

Wilderness House Literary Review 10/2

Doug Hawley
Mad(ison) Men

This is the personal story of some men, one in particular, an era, a school, a 50th reunion, mortality and a culture. In order to give it some relevance to a wider audience, I will reference culture, irony and Parkinson's. If none of those topics are of interest, at least it will apply to those alive in 1957 – 1961 in the Portland Oregon area.

Doug Hawley

IN 1957 MADISON HIGH SCHOOL OPENED. I had graduated from Whitaker on Columbia Blvd and 52nd, which made me a country cousin. At that time, my grade school was not in the city of Portland. My older sister had gone to the established Grant High.

This was the era of Eisenhower (until Kennedy's election), tailfins, beer as drug of choice and conformity. Jocks, soshes (a reference to being sociable) and greasers were the groupings. We were almost all white and middle class. I don't remember clothes much, but Pendleton shirts were big. The students voted for Rebels as our nickname, but the administration decided that that name could have racist overtones, so we became the Senators. It still seems that we survived high school in spite of the educational establishment.

Dramatis Personae At Madison –

Good buds:

Gary A. was a chick magnet who excelled in art and drama. He could write design and paint. We formed a close and odd couple, because I was a short, uncouth and mathy. He incidentally got me my start and finish in musical theatre being a Scragg in Little Abner. Type casting. I'll sing "Druthers" on request. His twin grandsons are 6'9" and two of the few white basketball players in Louisiana.

Roger "Boris" C. (Boris because of the Rocky And Bullwinkle cartoon) was extroverted and confident. He got my 1959 Fiat going after the transmission linkage broke and drove us around in a Packard limo from a car dealer where he worked.

Wally D. was a wild Irishman. He ended up at Madison after assaulting another student at Benson High.

Dick and Ron P. were 6'4" twins who marched to a whole different band.

Jim G. was a Russophile and antiauthoritarian.

Others:

Don S. was a renaissance man. He was good at science, music and outdoor sports.

John L. was differently oriented which made for conflict with his religious upbringing. Despite the usual prejudice, his intelligence and personality made him a leader.

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Bill M. was a Metro all star in football and popular with everyone.

Doug P. was a loud greaser who was generally in trouble.

Of interest after high school - Jim S., Dick I. and Herb K.. I tutored Herb in math during high school.

If you notice this only covers guys, it is an indication of my success with girls in high school.

Shortly after high school Gary, a twin (we could not remember which), and I took a broken hearted trip to Las Vegas in the Fiat. On the way to LV we broke a fan belt and coasted back to San Bernardino. A suicide door got bent along the way.

Leading up to the 50th I lost touch with almost everyone except Gary, Wally and Roger. Gary got married and gave up most of his entertainment career for a more secure future behind the camera. He was on Portland TV for a while as the masked restaurant reviewer. Wally served in Korea and had blue collar jobs. Roger had a number of different careers.

Jim started a nursery which featured Russian plants and tried politics.

I had gone to a few previous reunions. It seems that at the tenth there may still be some jockeying for position, but by the twentieth most rivalries are forgotten.

I ran into Don at the 45th reunion where I was the MC. I found out reunions don't want MCs, even one with my excellent material. He had a very successful career in the space program and in air traffic and had places in Saint George Utah and on the Rogue River in Oregon. We stayed at their magnificent St. George place before doing a Roads Scholar in Utah.

The twins have been in the military, had many jobs and now lived in obscure locations. Richard died January 20, 2013.

John L. became a Professor of English at the University of Rhode Island.

Bill M. got a Purple Heart in Korea and headed up the McCormick and Schmicks restaurants' construction as well as working on the remodel of the Voodoo Donut Shop, a hip local spot. In the movies, his character would have beaten up nerds, but as Don said after his death, "Everybody liked Bill."

Dick I. became big in Portland car sales. His two kids are in the ads now. He had Dick's Mackenzie Ford and Dick's Country Dodge and Jeep. He supported the Boy's and Girl's Clubs in a big way. His obituary indicated that he was born in a resettlement camp, something that happened to a Japanese person at that time, but something I had never known. I used to see Jim S. who had a long career in the financial industry, around Lake Oswego since he had bought just off the east end of Oswego Lake. Both died just before the reunion.

Doug P. is a successful marketing guy In New York City.

Herb is a controversial developer in West Linn, Oregon. His success is no doubt due to his knowledge of algebra.

Shortly before the reunion Roger got ALS. Gary commented that he

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and I were the only ones in (relatively) good health from the old gang.

About four years before the reunion I arranged for Gary, Wally, Roger and I to get together at Edgefield, a resort East of Portland, because Gary and Wally had a feud and Wally was in poor health after two heart attacks.

The 50th Reunion At Edgefield:

I was the disk jockey. As a part of my huge music collection, I had at least 80% of the top 100 songs for each year 1957 – 1961. As with being the MC at the 45th reunion, it didn't turn out too well. There were problems with the sound system. The photographer wanted the music turned off much of the time. There wasn't much interest in dancing.

The wife and I got a room overnight and I had a very good time hanging out with the "popular kids". Bill and Jim indulged me in a little football while meeting at Madison before the reunion and we had drinks with Don, John and Bill that evening. High point – being told by the videographer to slow down for filming during football. I must have been too fast for the camera.

After the reunion, Gary died from cancer on January 20, 2012. Bill died while boating on the Rogue River. While staying with Don and Barbara jet we boated to the approximate spot where he drowned. Roger died July 1, 2014. Wally is hanging on. We visited him and his family in Hawaii in December 2012 and climbed Diamond Head. His son and daughter are Hollywood attractive.

The irony – two of the four from the mini-reunion are dead, and they aren't the expected ones. The way this is going Wally will outlive all of us.

Madison today is little changed physically from 1957. The demographics have changed a lot. It went from a large mostly Anglo school to a small multi-cultural one.

At my wife's recent reunion in Detroit I learned that there are more Cadillacs and Lincolns in the area than Mercedes and BMWs unlike the west coast. Despite Detroit city being majority black, there aren't many in the northern suburbs. Some of her old crushes are dead.

Musings –

How is it I went to high school with people ten years older than me?

High school can be hard on everyone. If it was uncomfortable for Bill, it was misery for most of us losers.

Don't be short in high school.

The popular kids may not be cruel. Again Bill Martindale, good to everyone.

The Parkinson's roll call: A girl I had a crush on in grade school now has it. Another fellow said he would have stem cell research. The spouse of a classmate is trying deep brain stimulation. His head has two bumps and he has a battery in his chest. Parkinson's is an interest of mine because so many people I know have it and I was in a lot of Parkinson's research at Oregon Health Science University as a control – someone to establish "normal", although many would question my status as normal.

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Friendships seem to make no sense. In most ways Gary and I were opposites, but we both had “screw it” attitudes.

Appearances may be deceiving. Shortly before his death, Bill told me that he had not been comfortable in high school, and he was truly a golden boy. Beyond that, the Viet Nam War messed with him to the extent he wanted to live in the country and avoid cities.

I have two kinds of memories of high school – Things that happened that I don’t remember and things that didn’t happen that I do remember.

Do it now, you may not have tomorrow.

Despite high school misery, I can’t recall specific mistreatment.

People may turn out as expected.

The good ones don’t have to tell you that they are good and you should recognize my greatness for pointing out that valuable information. Gary didn’t tell me until a year before his death that he had been one of 50 promising actors at one time. Bill didn’t tell you about his many accomplishments.

At our age, a slow rate of deterioration is success. So many at the reunion had CRS, CHS and CSS. [Can’t Remember/Hear/See Stuff]

Check out the obituaries before you get out of bed. If you are in them, don’t bother.

Shirt on the Hawaiian cruise – “At my age, any hour above the ground is happy hour”.