

We Were Princes of the Olentangy and Princesses of the Scioto
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Here we are at our sixth high school reunion. Look around you at all the classmates we spent so many years with in the first part of our lives. I hope you all have a sense of belonging. For those of you who were never in a fraternity, sorority, or on a sports team, your membership in the Upper Arlington High School Class of 1969 should be the same experience. It is your chance to belong. For all of us out of towners, the sense of belonging here is especially acute.

As different as we all may be today given the many experiences we have had over the past 35 years, we all share a strong common bond—we all grew up together in the same community and in the same school system. We all had the same set of adult role models—and some of these role models, our teachers, are here tonight. It is the people here in Upper Arlington and their values that have made us the people that we now are today. Many of us grew up living charmed lives. As with other children of families living in privileged communities, our parents made sure the world revolved around us. Some of us also had our youthful rebellions here. And Upper Arlington even accommodated and tolerated these behaviors. We all grew up as Princes of the Olentangy and Princesses of the Scioto. Many of us grew up thinking that the world was at our feet and that we could be anything and accomplish anything. Many of us had very high expectations for ourselves and others. The good news is that most of us have lived lives that have met or exceeded those expectations.

Of course Upper Arlington is not a perfect place and its people are not perfect. No place or group of people are. But many of us still long for that community where we played out our youthful innocence. We try to create the same values in the places we now live in. OK, let's admit the fact that we thought everyone else was living the Ward and June Cleaver life—or at least Sally Whipple was—while we were living at Eddie Haskell's house. The truth was that some of our families were dysfunctional. We all saw and heard about things in our family and other families that we would prefer not to have experienced. Parents in these households were not trying to create such a family but it happened. And it wasn't just in these families. Lots of things happened to us in High School that some of us would prefer not to remember—the bullying, the awkwardness, or the intense social pressure to be cool and to achieve. It was a socially difficult time for many of us and we need to acknowledge this. At this point in our lives we should talk about what happened—especially here among friends—and I ask classmates to please listen to the memories of your classmates—both good ones and negative ones. But at the end of the day let's concentrate on remembering the good stuff. For most of us the good things that happened in Upper Arlington as we grew up far outweighed the low moments! We are all here this weekend because we want to remember and think about what it was like growing up. The people who do not want to remember have chosen not to come.

Thinking of the contrasting highs and lows I am reminded of the first sentence of Charles Dickens' *A Tale of Two Cities*:

It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness.

Thinking back to our high school days, there were many proud moments—getting an A grade in a class, getting on the honor roll, membership on a sports team or school club, getting into college, and so many more moments. These proud moments are the ones we would like to remember the best.

But what about the embarrassing moments? Why is it so easy to remember the embarrassing moments and harder to remember the proud moments? Some of those embarrassing moments were—not having just the right clothes to wear, kissing a classmate and then realizing that the

romance didn't really materialize, doing something impulsive and getting into trouble, being picked on or intimidated by other classmates, and so many more moments. See my mannequin story at the web site. Why am I the only one willing to tell these stories on the web site? Guys, it's OK to talk about this now. It happened. There were plenty of lows but most were just normal things that happen to everyone as they grow up. They seem so insignificant now in the larger scheme of things.

Sitting in this room tonight are the people we learned our early life lessons from and with. Together we matured both physically and mentally at different rates. We learned lessons about achievement and about competing with one another, about fun, about friendship, and yes some of these friendships involved romance!

We learned about achievement as we competed against one another. We competed in the classroom for grades, we competed on athletic fields for spots on teams, we competed in the clothes we wore, for attention from our classmates--that is for girl friends and boy friends. Because of our finely tuned competitive edges learned in High School many of us are coming on strong in the second half of our lives.

Some classmates were more focused on being perfect while others were experts in exploration. I think I was in this latter category. As Randy Ynotz says, we tried to discover our passions. Many classmates were so focused on just getting through High School and getting on with the rest of their lives that High School was a blur.

We also learned about fun from each other. We had fun in gym class and on the sports fields. We laughed lots with each other in the classroom. We wrote notes to each other. Sometimes this fun took on the dimensions of mischief and of juvenile delinquency—the car going too fast, the alcohol that we were too young to drink, and so forth.

We became friends in class, on the playground, at the swimming pools, and elsewhere. We also became friends with classmate's parents. Bruce Johnson told me about being a paperboy and Jay Moffit's friendly help in delivering papers—Jay threw one and broke a window! Some of these friendships led to marriages to each other. Some of these friendships were interrupted as people moved to other parts of the country and world. Staring tonight we can renew these friendships.

It all comes together on Ellen Isaly Clark's web site. Please go in there and make your mark. Leave a story about growing up. Say something controversial. Have a laugh. Here we can be together again and again have a sense of belonging. It is an important place because this site is intended to keep us more connected in the future.

As we move through our events this weekend I have a few suggestions about rules of conduct:

Rule One: Come to terms immediately with the fact that your dancing makes you look like a frog in a blender.

Rule Two: Guys—I know that various punches thrown at classmates over the years missed. This is not the weekend to try to connect again. Wait till our 50th reunion when the punch won't have much force behind it.

Rule Three: Pay careful attention to your alcohol and food consumption as you may pay a price in embarrassment the next day. Focus on more salubrious pursuits this weekend.

Rule Four: Remember to thank you classmates for their poor vision if they say you look great. If they persist in their compliments try to determine their intent. If all else fails, give them a psychiatric referral.

Finally, I am honored to be the chairman of this reunion and have had fun being part of the center of attention with Ellen the past six month. I have always wanted to be the bride at every wedding and the corpse at every funeral. The reunion committee has had lots of fun putting it all together and getting reconnected with each other. We have already had our reunion over the past 6 months and it has been a great one.

Thanks for taking the time to show up, reconnect with friends, and both reflect on and laugh about some of the things that happened to us early in our lives! Just remember and focus on the fact that you all look exactly the same as you did in high school! NOT!