

ANECDOTES FROM THE 1958 SAUGATUCK HIGH SCHOOL CLASS REUNION

August 9, 2008

By 6:00 PM, Pumpnickel's Eatery of Saugatuck was quickly filling with 1958 graduates of Saugatuck High School. Larry and Jenny Bozt, proprietors, had side tables brimming with great food and the bar was open. Larry can be viewed on the video record describing this 1851 building that was partly built with late 18th century lumber.

The 1958 grads were joined by a few Saugatuck High School grads from 1957. Many of the alumni have continued to live in the area and retained a connection through the years. Frank Lamb, the coordinator of the event, appeared in his original Saugatuck basketball letter sweater. On a table near the entrance were pictures of the graduating class in 1958, and photos of classmates seated in a classroom. There were also photos of the 1958 varsity basketball team.

Larry L. Davis, the 1958 graduation valedictorian, soon presided as the master-of-ceremonies (he was remembered as having been very shy in high school). He provided a long list of school years memory questions for the attendees to react. He also provided a touching testimonial to the teaching abilities of his teachers, specifically Loretta Billar.

Before the sit-down dinner, Larry took the group down memory lane beginning with first grade. The memory challenges brought out old memories very effectively as memories jogged more memories in the group. It was remarkable how many shared memories this small group of people who spent 12 very formative years of their lives together could generate. Dinner was getting cold when they finally finished the 8th grade questions to finally go into the dining room to eat.

After dinner, group pictures and a few more drinks, the grads restarted the recollection game to cover high school. The memories became more personal and exciting with contributions from a former Saugatuck High

teacher sharing her views. Pranks and problems were aired and personality issues disclosed until the Bolz's indicated they were ready to close up the building. Clearly everyone had fun and left with a greater tolerance for the behavior of neighborhood adolescents.

Both photos and a video record of this event will be found in the www.sdhistoricalsociety.org website archives by 2010.

Following are excerpts from some audio records taken at the reunion.

Patricia Meyer Diepenhorst, 587 N. Maple Street, spent 10 years in the Saugatuck schools from 1948-58 after moving from Chicago. Her mother, Dorothy Meyer, and her grandparents Percy and Teckla Griffen, were also locals. Her twin sister is Diana Meyer Clough Kausen.

Pat remembers being a cheerleader for basketball, writing for the school newspaper, being class treasurer, singing in the school choir. He remembers loving her typing and bookkeeping courses, which served her future career. Among her favorite teachers were Loretta Billar (4th grade), Bill Johnson and her typing teacher, Jack Baker.

Ballroom dancing was taught to Pat and all students in those days by the professional dance team of George and Joanne Gallis. Pat studied art with noted artist Cora Bliss Taylor. School and community activities blended in her memory of 1950s Saugatuck-Douglas. Downtown were miniature golf and shuffleboard courts, a 35 cent movie, roller skating in the Big Pavilion, the ever popular Soda lounge, teen hops and square dancing on the Butler Street tennis court.

Pat recalls that after the school fire on the hill classes were held in private homes, churches and the school gym. She's very grateful for the family move from Chicago which allowed her to have the close personal attention of a supportive community.

Right after graduation, Pat married and had two daughters. Later, as a single mother, she went to work at what is now the Chemical Bank, where she remained for 36 years surviving the armed robbery of 1991.

Pat more recently built a home for herself on Maple, not too far from where she began her life in Saugatuck.

Larry L. Davis, of Clay, MI, attended Saugatuck schools through high school, growing up at 940 Pleasant Ave, the son of Laverne Davis who has since deceased. A serious student, Larry was known to be somewhat shy and retiring and favored by teachers for his diligence and reliability. However, as a senior adult, he volunteered to take over the master-of-ceremony role at the reunion and managed over an hour of directing his former classmates in a test of their school years memories. The activity brought out some raucous stories and hidden insights into the early development of some of these now significant adults.

Larry played basketball (not well by his report) and baseball, served on the student council in 11th grade and was class president in 10th. He gave the Valedictorian address with a dry mouth.

After graduation, Larry attended and graduated from Michigan State University with BA in Mathematics (Honors) in 1963. He has since worked in “all aspects of computer and information processing from entry level programming to major data center senior management in his 40.5 year career”.

In commenting on his Saugatuck education he reports the following.

As with most things in life, you got out of school what you put into it. The small school, small class sizes and easy access to teachers made for an optimum learning environment. Those who chose to take advantage of it did well. The teaching staff, with some exceptions, was comprised of dedicated, competent professionals. The firm foundation provided by Miss Loretta Biller through the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades was the basis for all of

my future learning and life-long self discipline. I was well qualified for college leaving the Saugatuck Public Schools. Saugatuck High School provided countless memories. It's not possible for me to select one above another.

(Larry brought with him to the event a diary given to him by Francis May Heath when he was in high school. The contents include the names of Saugatuck High School graduates from the earliest years of its existence. He is shown exhibiting this valuable artifact on our video. His plan is to give it to the SD Historical Society when he "is ready".)

Esther Hoover Jorgensen of Fennville, MI, quietly recalled how Saugatuck High School prepared her for a career as the Medical Librarian at the Douglas Community Hospital from 1960-68. She fondly recalls her senior year trip to New York City, attending basketball games when the team took district championship and many gatherings at the Soda Lounge downtown during the noon hour.

Video recording 1:00 hrs.
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Oral History