

EL SEGUNDO HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1968: FOND MEMORIES

It was 1950, five years after the war that followed the war to end all wars, that those of us who have gathered here for our 40th high school reunion were born. Many spent their entire formative years in El Segundo while others came to our little town in elementary, junior high, or even high school. No matter when we got here, we all shared some special times together.

Let's jump ahead to September, 1962, when we matriculated to El Segundo Junior High School from our various grammar schools—Center, Richmond, and Imperial. Getting there was easy, for we had already conquered such travels as hitchhiking to El Porto, riding our bikes on Devil's Path to Rec Park, walking through the Sepulveda tunnel to the Paradise and Loyola theatres, hiking up the sand dunes, and trips to White Field, Standard Stadium, and Candlestick Park. Once there, we encountered kids from other elementary schools and quickly made friends. We got to have many teachers each day—instead of just one—and could take elective classes, such as crafts, guitar, and woodshop, and competed athletically as homeroom battled homeroom. We also remember where we were on November 22, 1963. On a more positive note, we also recall that Monday morning in February, 1964, when the buzz on campus emanated from Ed Sullivan's debut of the shaggy haired chaps from across the Pond, the Beatles. We spoke a strange language back then, teen slang, which allowed us to fit in with our peers, but drove our parents batty. We were also quite intellectually advanced for our time as manifested in our 1964 yearbook in acclaiming such important attributes for the ideal eighth grade boy and girl: best hair (Jan Bissonette/Greg Peterson), best nose (Jeri Wooding/Pat Steffan), best complexion (Tina Wirtz/Eddie Flayer), and best clothes (Brad Gentry/Cheryl Page.)! And, who could forget Lloyd, the Helms Bakery man, in his yellow truck peddling high cholesterol treats for us after school let out. Finally, we were heading to high school, but that summer, like all others, found us playing baseball, hanging at Rec Park's Drop-In, and good ol' El Porto, 42nd St, the Surf-Rite Inn.

September, 1964, welcomed us to El Segundo High School as freshmen full of hopes, dreams, acne, and scared to death of the Seniors who might demand lunch money from us. No more lunch pails and mid-morning snacks. No more parents kissing us goodbye as we quickly escaped from their limousine service to school. We were in high school now! And, what a time we had. For four years, we took six classes a day, played sports, attended rallies and assemblies (remember John Goddard?), took rooter busses (remember the Roto Rooters? Remember Frank Harris, our bus driver? We had a few milk fights at lunch and fouled the Queen's English with such key terms as "bitchen," "groovy," "cool," "boss," and "right on." Oh, and "far out."

By the fall of 1966, we were all driving; some had their own cars, while most drove mom's station wagon. Good thing gas was under 30 cents a gallon, and you didn't have to get out of your car to get it; weren't they called "service stations"? We

drove like typical teens to such exotic places as Hawthorne Blvd, drive-ins such as the Century, Centinela, and Studio, and the beach. We also drove to the Imperial Bowl, the Rose Bowl, the Plunge, the pits at the end of Imperial. We hung out at Woody's Smorgasbord after games.

For many of us, high school was a blast. We likely don't remember too many teachers or academic pursuits, but we do recall many others times, moments, events, and people. Fireworks on July 4th at Rec Park. After game dances with real, live bands. Lip sync contests at the Drop-In. Our Rec Park cards. Musically speaking, our generation was blessed what is arguably some of the best music ever: Beatles, Stones, Motown, the Doors...you name it, we had it...and Wolfman Jack always reminded us of that fact! Some of us even listened to those FM underground stations. We didn't like our parents music, they hated ours. Ironically, our kids love ours. Go figure.

We remember the fashions back then: corduroy jeans, Penny's Towncraft T-shirts, Purcell's and Converse tennis shoes, bermuda shorts. We remember Mariposa and Penny Profit markets; now we shop Albertson's and Von's. We went to Moore's Stores because Home Depot was not born yet. And, the high fashion options and great variety of Leonard's we miss; Walmart and Nordstroms have replaced them. Woody's is now an IHOP. Robb's became Jolly Roger and is now the Stick n Stein. Hessel Chevrolet is long gone, as is Patmar's Drive-in. The Drop-in is something else, but the fireworks still remain. Gone is the Good Humor man and the Adohr or Arden milmen; now, milk comes in plastic containers.

June 12, 1968, marked the day of our commencement. We gathered on Hazeltine Field for our last hurrah, listening to blessings and admonitions from adults and valedictorians alike. After the alma mater, the graduates flung their caps high into the air and the Class of 1968 was on its way in a multitude of directions after a night at Disneyland. The year was marked with riots, assassinations, and an uptick in the Vietnam War; nonetheless, we embarked on a long, strange trip. Many would enter college, some travelled, others joined the military while some chose to work.

Much has transpired in the past forty years. We went to school, married, had kids, grandkids. We divorced, we remarried, and had more kids. Social security back then meant your group of friends; today, it's a hope that we live to get it. Back then, our generation popularized drug use, to the dismay of many; today, it's Vitorin and Viagra! We experienced Woodstock, the moon landing, the draft lottery, and the end of a long war within a few years after we left school. We used to say: "Don't trust anyone over 30." Now, it's the other way around! In high school, CIF was an important acronym; now it's AARP. We used to be cool by driving stick shifts; does anyone not drive an automatic today? Boy, have we changed!

We had the hubris to think that our generation would change the world...and we did. We brought computers, iPods, CD's, and SUV's to the fore; no more 8-tracks, 45's, or bulky manual typewriters...or VW bugs! We were part of the Generation

Gap, where our parents and ourselves didn't see eye to eye. Now, if you're lucky enough to still have your parents around, we must see eye to eye, as we're switched roles. They raised us, cared for us, diapered us; now, it's our turn to do the same, and we must take that responsibility seriously.

The class of 1968 was the 40th class to pass through the halls of El Segundo High School. And now, 40 years later, we have gathered to reflect on those wonderful times and people whose lives crossed our adolescent paths. Yes, the time has flown, and we do miss those members of our class who are with us in spirit but not in body. It is hoped that we will meet again, in 2018, when we are 68 years old. If the Hacienda doesn't have wheelchair ramps, perhaps we can meet at Leisure World and dine on apple sauce, yogurt, and Metamucil. No matter what, we are a class, we have something special. We have lifetime memories, lifetime friendships, and, no matter what, we shall see one another again. As Bob Hope always said, "Thanks for the memories."

John Webb