

# HIGH SCHOOL REUNIONS

*By Fred Hobbs*

Most folks are curious about the current status of old friends, former associates and even some faraway family members they haven't seen, perhaps for a long time. Periodic reunions help to satisfy that curiosity. The most common grouping takes place in commemoration of experiences in a school setting. For those who attended college, alumni reunions are often staged by and for the "Old Alma Mater." (Pledge cards for contributions generally follow!) But the most memorable, often humorous, surprising and even shocking reunions are those recalling high school days. Depending on your viewpoint, you may think I'm a sentimental fool or perhaps a masochist, but over the years I have attended five of these rituals, each a decade apart.

The first reunion of the East Denver High School class of 1950 came too soon for me. After four years of college and two years in the military, only four years were left in that initial decade to begin the quest to "find" myself. Get that first paying job, meet the girl of my dreams, have at least a few adventures, even if modest and inexpensive. So, I can't report first hand on the 1960 "Confab of Angels." (That's right, East High students and grads weren't Tigers, Warriors or Rebels, they were proud Angels.)

At the twenty year mark, lives of the grads had taken many shapes, literally and figuratively.

Some of the curvaceous and amply endowed "campus queens" had added on more than a few extra pounds. Several of the once young, handsome, muscular "jocks" sported small, but noticeable expanded middles and were beginning to lose a little off the top. A smattering of "nerds" (though I'm not sure they were called that just yet) now wore "granny" glasses and the beginnings of scraggly beards. In this decade, the men had established their careers or at least the paths to them. Women were increasingly asserting their rightful place in the working world and a more prominent position in the overall fabric of American society. The conversations at the next reunion centered around those developments.

Somewhere between the 20<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary meetings, many of the grads encountered a series of obstacles. One prominent couple, she a popular and vivacious student leader and he a hero of the gridiron, ended their marriage that had begun shortly after their high school graduation. The class recorded its first member with a prison record. The list of deceased increased. The reunion committee lost track of some who apparently had simply disappeared.

On the positive side, by the 40<sup>th</sup> year reunion, the class, among other successes, had produced an Army general, a renowned artist, a future acclaimed principal of the school and a genuine hero of an incident in Africa. When an anti-American group tried to take down and burn an American flag, this African-American East High grad single handedly managed to turn them away.

At the 50-year mark, most of the reunion attendees had begun to mellow out, enjoying retirement, relaxation and grandkids. It was the last big, fancy event of 1950 Angels to be held at a country club.

The invitation for the 60<sup>th</sup>, two years ago, described the observance as a “all you can eat buffet” at 12 noon, the entire event taking place on the first floor with lots of close-in parking.” Nice and easy. All the reunions were memorable, but somehow this turned out to be the best... so far.

I'll let you know what happens at the 70<sup>th</sup>!