

GRAPEVINE HIGH SCHOOL

CLASS of 1966

SEPTEMBER 2009 NEWSLETTER

Well – here it is September 2009 – let’s see, we started the first grade about fifty-five years ago this month....many of us probably couldn’t even count to 55 before we lost interest! We started our senior year 44 years ago and I’m not sure we even thought that we would be around forty-four years later – much less still having contact with some great life-long friends. I hope that each of you are as proud as I am to have been a part of the GHS Class of 1966 and continue to realize just how fortunate we were to have grown up at that time and in Grapevine, Texas. It is amazing the changes that have occurred in Grapevine, Texas since those days. It is also somewhat comforting to know that some things remain about as close to the same as one could expect after so many years. The last weekend of August, Linda and I went to Bartley’s Bar-B-Q to eat dinner. While there Linda and I sat down with Mayor Bill Tate and his wife Betty as he asked me to talk with him about a proposed development coming into town. There are not many places where two knuckle-heads who graduated from a high school 49 years ago and 43 years ago can sit down at a long-time eating establishment in our hometown and discuss what might be best for growth within the city! I often believe we lose sight of just how blessed we have been for our experiences growing up in Grapevine!

On Saturday, July 11 Carnival Cruise Lines had the experience of hosting a few classmates from the GHS Class of 1966! We tried to encourage everyone to go, but with the economy and many other issues facing us all – only four couples set sail as pirates for a week! In the undercover pirate excursion were: John and Caroline (Cason) Wilkinson; Jerry and Linda (Bowden) Cox; Gary and Jane Cumbie; and Larry and Linda (Ethridge) Oliver. We took over the starboard side of the Upper Deck of the ship Ecstasy, and set sail out of Galveston for shores unknown (well, we are guessing that the ship captain knew). I am not certain that there was a “professor” among us, but lots of Gilligans! And, of course all the ladies were of the Ginger & Maryann type! We had a GREAT time! We had our own table at dinner each evening and the waiter kept us in tow with providing numerous “extras” to satisfy our pirate appetites! We had money, but managed to misplace it in the casino (well, maybe most everyone but Linda (Oliver)...who played the penny slots and won the most – who would have guessed! We spent a day inland from Progresso at the Mayan Ruins and were most fortunate to have an archeologist giving us a tour (he had worked numerous “dig sites” and was of Mayan ancestry himself). In Cozumel, some went aboard a submarine for a 100 + ft. dive into the reefs off the coast, and others went dune buggy exploring and snorkeling. If only the snorkelers could have driven the dune buggy to the reef rather than having to swim out to it their oxygen supply would have lasted longer (another story). We spent time watching Cumbie stand in line with the 7 to 10 year olds waiting to go down the BIG SLIDE at the pool, two 9 year old girls took his pina colada money. We played a lot of Farkle and on a few occasions had to force our way into the “card room” to take over enough space for our group. We saw some great shows and tried to sit where the seven foot tall beautiful brunette would dance in the isle for us again, but we seemed to miss out other than that one time! Maybe she was becoming more selective in her “isle dancing” after the first night and dealing with Cumbie! Upon returning to Galveston, we all loaded up and drove to Montgomery, Texas and spent a

night with Jerry & Linda at their beautiful new home! And it was a beautiful home...I mean indescribably beautiful! Anyway – it was a great trip and the group managed to sing an old favorite song from previous trips with classmates titled “Larry is a Butt-head” to the tune of “Froggy Went a Court’n”. Many of the passengers were amused and began to sing along when the group would spontaneously erupt in song! One couple from Canada was especially amused and impressed.



On Friday, July 17, 2009, after arriving back home from our cruise, I received a call informing me that life-long friend and classmate James Wilkins had suffered a massive heart attack and died. I don't know that I had a non-relative friend who I have known any longer than James. Our families knew each other long before either of us were born. Our fathers worked together for many years. We lived next door to one another for about four years before we started the first grade with each other. I have little doubt that I have known James longer than any friend. Hearing those words that James had died hit me very hard. Even though connections with James had been less over the years, you can still hear his laugh, you can still see his smile, and you can see so much emotion from his eyes. He and I had talked every month or so since his return to Texas – mainly to talk about mutual friends and discuss our mutual dislike for decisions that were of a political nature. Like so many of you, we knew James, loved James and respected James for so many things. James was one of those “Good Men” we are fortunate to come into contact with in life. It has not yet become a solid fact that James is no longer with us, but our memories of him and our times with him will remain solid and firm within our hearts and minds. We celebrate his life and his service to humanity. Like others in our class who have dedicated their efforts to community service and serving their fellow man, not looking for fame or fortune, but looking to make this world, this county, and our communities better places to live – better places to raise a family – places where we feel safe. We can certainly feel confident in knowing that James Rucker Wilkins did his part and represented his family, Grapevine, GHS, and the Class of 1966 as well as any. God Bless James and the Wilkins family. Continue to keep his wife Linda, his children, his brothers Frank and Dale in your prayers as they face the difficulty of this loss in the days ahead.

In August, David Barnes had knee surgery. All went well and David is back to work and doing well. During that recovery time David and Cindy (Frye) Barnes celebrated the arrival of a new grandson! Be sure to tell Cindy what a wonderful nurse she was in helping David during his recovery time at home. She wants people to brag on her about her work – so humor her a little bit. She did, without a doubt contribute to David’s quick recovery and getting back to work.

Harlan Jewett is at home and doing pretty well. He still has trouble getting around some days and has been most appreciative of everyone’s prayers and cards. He has had a very difficult time since he lost his wife, Inez. Please continue to keep Harlan in your prayers and don’t hesitate to send him a card of encouragement – his address is 721 W. College, Grapevine, TX 76051.

On Friday, August 14, 2009....another National Gaming Event of “Not Even Close to Professional” Poker was held in Grapevine, Texas. Non-professional-poker classmates from the GHS Class of 1966 were: Gary Cumbie, Joe Lipscomb, David Florence, Jim Box, Bob Stevenson, Darrell Faglie, Gus Linthicum, and Larry Oliver. Stacy and Yancey were still completing their five-month suspension and are expected to be at the next event.

From Shirley Stapleton Foster – “My brother, Robert C. Stapleton, would have been in the class of 66; however he joined the service and went to Vietnam. I would ask that everyone pray for him as he has stage 4 Cancer, brought on from the effects of Agent Orange in Vietnam. Robert needs to have contact with as many of his old friends as possible as this seems to cheer him up and give him hope. I spend the weekend with him, he is not doing well, and we spent a lot of time talking about old times in Grapevine and his friends he grew up with. I just wanted to make you aware of this so maybe some of his classmates could contact him. His email is rcs2502@embarqmail.com and his phone number is 940 748-2287. He is legally blind, so a phone call might do better than an email although he can read some things, he just can't see well enough to type.” Thanks Shirley and thanks to the number who responded and contacted Robert, please keep Robert in your prayers.

A couple of months ago I received an email from Neena Keelin informing me of the death of our classmate and friend, Dennis Keelin. Dennis died of complications due to type 2 diabetes this past December 12th. Please keep Neena Keelin and her daughter Shaina in your prayers, and pray for one another as we learn of the loss of another of our classmates. I have asked Neena if she has an email address or mailing address to share and if she would like to continue to hear from us via our email - I will certainly notify you if I hear back from her. She has not responded as of this Newsletter.

During a routine physical, Woodie Woodson’s doctor discovered a slight heart murmur and thought he should see a cardiologist. Upon further examination it was discovered that Coach Woodson’s aortic valve was calcifying. By the time of his surgery on August 25th, he was operating at about 25% capacity. He did well during surgery (East Texas Medical Center in Tyler). Butch Tiller has been keeping up with Coach Woodson for us. On Monday, August 31, 2009, Butch called me for Tom Walker’s phone number, it just so happened I was having lunch with Tom Walker and Bill Powers and just passed the phone to Tom. He indicated that Woodie would most likely be having a pace-maker put in during the coming days. Chris Ashton was in Tyler on September 2nd and stopped by to visit Coach Woodson – he was released to go home while Chris was there visiting....so we still don’t

know at the time this Newsletter was sent out when or if he will be going back for a pace maker!
Continue to keep the Coach and his family in your prayers.

Butch Tiller continues to need our prayers, he is planning to go in for some surgery on his shoulder on September 28th, please keep Butch in your thoughts and prayers as he continues recovering from his neck injury and now the shoulder surgery.

Darlene Tillery Florence's mother passed away on Sunday, August 30. Joan Tillery was 80 years old spent 61 years as a Grapevine resident and member of the First United Methodist Church. Please keep Darlene and David, Lynette, Nancy, Mr. Tillery, and the entire Tillery family in your prayers.

Lee (Eddie) Davis had hip replacement surgery on Wednesday August 26th. It was reported to me that the surgery went well and that he is in rehab in Marshall, Texas. Please include the Davis family in your prayers.

Gary Blagg recently had cataract surgery. Wanda emailed me a couple of weeks ago to say the Gary was back driving (no surprise there), but still had blurred vision. Wanda said she could not keep him down or at home any longer. The doctors told him it could be three months before the vision clears up completely. Keep Gary (and Wanda) in your prayers.

I continue to have the opportunity to keep up with Tom Walker and he seems to be doing well....he gets lots of invitations to reunion events these days. Tom has certainly been a friend to the Class of 1966 in so many ways for a long time!

We also try to keep Ms. Gayle Shumate up-to-date on things with our class....we cannot get her to leave Commerce, Texas to visit with us! We continue to rely on Sharon Huffman Smith to keep a watch on Shumate to make sure she stays in line! Ms. Shumate reads our Newsletters and GHS Info emails....if I could just get her to quit sending these things back to me with all the RED MARKS! We love you Shumate!

The second week of September, Leann Baber sent Linda an email concerning James. James is scheduled for surgery on Monday, September 14th at 9:00 a.m. at Baylor Grapevine. As most of you know James has had a battle with his right leg for some time. The pain has overtaken his life and they will be removing James Baber's right leg, either just below the knee or just above the knee on Monday. They will not determine until the surgery where they will amputate. Leann says that James is doing pretty well considering and is trying to keep things light by joking about saving money on shoes and socks. I know that we will all want to keep James and Leann in our prayers as he moves forward from this difficult decision and recovery.

There is still time to join your GHS Classmates for a Scandinavian Cruise departing June 1, 2010! If you would like to receive the information again or if you didn't receive it, please email me, call me, or mail me that you would like the information. We have a group of ten or eleven signed up – so if you feel compelled to head to the likes of Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Estonia, Poland, Russia and the like

with a group of people you've known longer than you want to admit you've lived – let me know! From our previous cruise time – I can promise you a great time and an adventure (in staying out of trouble).

GHS HOMECOMING: OCTOBER 15, 16 & 17, 2009 – Parade on Thursday evening at 6 p.m., Game on Friday at 7:30 (with pre-game activities earlier), and Ex-Student Association Dinner/Dance at Austin Patio Ranch Saturday Evening October 17th. You should have received an email on this a couple of weeks ago!

NEWS FLASH: Just before this Newsletter was to be posted I received word that James Rucker Wilkins will be inducted in the GHS Hall of Fame as a Distinguished Alumni at Homecoming this year. James is the first GHS graduate to be inducted posthumously. Along with James' induction will be our teacher Edith Pewitt as an Outstanding Teacher. Please attend the induction ceremony on Friday morning at 9:00 a.m. at the GHS Library on October 16th if you can.

Next year at this time we will be gearing up for our class's 45 year reunion! Hard to believe – so stay well, stay focused on the wonders of life, see and visit your life-long friends, keep one another in our prayers, and God Bless the GHS Class of 1966!

Respectfully submitted,
Larry Oliver