

THE OWLETTE DISPATCH

Fresno High School Class of 1958

Newsletter No. 4

Spring, 2005

In Memoriam

This issue is dedicated to those classmates whom we've lost in the last six months. Karen Hyberg Graham, Gary Harman, Tom Jing, Mary Gendusa Powell, Marilou Parker Rushing, Geneva Ray Selsor and Harold Zahlis.

PAGES FROM THE PAST

Cathy "Vernie" Morison Rehart

Our school has a rich history—one that provides an academic counterpoint to the Dodge City atmosphere of Fresno politics that existed until 1901. It may be argued that, in spite of the efforts of the reformers of the early 20th Century, city government has not changed that much, but that is not something that will be discussed here. This will be a place to look at the forces that caused our school to be established, and then to share stories from our school's past. Like all good stories, this one will begin at the beginning.

Fresno Station was established in April 1872, when the Central Pacific Railroad line reached a point that is today Tulare Street and the Union Pacific Rail line. The new town was a true "Wild West" community. Dirt streets, wooden sidewalks, and frame buildings created a landscape that looked like the Dodge City of *Gunsmoke*. That wasn't the only similarity. When the village was only a month old, sixteen saloons and one dance hall were open for business. Families who lived at Millerton began moving to the new town on the valley floor. Others came also, but it wasn't until February of 1873 that anyone began to talk about opening a school for the eighty children who lived in Fresno. On February 5th of that year, a school district was formed, but the school bonds that were placed on the ballot failed to pass. Since there were no funds to build a school, a room over Booker's Store was rented and a teacher, Mary McKenzie, was hired. This became the one-room schoolhouse for the children of Fresno.

On August 29, 1874, a few months after Fresno became the seat of government for Fresno County, an election was held. As a result, the school



district was reorganized and a school bond was finally passed. The vote was 48 to 2 to approve the \$4,000 that was used to construct Fresno's first school near Tulare and M Streets. It was nicknamed the "Pink School" because of the color it was painted.

By 1878, the city had grown so much that another school was needed. California's legislature authorized the school district to issue \$15,000 in bonds. The district hired contractors Frank and C.P. Peck to design and build the new school. The site that was chosen was a small hill that, in 1872, the railroad had hoped would be the site for the Fresno County Courthouse. The citizens of the city asked for land at Mariposa and L Streets instead. Now the hill was the place for the Central School—a white frame building that would become, next to the Courthouse, the most cherished building in the city. Today, the Veteran's Memorial Auditorium is on this site. The new school opened in September 1879 and, by 1885, had reached its capacity of 400 students.

The citizens of Fresno had provided two schools for the young people of their city, but a separate secondary school did not exist. The growing city needed such a facility badly and forces were at work to see that this need was met.

Next time...Professor Heaton to the rescue...

TSUNAMI IN INDONESIA

Grace Masuda



I was asked to write about my husband's recent trip to Indonesia.

On Saturday, January 24, 2005, my husband, Ray Imatani learned of an opportunity to join our Saddleback Church's team that was going to Indonesia to assist in the tsunami disaster. By the following Monday, he was taking the necessary vaccines just hours before boarding the plane for a two week trip. Ray is an orthopedic surgeon and last June we started living in various parts of the U.S. with him doing short-term medical assignments. Yes, have scalpel, will travel! We returned to Southern CA for the holidays after five months in Maine and, fortunately, Ray had the free time to go on this trip. During one weekend, church members donated \$1 million. It was the team's job to assess where the money would best be used rather than pass it to the corrupt government.

After taking almost twenty-four hours to get there, Ray spent most of his time in Banda Aceh, which was the area nearest the epicenter and where over 125,000 people died. Foreigners had not been allowed into the country for two years previous due to Muslim laws and suddenly thirty countries and over 100 organizations descended upon the country to give aid. There were many doctors; however, there wasn't much to do since after the disaster, the people either lived or died. Ninety-nine percent of Banda Aceh people are Muslims and are required to pray five times a day for two hours each time. Working with American Christian missionaries, who live full-time in this Third World country, they, together with Ray's teammates had to speak in code to each other for their safety. By the time Ray arrived, most of the dead were buried but they were still burying 100 people daily. He heard many horrific personal stories and visited many homeless people living in tin roof tents with dirt floors. When it rained, the people could not even sit down. Even the areas not effected by the tsunami have tough living conditions with open sewers, dishes washed in recycled water, and food left out all day covered with flies. Ray slept on the concrete floor with a thin foam mat. As tough as it was, he was grateful to have this experience which has forever changed his life.



DISPATCHES FROM THE FRONT

Buddy Arakelian

Please make note of the following e-mail address changes: Buddy Arakelian is mrcentralv@sbcglobal.net and Lyn Darby Maloney is lynmaloney46@aol.com.

Be sure to check out the website for the Fresno High Alumni Association at www.fresnohighalumni.com. While you are there, look at the "lost" and the "deceased" lists for our class. If you have any information regarding lost or deceased classmates, please let us know.

The 6th Annual FHS Alumni Association Dinner will be held in front of the school at 1839 N. Echo on Saturday, May 7. It is a great opportunity to see old friends from other classes. No host cocktails at 5:00 p.m. Dinner at 7:00 p.m. There will be an introduction of FHS school principals at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$35 per person. Checks payable to FHS Alumni Association; P.O. Box 27516; Fresno, CA 93729-7516. Please include year of graduating class and any group seating requests (tables 8 or 10). Deadline is April 29.

I mentioned in the last newsletter that I intended to compete in a bodybuilding show in the Fresno High Auditorium on March 19. Due to some medical testing which still has not been completed I was unable to do it this year. Hopefully, I still have a few more years to compete in the ultra masters (over 60) division.

I have been to the FHS auditorium several times during the past year. It is fabulous, and being there brought back many of the same memories mentioned by others in this newsletter.

JOHNNY RUSSELL

JoAnn D'Ambrosio Woodward

At a time when every teenager was listening to "Rock Around the Clock", "Blue Suede Shoes", "Little Darlin" and "The Stroll", Johnny Russell was singing country music songs. Rock and roll music was almost the only music you heard on the radio and at the record stores, but Johnny had his own world that eventually would catapult him into becoming one of the most influential and successful country music performers of his time.

Johnny came to Fresno at the age of 11 from Sunflower County in Mississippi where he was born in 1940. He often appeared in assemblies during his years at Fresno High School where he would present his favorite country music on his guitar and often would have the audience laughing wildly at his jokes. His most favorite phrase, "Well, now, you just better not do that" was heard often behind a huge grin and put smiles on many faces.

Shortly after graduating from FHS, he recorded his first song, "In a Mansion Stands My Love" which did not make it to any top ten lists, but it caught the attention of Chet Atkins who signed Jim Reeves to record the words written by Johnny.

Reeve's recording as a country popular member of number Two years and sold could ever

Although recording influential and the Plans" Now for "Let's Fall Strait), Brothers), recording Socks & which finished in the top five.



The song was the B-side of "He'll Have to Go." The established Johnny's reputation significant songwriter on the music scene. Probably his most song was co-written with a the Buck Owens band and was a one hit on the country charts. later, The Beatles recorded it over 30 million copies.....who forget "Act Naturally."

Johnny did not become a top artist, he was extremely as a writer. Some of his songs recording artists were: "Makin' (Dolly Parton), "Got No Reason Going Home" (Gene Watson), to Pieces Together" (George "You'll Be Back" (Statler and many more. The biggest he made was "Rednecks, White Blue Ribbon Beer" in 1973

He appeared on many TV shows, some of which were Hee Haw, Dinah Shore, Dean Martin Show, and almost every Grand Ole Opry show. His music was recorded on at least seven major labels and his tremendous career help land him a "Lifetime Achievement Award" in 1995.

Late in the 1980's Johnny suffered a stroke but continued to perform. In 2001, with deteriorating health problems, his good friends Vince Gill and Garth Brooks held a benefit concert for him at the Grand Ole Opry. In July of that year, Johnny passed away in Nashville, TN at the age of 61.

Memories of Johnny:

James Palmer.....I loved Johnny Russell coming out and singing some good songs, he was ahead of the western era which made his road to stardom much more steep.

Bob Baker...I really did not know Johnny very well in school but when I was railroading, I met him in Eureka, CA. I saw an ad in the paper saying he would be playing at a local dance hall. I had to go and see if it was the same Johnny. He was there for a month or so before he moved on but we did have a chance to chat before he left. As a CW fan, I enjoyed his music but I never saw him again until they started broadcasting the Grand Ole Opry. I was sorry to hear he had died at such a young age.

Vernie Morison... she had a little Fiat and Johnny wrote in her yearbook "look out for those little cars."

Buddy Arakelian...I will remember his corny jokes, like, "she had a dimple on her chin, she had a dimple on her chin. Why did I say that two times?because she had a double chin."

The following question was asked of some classmates who could be reached by email. "What memory do you have of our glorious auditorium?"

Pat Scheidt Austin, I remember many joyous hours spent in the FHS auditorium. My introduction to life as a Warrior was at the Sophomore Welcoming Assembly. I'll never forget the Senior Class President, **Steve Charlesworth**, standing on the stage saying something. All I knew was that he was the most handsome fellow I'd ever seen.

Those three years were fun. My favorite stage entertainers were **Johnny Russell**, the **Kimball-Knott Combo**, **Steve Brooks** and **Larry Cross**, the Madrigal Singers, and the Swing band. And who can forget **Darlene Wimer's** acrobatics and baton twirling, **Jim Shields** playing the trumpet, and **Nikki Lampkin's** drums?

Whatever became of **Gary Rogers**, who sang, "It's Almost Tomorrow" at the Sophomore Assembly? He had the voice of an angel, but he somehow disappeared before graduation. Amahl & the Night Visitors...admission 75 cents. Brigadoon, with all our male Warriors wearing kilts. I remember that was a major production...it cost \$1,000 to produce and used lighting and a scrim curtain.

TeePee Talent, the Blossom Day Fashion Show, pep rallies, award assemblies, Arsenic & Old Lace, the Choraleers (don't fall off the risers) and the Warriorettes performing in their purple jumpers and white gloves.

Those were great times in a glorious setting. Theater seating and a balcony. How lucky we were! Luckier still are those of us who hold these memories in our hearts.

James Palmer, I remember the cadets doing their drill routines with their rifles.

Vernie Morison Rehart, I remember sitting in the balcony as a sophomore or junior and hearing the Ink Spots...also Eddie Peabody giving a program playing his banjo. I remember the first assembly as a senior and the thrill of finally sitting downstairs and being able to walk out first...that was heady stuff. Christmas was always made more magical by the yearly performance of The Gloria. I also remember attending the annual play with **Jan White Letson** in the auditorium--it must have been in 1959, the year after we graduated. Oklahoma! was performed and Jean White, Jan's sister played **Annie**. It was great fun. The old wooden seats aren't very comfortable, but sitting in them now brings back so many memories. I'm glad they remain after the restoration of Royce Hall and the auditorium.

Bob Baker, Well, as you may remember the band and orchestra met there. That was our classroom. Do you remember when we did "Brigadoon?" That year we had a young and pretty student teacher by the name of Jean Peaugh who was a senior at Fresno State.

Several of us entered down the center isle one afternoon and Miss Peaugh walked down the North isle. We started singing the song, "go home with Bonnie Jean." She said, "That will be the day!" A day or so later, Mr. Buyuklian had a talk with us. He chewed us up and spit us out. Needless to say, we didn't sing about "Bonnie Jean" again.

Helen Nordeman Ford, Two years ago, my friend **Jan McDonald Martin** took me on a tour of FHS. The auditorium was locked but a peek inside showed that it had changed little. Oh, the hours we spent in their practicing our music under the leadership of Mr. Buyuklian. There was a gem of a man and a terrific trumpet player. Much to our surprise, there was a picture of the FHS band in the lobby showcase. It was taken sometime between '57 and '58. Our tour guide was caught up with our excitement when I found MYSELF in the picture, some 45 years younger!!

Joan Alexander Quintana, My favorite memory was singing on stage in the performance of Brigadoon in my junior year.

Judy Mooney Bevins, Do you suppose that the curtain in front of the stage still says "ASBESTOS" in big, bold letters?

How about the copper fire extinguishers in niches in the walls?

Exchange assemblies. Edison High always had the best one. In fact, one year **Bill Bence** and I skipped our next class and stayed for the second performance and had to walk in late to whatever class was going on when the assembly ended. That, or we saw only what we wanted to, felt guilty and then went to class. We were teased about coming in late, together!

The pep rallies were so much fun! And loud!

Jim Bennett, I remember the great assemblies we had and it was just like being in a theater. It seems like everything revolved around that auditorium.

Connie Flores Reisbeck, Mixed school assemblies were always looked forward to with great enthusiasm, especially enjoyable were performances by Edison High School students, they always had outstanding talent.

Alan Hall, I fondly remember being in my jr. and sr. class plays in that great old auditorium. I remember Eddie Peabody being there. But the thing that gives me the greatest chuckle was **Ed Munger** doing a skit in our jr. year when the teachers in charge became offended with his subject matter and closed the curtain, but Ed was not to be deterred and stepped out in front of it. Then they pulled the big huge fire curtain down but he dodged that one also! Alas they turned his power off, which ended of his performance!!!!

WHO WOULD HAVE KNOWN.....



On April 6, 2004, Janene Lamanuzzi and Darin Marsella were married on Waialae Beach, Hawaii. I don't think either **Tom Marsella** or **Vic Lamanuzzi** could have dreamed of an event such as this while they attended Fresno High School.

It wasn't long after Darin met Janene that the connection was made about their dads both graduating from FHS in 1958. They often compared high school stories told by each dad about the fun times they had. It wasn't long after they met that Vic passed away, but he passes his blessings on to the newly weds from a glorious view above.

Darin works with Tom in investment management / venture capital and Janene teaches at Cooper Middle school, having earned her masters in education. They are expecting their first child, Dominic, on August 15 of this year. This will be the fourth grandson for Poppa Tom and the third grandchild for Janene's family.

"Janene is so very loved by our family, and Darin has never been the same from the day he met her", said Tom. "I am so very proud of them, they are both so very caring and loving, and I mention, now and then, how much I wish Vic could be here now". Who would have ever known.

MORE.....SENIOR WILLS

Who said, "I do hereby will...."

.... my dressing spot in the auto shop boiler room to some girl with enough nerve to take it.

....two dogs to a certain junior girl hoping she won't make the same mistake again; and Perry Como to FGM (he is 63, my dad told me).

....to Mr. Shive a can of peaches for his basement in case of an atomic bomb attack; to Pat Longache my candy dish; and Jamie to Helen Thormann.

....to Junior Sarantos a book on 50 ways to break your nose; to Sue Christianson, fourth period lunch, to Carl Warren, my book on how to get tall; and to Mr. Bain peace and quiet and more students like me.

....my guitar, cowboy hat and cowboy boots to Mr. Metzler because he told me (confidentially, of course) that he has always admired Elvis Presley (now he can be just like Elvis).

....to Mary my long hair so she won't have to wear a false pony tail; to Pick, my ability to stay in school; and to Gail my ability to drive.

....to Tony Lindlahr the black eye he gave me in the boxing show; to Harvey Diamond a whole slew of Dixieland records (may his metronome rest in peace).

....my rusty swimming suit to Hussy; a free class in co-ed cooking to Mr. Taylor; and everything else to Bear.

....to Chuck my car and driver's license; to Jim a new joke book and tube steak; to Vic some coordination; to Kathy, Chuck's basketball some day; and to Dick and Jean a world of their own.

....a course at Harold Zinkin's to J.W.; a new "head" to Barclay; all my conceit to Tews; my ability in athletics to young Carruth; and my driver's license to J.W.

Answers: Gerilee Schneider Cave, Jim Shekoyan, Francie Burkholder Griffin, Bev Cavounis Pointkowski, Larry Cross, Elvira Corsini Bowlby, Bob Knott, Phil Austin, Gary Gostanian and Danny Baker.

CONTINUING THIS NEWSLETTER: Without your support, this newsletter cannot continue to be published. Each four-page issue costs nearly 50 cents and consumes money that can be used towards future reunions or helping others who cannot afford to attend. Send your tax-deductible check to FHS Class of '58 c/o Buddy Arakelian at 529 W. Scott Ave. Fresno, CA 93704. Any amount will be appreciated.

_____ \$5 _____ \$10 _____ \$15 _____ \$25 _____ Other

Notification

Please notify someone on the reunion board of any changes to your personal information. Updates on changes for street address, email address, phone number or name will keep the FHS Class of '58 database in tip-top shape.

Editor's note: When contacting any classmate by email, use FHS, or Class of '58 or something similar so the email will not be deleted.

*"When in future years we're turning
leaves of memory,
Then we'll find our hearts returning,
Fresno High, to thee."*

Fresno High Class of '58
C/O Buddy Arakelian
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Fresno, CA 93704

Return Service Requested

The following classmates have made contributions to our newsletter: Wayne Alexander, Mickey Badiali Vermon, JoAnn D'Ambrosio Woodward, Tamra Koerner Beeler, Dennis Libby, Arlene Mazgedian Cartozian, Dian McCloskey Hale and Sharon Tranberg Kelley.

Reunion Board Members: **Buddy Arakelian**, co-chairperson. Reach him at Mrcentralv@sbc.global.net, 529 W. Scott Avenue, Fresno, CA 93704, 559-229-0850. **Lyn Darby Maloney**, co-chairperson. Reach her at lynmaloney46@aol.com, 7027 N. Teilman, #102, Fresno, CA 93711, 559-439-7525. **Pat Scheidt Austin**, austinart@comcast.net, 2500 E. Menlo Avenue, Fresno, CA 93710, 559-299-8446 **Donna Farris Gaither**, paulndonna@comcast.net, 6758 N. Malsbary Avenue, Fresno, CA 93711, 559-435-2411. **Vernie Morison Rehart**, crehart@aol.com, 5110 N. Fruit, #123, Fresno, CA 93711, 559-226-6620. **Jim Shields**, shieldsdad@aol.com, 499 E. Kelso, Fresno, CA 93720, 559-434-3899. **JoAnn D'Ambrosio Woodward**, ja_woodward@hotmail.com, 351 Baron Avenue, Clovis, CA 93612, 559-298-9296.

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This is your newsletter. Let us know of things that are happening in your life or tell us what else you would like to see in this publication. We are always looking for interesting stories and comments to convey to our long lost friends and classmates.

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Jan Charshaf Kelley, Janice_Kelley@sbcglobal.net, 2094 W. Magill, Fresno, CA 93711, 559-439-5272, and **James Palmer**, Jjf5864@yahoo.com, 559-233-7596, for Washington Jr. High. **Donna Farris Gaither** is looking for anyone interested in a committee for Fort Miller Jr. High. Call her at 559-435-2411. Since Harold Zahlis' death a few months ago, we no longer have a representative for Hamilton Jr. High. Anyone interested please contact JoAnn D'Ambrosio Woodward on the reunion board.