

THE CLASS OF '62 HAD ITS DREAMS

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The Statler Brothers had a hit back in 1973 called "The Class of '57 had Its Dreams." The theme of the song is in the chorus that goes:

*"And the class of '57 had its dreams,
Oh, we all thought we'd change the world
with our great words and deeds.
Or maybe we just thought the world
would change to fit our needs."*

Well, I didn't belong to the class of '57, but I did belong to the class of '62, a mere five years later and like the folks in the Statler Brothers song, we had our dreams. I doubt that any of us were ostentatious enough to believe we'd change the world, and we certainly did not believe the world would change to fit our needs – it was not the way he had been brought up – still we had our dreams.

Some of us went off to college and would not return to Carthage to live for many years, a few of us would never return. Most of us did not venture too far beyond Nashville, or Donelson, but a few, like me, made a career in far away places like New York, Detroit, Atlanta or Charlotte. We found that like Hank Jr. says in his song, "A Country Boy Can Survive," even in the big city. The problem is, he is not likely to feel perfectly at home with that much concrete, unless it is poured into a hydro power dam, like Cordell Hull or Center Hill, where it serves some useful purpose by providing good crappie fishing.

Like the class of '57, some were big in cattle, some were deep in debt, where some of them ended up, is anybody's bet, Martha Ann married Sonny, and the brown eyed girl married me, and the class of all of us is just a part of history.

Charlotte worked for the phone company, Pat married George Bush (well not that George Bush), one was an actuary, another the sheriff's wife, Bill sold life insurance, and several went under the knife.

Now as the class of '62 has passed 65 and hardly slowed down, we seem to all be gathering in again to the friendships made so long ago. Many like me, have retired and moved within easy reach of home again and look forward to the first Tuesday of each month when we meet at the Walton Hotel, have lunch together, and bask in the warmth and sunshine of friendships that have lasted over half a century and sometimes longer. I give the credit for keeping us together to Charlotte Beasley Holliman, Pat Kittrell Bush, and Crystal Silcox Hughes who always found time to put together events where we could get reacquainted all over again.

A week or so ago, Bill, former co-captain of the football team, stopped by my house to pick up a few books (a mercy purchase, I suspect) and as we sat and talked, the years simply fell away. Something about his presence just made me feel younger and I am quite sure we could have talked for twice as long with no danger of running out of conversation.

It is sobering when we gather to realize that some of our friends who had seemed as teenagers to be invincible, under armor, and hardly even touched by the rules that applied to the rest of us, are now gone on ahead, leaving those left behind to struggle with our own mortality. It is sobering when we gather to realize that those “old people” sitting around the table are us, they are our age and just yesterday we were teenagers with our whole life ahead. It is sobering when we gather to realize that retirement and old age are the great equalizers, that when you have been retired five or ten years, no one really cares whether you were a powerful executive or the “local garbage man” as one of our class likes to refer to himself (not quite and accurate picture, however).

I once was the “bagman” for GM executive who was in charge of all car manufacturing in General Motors and as he neared the last day of work before retirement, he confided that, “I wish I had treated people better over the years.” I made up my mind then and there that when I retired, I might have some regrets but that would not be one of them. I suppose it is the impending end of another year that makes me pensive about these things, but I never remember hearing a single retired executive say, “I really wish I had spent more time at the office and less time with those kids of mine,” or “I really wish I had been tougher on the people I worked with and gotten just one more promotion.”

No, I think when we come to the “short rows,” as we from a farm background want to say, it is how we treated people, how we served God, and how we served our family that matters.

I hope this year is a good one for you, and that you see it as an opportunity to treat those that you interact with better than ever before.

Happy New Year.

*Read more about Robert Rogers Chaffin in the Chaffin files and read more Writer's corner stories at: <http://www.ajlambert.com>