USAIR, for 29 years and retired from there in 1996, and from the Navy in 1980. (Thank you for your service to our country.)

WWHS is on the Web!
See us at:
<http://www.wwhsalumni.org>

Bill McCutcheon received the WWHS newsletter today and he thought it high time he touched base. "In a nutshell since WWHS, my meanderings have taken me from Duke [undergrad.], to WVU [dental school]; then, University of Michigan [specialty training], U of California Berkeley [more grad. work + residency], back to Michigan [faculty], and finally back to WVU." His last choice was a really happy one where he stayed on the faculty for 30 years, retiring 2 years ago.

"I am fortunate enough to have excellent health, and I'm thoroughly enjoying retirement. Despite the fact that it's growing by leaps and bounds, I love living in Morgantown and plan to continue doing so.

I'm really looking forward to the reunion and hope that will include seeing old friends."

Bob Sampson sends some info about life since graduation. He worked at Beckley Manufacturing for five years and attended Beckley College at night. He left Beckley in 1960 for Southern CA and began working for North American/Rockwell, retiring from there in 1996 as the Manager of Industrial and Manufacturing in Tulsa after 35 years. He was in on the ground floor on many Military aircraft and the NASA Space Programs.

Bob was widowed in 2002 after 46 years of marriage. He has three living children. One son and middle daughter live in Oklahoma and the youngest daughter lives in California. He has two grandsons, in Ca. and NV, and two great grandchildren in NV.

"During the last year, I have earned the title of having the fastest can-opener in NE OK! I'm looking forward to seeing familiar faces after more than 50 years."

Continued from page 1 ...special class of '54

Our brothers, cousins, neighbors and friends went off to some distant lands to fight for us, and we could not get the picture of what they were going through – but now we know. They were truly heroes, and through our current media opportunities, we know full well what they faced.

And we were so innocent, our lives were centered around school, family, and teenage fun. Our times were great times, and our children might not be able to understand how life was so calm and peaceful in the 1950's – they have faced so much turmoil and so many challenges.

That's why this year's opportunity to get together will be a celebration of our times as well as a renewal of our spirit – the Spirit of the Championship Class of 1954 Flying Eagles, from the City of Champions.

Hopefully, you will be able to come to the Eagle's Landing and celebrate our legacy, and get re-acquainted with your classmates.

This newsletter was produced as an independent initiative with the encouragement of several classmates. Postage was paid by them and some of these same friends handled mailing process. No reunion money was used for this effort. I take full responsibility for content, and appreciate the support given for the newsletter.

Norm H.

If you have news about any of our classmates, please contact me.

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What's a silent auction?

If you've ever been to a silent auction, you know that the main feature is the absence of a fast-talking auctioneer, but the objective is the same.

Several talented classmates have offered a piece of their artwork, or an item of interest/value to be used in the auction. There will be other items added from townfolk, to create a shopping experience with a little competitive bidding to make it fun.

The items will be displayed along with a sheet of paper describing them and lines for names and bids to be written. If you see an item you want, you write your name and place the amount you're willing to pay for it. Along comes someone else who wants it and tops your bid, so you have to keep up with the bidding during the auction time and re-bid as you feel the urge.

When the bid period is over, the highest bid on the page is the winner and you can have your item when you pay for it.

As noted above, the money will be used as seed money for a donation to honor our class and our deceased classmates. (One of the classes we were in school with has donated almost \$90,000 over the years to BAF for use in scholarships and other uses.)

** If you have anything you'd like to offer for the auction, please let one of the Friday evening hosts know and we'll plan on using it in the auction. And you can also think of how you might be able to support the donation in other ways.*

City of Champions.