

Keep the Faith

By Hap Hansen

Fifty years is a long period of time. Five decades. A half century. Many people are born, live and die within that period of time.

One would expect that most things would change over fifty years. Consider a few of the changes that have occurred over the last half century. Modern cars that drive themselves. Appliances that talk to you. Superhighways. Planes flying twice the speed of sound. Microwave ovens. Polyester. The list goes on and on. We must have faith in change. Some things don't change much. Unfortunately, we still go to war. We still elect pork-barrel loving politicians, along with those who really have the best interests of their constituents at heart. We still enjoy having the grandkids for the holidays. And folks today want pretty much the same things they wanted fifty years ago. Good health. A good job. A reasonable retirement. A happy family. And faith in what they believe.

One would assume that young students wouldn't have changed appreciably over those periods of time. One would think that good grades, winning the big game on Friday night, the school prom and the hope of a college education would be, then and now, what would be on the minds of today's grade school and high school students. Faith. But that's not so. At least not according to a magazine report that printed data from the Congressional Quarterly Researcher.

What did students have on their minds and what did teachers consider disciplinary problems when I was a kid many years ago? The top seven were: talking in class, chewing gum, making noise, running in the hallway, cutting in line, dress code violations and not being ready for class. It was apparently easy to teach and to learn those many years ago with minimal distractions. An act of faith.

Consider the differences today. The top seven today are: drug and alcohol abuse, bullying, pregnancy, rape, suicide, smoking marijuana and assault. Today's students consider many schools to be a dangerous place. For some, showing up for the first class at nine a.m. is an act of courage and a leap of faith. Obviously, things aren't that bad in the classrooms, hallways and playgrounds of all the schools in America. But we must ever be on guard, or creeping fear, even violence may penetrate even the best run schools. Have faith. We have to continue making tough decisions in the days and years ahead to contain school violence and encourage student responsibilities. Decisions that will once again assure our young people that they can concentrate on school work and play, instead of drugs, guns and terror. Keep the faith.