



Fresh Beginnings

It seems like we all need the lift that comes from the start of spring. Spring makes us have new expectations, even if we are less mobile and unable to get out to see the fresh blossoms and greening. This winter has been very mild and there was only one light frost in Pinellas County. Everything looked like Florida all winter long. This is the season when visitors come to get warm and many visit family who live here. The beaches are crowded and we are seeing the spring breakers here from northern schools. Yes, it is mostly familiar to us, but there are new things to explore. Downtown St. Petersburg has become a very “in” place to visit, with new restaurants and attractions everywhere.

January Luncheon

Following our experience last quarter, we decided to return to Carrabba’s restaurant on 4th Street North. We had a good group attend, with classmates travelling pretty far to join the luncheon. Dick Jemison came from Ft. Pierce and Emil Sales came from Clermont. We also have the Provo’s, who regularly come from Pasco County. Also, the Flad’s come from Leesburg.

Classmate News

Neil Gatewood commented on the previous article about Turner Sunken Gardens. It turns out that George Turner was his mom's uncle. Both Neil’s sister and brother were born there. His mom’s parents died when she was thirteen and kids were farmed out to relatives (Uncle George).

Bev Furman Praschan wrote last December: “Sorry no plans to come to Florida at this time, but will contact Nancy Litten if I do. She and my little sister, Darlene, are good friends. We love it in dry, sunny AZ! Been here (moving from Mich.) 29 yrs. ago come Jan. 1st.! We have one young grand (12

yrs. old) coming to see Grams and Grampa for Christmas. We have 12 great grands from 14 down to almost 2yrs. in IL, TX and CO. Our kids (all senior citizens) live in CA, IL and TX! All of them have come to visit this year. Hubby Neil had emergency Pacemaker put in after a fall in March. I had planned knee replacement surgery in October, so we’ve stayed home all year. Have a wonderful New Year!!! Loved the Sunken Gardens story. Enjoy your 1954 SPHS reunions everyone! I love the pictures! Happy 2017...Love and prayers,”

Judi Hirshberg Allen has lots of news for us: She and long-time friend John Marcellus were married on March 4. They have moved into a new residence in New Port Richey, on a canal that is connected to the Gulf of Mexico. John has a boat at the back door and loves to fish. Daughter Sharon performed at Ruth Eckerd Hall in Clearwater on March 5, in her impersonated role of Barbara Streisand. Hubby John Marcellus, who is a professional trombonist and master played in the orchestra for Sharon’s performance.

Sally Cook Vazquez has had some disabling falls recently. First fall damaged her shoulder and the second fall further aggravated the same shoulder and her hip and back. She has trouble driving with one arm and has not been able to join us recently.

Bette Jackman LoBue has published another book. This time it is for children and is titled *A Special Day for Aki*. It is a colorful highly illustrated book about a day in the life of a Japanese child. Check it out at Amazon.com, or your favorite book store.

Graduations

Charlotte Rigelspaugh Batt died on February 23, 2016 in Rocky Mount, NC. We learned this belatedly from her son, Bill. Well known for her joy of meeting new people, Charlotte owned and operated Main Street News for over 30 years which was in downtown Rocky Mount. She dedicated her life to helping those around her and would later associate herself with Amy’s Hallmark for another 10 years until her retirement. Charlotte had five children. A woman of faith, she was a member of Englewood Presbyterian Church for many years.

Charlotte was a loving mother, grandmother, great-grandmother, sister and friend to many. She loved and cherished all the great memories created with her children and grandchildren. She is dearly missed by all who knew her. Her son, Bill, said Charlotte really enjoyed the newsletter and thanked the class for sending it.



Phyllis Robbins Tippets passed away June 27, 2016, per her caregiver Ann Marie Chinn. We were unable to find an obituary for Phyllis via on-line sources and only know that she lived in Tampa.

The widow of our late classmate, **Ross Lew, Evette Lew**, passed away on February 5, 2017 in St. Petersburg. She and Ross were parents of three children, Carmen (deceased), Jeffrey and Alan. She had three grandchildren and three great grandchildren. Yvette will be remembered as a devoted mother and friend to many, who would send a beautifully written note or card to say hello or lift one's spirits.



Doris Chew Gilbert died on December 31, 2016 in Spring Hill, FL, one day short of her 81st birthday. She is survived by a son and two daughters. She also had three grandchildren. Doris had worked at the GE-Lockheed Martin plant in Pinellas County until

1992. She was a life member of the VFW Auxiliary of Hernando Beach and the Red Hat Society.



Many of us remember Doris like this.

Barbara Drescher Broughton died February 8, 2017 in Marietta, GA. Barbara had been in education most of her life. She had risen to be Principal of SPHS and hosted one of our reunion tours of the school. After SPHS, she moved to the Atlanta area, where she served in an executive position for a secondary school accreditation organization. In recent years, she suffered from dementia. Her obituary in the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* was very brief and did not note survivors or any memorial services.

. Our Classmates Help

This newsletter helps us keep track of classmates near and far. Often, a person informing us of a classmate's passing will tell us how much the newsletter was appreciated by the loved one.

Our classmates generously help pay these newsletter costs. It eliminates the need for

“subscriptions”, which would require too much bookkeeping. We try to acknowledge donors in each edition. Thanks to **James Cox, Joan Shaffer Hammill and Ed Parsley.**

St. Pete Gran Prix

For a city with an older reputation as a place where seniors hang out and green benches, St. Petersburg has become a place attractive to young people. Not only are more moving into downtown housing, but night life has increased all around town. Planned events cater to the town’s younger population.

An annual event for many years is the St. Pete Gran Prix, which showcases the town to the world. Those who have not lived in the area probably do not know about this event. Downtown streets and Albert Whitted Airport are laid out with the course. Concrete and chain-link barriers are placed all along the course to protect drivers and spectators.

The IndyCar racers open their season every year in St. Pete. The season is 17 races long and they compete all over the U.S. In contrast to NASCAR cars, IndyCars are open-wheel custom cars of the type seen in the annual Indianapolis 500 race.



Looking NW along Bayshore Drive SE, the field takes a turn onto Dan Wheldon Way on their way to the airport runway. St. Pete’s booming skyline can be seen in the distance.

One part of the race course is Dan Wheldon Way. Wheldon was a British driver who won the 2005 IndyCar series and the Indianapolis 500 in 2005 and 2011. He won the 24 hours of Daytona in 2006. Sadly, Dan was killed in the final race of the 2011 IndyCar Series, in Las Vegas.

Today, Dan’s widow, Susie, and their two sons call St. Petersburg their home. Just prior to the 2017 race events, Susie opened a clothing boutique in St. Pete, *Verve*. The Indianapolis Motor Sports people sent the Indy 500 Borg-Warner trophy down to her shop for the grand opening. Also present were a half dozen previous Indy 500 winners, including four-time winner Dario Franchetti.



Making a turn at the airport. This year’s race was sponsored by Firestone Tires.

The actual IndyCar race is only one of the races held during the week-end. Preceding and following the main events are other specialized races. This year, customized pick-up trucks raced. Also, luxury car clubs race against others of their brand, such as Maserati, Alfa Romeo, Jaguar, etc. These are usually short races, and create a lot of stress for drivers and spectators alike. When one of those beautiful machines hits the wall or another car, it seems like such a waste. They were only out for a friendly race and suffer costly damage to their personal car. ☹️



The streets of St. Pete were humming with open-wheel IndyCar race cars for the start of the IndyCar Series 2017 season.

Class Contacts:

Class of 1954 web site, where you can find it all:

<http://sphs1954.org/> . Help us keep your data current!

Reunions Chairman: Boyd Acklin, 1110 42nd Ave. N., St. Petersburg, FL 33703, (727) 527-0361 or eacklin1@tampabay.rr.com

Contributions: Donations are a big help and they keep this newsletter coming. (14 years, so far.) Please send them to Lil Classen, Treasurer, at 8037 Elbow Lane N., St. Petersburg, FL 33710. Please make checks payable to: “SPHS Class of ‘54”,

Classmate updates, news-to-share, etc., should be sent to: Ron Rasmussen, Editor, 10212 58th Street, Pinellas Park, FL 33782-2632, (727) 544-2374 or ronr@alumni.ufl.edu

Next reunion luncheon is Saturday, April 8, 2017

Location is Chili’s at US 19 & East Bay in Largo (with a Clearwater mailing address) Gathering time is **11:30 a.m. If you plan to attend, please let Nancy Cramer Litten know by Thur., Apr. 6. Nancy’s phone is (727) 392-7417.**



5430 E. Bay Drive, Clearwater, FL

SPHS Class of 1954
10212 58th Street
Pinellas Park, FL 33782-2632
Address Service Requested