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# Seizing a Golden Opportunity

I am a proud graduate of North Kansas City High School, the home of the Hornets. We proudly sported our alma mater colors of purple and gold during our high school years. Gold, not golden—but why do I mention “golden”?

Golden also refers to long-lasting and meaningful relationships, associations, marriages and other events in our lives. This fall I was part of the 50th reunion of the 1964 graduating class of NKSHS. (See crest to the right.) Yes, 50 years ago, we left our safe lives and took off in the direction of our choice (and in some cases, the direction the U.S. military chose for us).

The year 1964 is the leading edge of the baby-boomer generation. This was the first exposure of the country to what was to follow for nearly two more generations. By the time the last boomers came along, society, industry, educational institutions and all other aspects of normal life were ready to handle the onslaught of the largest population group in history.

That was not the case for those born in 1946 and who graduated in 1964. None of the nation's institutions or segments of society at that time were ready for us and those coming behind us. A span of 18 years represented great differences between the first and last elements of the largest generational group that has existed. Our mere presence has created challenges and opportunities to business, government and other institutions, resulting in tremendous innovations and improvements in our country. Our class (and my childhood friends) reflected on all of these various challenges during a weekend-long celebration a few weeks ago.

## A Special 877

The current student body of our high school was gracious and supportive of the old folks, and the interactions between “us and them” were entertaining, informative and enlightening. It was a fun time spent with members of a vastly different generation from a vastly different time, who are growing up in a vastly different country. They represent a group who will never



know, understand, appreciate or identify with all of the influences that surrounded we boomers. We found a sense of fulfillment in imparting what our years at NKCHS were like compared to those of the current senior class members.

We were the largest graduating class—877 strong—in our high school's history up until that time. That record held for until the class of 1965, which numbered more than 2,100. Yep, society never opened its eyes and never saw us coming even though we were always there, just creeping a little closer every year.

Once must take a moment to realize the enormity of 877 in 1964. Those numbers just simply did not exist. I found

that out very clearly later that year, when I went to college and talked to my new fellow classmates about their class sizes. Our number created its own challenges; however, opportunities were not far behind.

## Coming Together

Our reunion brought together 283 individuals, many who had not seen each other in 50 years. The joy of those two days together was not based on reflecting on time long gone by but rather on lives lived, sorrows faced, joys created and loves found and lost. We each shared who we are now, not who we were then. It was truly a lesson in appreciating what our blue-collar student body had (and wildly loved), and what as a totally divergent group of human beings we have enjoyed: much happiness, accomplishment, fulfillment and sorrow. And much satisfaction and feeling of completion about what we may have envisioned walking across the commencement stage 50 years ago. And we also recognized we didn't take full advantage of some opportunities, and there were some paths we simply did not take.

These words are not what you may have expected this column to be this month, but it's something that simply came from my heart that I wanted to share. And, to tell each of you not there yet, when you have the opportunity to rekindle relationships long since ended, please do so. Because it truly does turn out that they never ended—they were just waiting for a time to begin again.

Our capacity for reflection and appreciation are wonderful feelings that we each are blessed with. Grasp them! ■