

Bisonalities, Again



A quarterly Newsletter dedicated to the Alumni of Waterford and Fort LeBoeuf High Schools

October 2009

Fall Issue

Volume 11 – Number 1

Inside this issue

Cat's Corner	2
Trip to 2009 Waterford Heritage days by Wes Nicklas-WHS '54	3
Aging Gracefully Author Unknown	4
The galvanized washing tub Author Unknown	5
55th Class reunion by Wes Nicklas-WHS '54	6

Welcome to the latest issue of the **Newsletter** dedicated to the alumni (students, teachers, and administrators) of Waterford and Fort LeBoeuf High Schools. This newsletter will be distributed quarterly. New issues will be posted for viewing on the Web on or about, January 1, April 1, July 1, and October 1.

The Bisonalities, Again Web site may be viewed by going to the following URL: www.bisonalitiesagain.com

The success of this newsletter depends on you. I need contributors. Do you have an interesting article, a nostalgia

item, a real life story, or a picture you would like to share with others? Do you have a snail-mail or an e-mail address of an alumnus? If you do, send it to me at the following e-mail address:

candoercat@gmail.com

or to my snail-mail address:

Robert J. Catlin, Sr.
2670 Dakota Street
Bryans Road, MD 20616-3062
Tel: (301) 283-6549

Please, NO handwritten submissions.

This newsletter is available free on the Web to any and all alumni, teachers, and administrators, past or present, of Waterford and Fort LeBoeuf High Schools. If you know an alumnus, teacher, or administrator who would be interested, tell them about the Web site.

None of the material in this newsletter has a copyright, unless otherwise noted. If you wish to print the newsletter and make copies to distribute to others, please feel free to do so.

There was a young lady named Hannah,
Who slipped on a peel of banana.
More stars she espied
As she lay on her side
Than are found in the Star Spangled
Banner.

A gentleman sprang to assist her;
He picked up her glove and her wrister;
"Did you fall, Ma'am?" he cried;
"Do you think," she replied,
"I sat down for the fun of it, Mister?"



Cat's Corner

Nancy and I, for the first time in a couple of years, decided to take our summer vacation during Heritage Days, instead of over the 4th of July, and we are certainly glad we did.

During our vacation in the Waterford area we had a very delightful stay. The weather was not exactly delightful, but the events we attended were.

It started off the first night of Heritage days with our attending Alumni Night at the fire house. This annual event is sponsored by the Fort LeBoeuf School District Foundation.

Later that night we drifted through the Heritage Days grounds and down to the Waterford Hotel and had a sarsaparilla on the patio.

On the patio we met with numerous alumni who also were partaking of liquid refreshments. I would love to list the people who were there but with my memory (or lack there of) I know I would leave out several names, so I will not do so.

The next morning we came back out to Waterford and stood near the judge's stand and watched the Heritage Days parade with Merle and Connie Wilmire and family. We wanted to be close enough to hear the announcements of each group/float as they passed by

but with Art Steeves making the announcements, we could probably have watched from a mile away and heard him (grin).

Later that day, Saturday, July 18, we attended the FLB class of 1959's 50th class reunion. It was held at class member Harry Thomas's house in the Asbury Woods neighborhood of Millcreek. Nancy and I were invited as special guests of Buck Davis. A great time was had by all.

That night we met Chuck and Alice Cowley in the park for a country music concert in the gazebo. Good company and good music.

The next day, Nancy and I attended the Waterford High class of 1954's 55th class reunion. Their reunion was held at the home of Roger and Betty Jean Schwab on West 3rd Street in Waterford. Nancy and I were special guests of Shirley Eliason. A very delightful time was had by all.

On the way back to Erie we decided to take a detour to the waterfront in Erie. We started down the Bay Front connector and noticed that a car show was being conducted in the commuter parking lot in front of the Pepsi Amphitheater. There were over 300 old and new cars on display that were being judged for "best of show." One of the cars in the show we recognized immediately, it was Everett and Louella Falconer's Kaiser.

After spending over an hour looking at the cars we proceeded down to the dock to try to locate my Mother and Dad's memorial brick on the wall that runs around Dobbin's Landing. My oldest brother, Ernie (WHS class of '47), arranged for their names to be placed on a memorial brick and put into the memorial walk wall.

In addition to all these events, we had dinner, lunch, and/or breakfast with several old friends.

On the final day of our stay, Wednesday, July 22, we had lunch with the class of 1956 reunion committee at Carini's on the corner of First Alley and High Street. In attendance at the lunch were Babe Brace, Joni Markham, Carol Kircher, Suzie Fox, Lura Silvaggi, Phyllis Russell, Vera Powell, Janet Lipinski, and Nancy and I. We arrived about noon and spent the good part of three hours discussing the problems of growing old and historical events in our past and present lives.

It was great to see so many of my old classmates while we were home.

Joni looked great. She has pretty much recovered from the devastating brain stem stroke she had. The limericks found between stories are a few of the "clean" limericks I have in my collection.

A Tutor who tooted the flute

Tried to teach two young tooters to toot.
Said the two to the tutor,
"Is it harder to toot, or
To tutor two tooters to toot?"

Trip to 2009 Waterford Heritage days by Wes Nicklas, WHS Class of 1954

This is for old people only.

Do you remember early school days when the teachers were desperate for writing topics? The fall-back position was usually "What I did on vacation." This story is about my vacation, written in semi-outline form since this is the way my brain works.

Left Lexington on Wed 7/15/09, with intent to go to the reunion of WHS class of 1954. Heritage Days was included as a freebie. With wife Gwen

we headed north from Lexington, KY, with a plan to see the Horseshoe curve on the old PRR railroad near Altoona. This was the only bad feature of the entire trip. They have a nice observation area, but have allowed so many trees to grow up that you can not see much of the curve. About all you can do is hear the trains come around. If you want to see the thing get an airplane. We wasted two hundred miles on this detour, but from this point on the trip went very well. (I have since found out from internet friends that the curve can be seen by taking a morning Amtrak train from Altoona to Johnstown and returning over the same track in the afternoon. No charge for this advice.)

Lots of things to do in Waterford. Had dinner at the Eagle Hotel Thursday night and started Friday by buying two cases of Troyer's chips. The Mercury auto was beginning to fill up. Went back to the Eagle and bought two more of Lew Dove's books. Both good, but "Elsie" had some rough edges-needed one more proof-read. Had Jim Salmon sign his book for me (Confessions of a One-Eyed Neurosurgeon) and got acquainted with his wife, Louisa, while he was signing others. Told Louisa what lies I could dredge up about Jim, and maybe she did the same. (The lady that's known as Lou?)

Saturday morning started with the parade and Jim was part of it, driving a nice old Allis tractor.

Couldn't believe the size of the FLB high school band. They had more people marching than we had in the upper three years of WHS. Probably about 100 total. The town looked good, hard to believe they had 200 inches of snow last winter. Dell and Bobbie Shields introduced us to people I used to know and furnished some Waterford history. How many

towns of that size have a historical society? Or a fire department that large? Talked to Ronnie Gibson and Roger Skiff. Gave Amber Owens McCall a card from Lester Owen's son, music director at a Lexington, KY high school.

Took a quick run thru the back roads of Washington valley, near my Grandfather's old farm. Saw the largest flock of wild turkeys ever. Heard some good music in the park Saturday and since we had some time to kill later I talked Gwen into an Erie casino visit. She was sitting in front of a triple diamond quarter machine, looking bored. I put a \$15 ticket in the machine and walked off in search of another machine. Upon returning, she was gone, but later showed up with a cash-out ticket for \$155. She was smart enough to quit while ahead.

Saw lots of motorcycles at our motel. Turned out they were there for "Roar on the Shore" There were supposed to be 200,000 of them.

Went to Church in the Park Sunday, followed by the reunion. Can't fit the reunion in here, but will try to pick up on this later.

On the way back to Kentucky, we stopped in the Sandusky, OH area. Took a ferry boat to the Put in Bay Island and saw the Perry Victory monument. If you don't take your car to this good sized island, you will need a bike or a golf cart. All are for rent, but your car is better in case of rain. Net cost is about the same. Nice country with orchards and good farmland. Bet it is cold and windy in winter.

Next day we discovered that Camp Perry was only a few miles out of our way. We missed the big national shoot off by only a week, but got to see a lot of people practicing. This is an OH National Guard base and is popular due to

availability and shooter safety. The impact area behind the targets was Lake Erie. Target distances go out beyond 600 yards, maybe 1000. It was an easy place to visit, with maps at the gate. Large place.

Seven hours into the next day and we were home. Gwen enjoys these Waterford trips as much as I do. She accomplished her goal of not having to fix meals for eight days. This was done in spite of sometimes staying in rooms that had cooking facilities. When I suggested that it wouldn't be too much trouble to buy a box of Cheerios she pretended not to hear me.

**There once was a man from Nantucket,
Who kept all his cash in a bucket,
But his daughter named Nan
Ran away with a man,
And alas for the bucket, Nan-tuck-et!**

**But he followed the pair to Pawtucket,
The man and the girl with the bucket,
And he said to the man,
He was welcome to Nan;
And as for the bucket, Paw-tuck-et!**

Aging Gracefully
Author unknown

The other day a long-time friend from my days with the Department of State sent the below to me. It says it all for me and I hope for you, also.

I would never trade my amazing friends, my wonderful life, my loving family for less gray hair or a flatter belly. As I've aged, I've become kinder to myself, and less critical of myself. I've become my own friend. I don't chide myself for eating that extra cookie, or for not making my bed, or for buying that silly cement gecko that I didn't need, but

looks so avant garde on my patio. I am entitled to a treat, to be messy, to be extravagant.

I have seen too many dear friends leave this world too soon; before they understood the great freedom that comes with aging.

Whose business is it if I choose to read or play on the computer until 4 AM and sleep until noon? I will dance with myself to those wonderful tunes of the 40's and 50's, and if I, at the same time, wish to weep over a lost love ... I will.

I will walk the beach in a swim suit that is stretched over a bulging body, and will dive into the waves with abandon if I choose to, despite the pitying glances from the jet set. They, too, will get old.

I know I am sometimes forgetful. But there again, some of life is just as well forgotten. And I eventually remember the important things.

Sure, over the years my heart has been broken. How can your heart not break when you lose a loved one, or when a child suffers, or even when somebody's beloved pet gets hit by a car? But broken hearts are what give us strength and understanding and compassion. A heart never broken is pristine and sterile and will never know the joy of being imperfect.

I am so blessed to have lived long enough to have my hair turning gray, and to have my youthful laughs be forever etched into deep grooves on my face. So many have never laughed, and so many have died before their hair could turn silver.

As you get older, it is easier to be positive. You care less about what other people think. I don't question myself anymore. I've even earned the right to be wrong.

So, to answer your question, I like being old. It has set me free. I like the person I have become. I am not going to live forever, but while I am still here, I will not waste time lamenting what could have been, or worrying about what will be. And I shall eat dessert every single day (if I feel like it).

**FRIENDS MAY YOU ALWAYS HAVE
A RAINBOW OF SMILES ON YOUR FACE
AND IN YOUR HEART.**

The galvanized washing tub

Author Unknown

The following poem will not mean much to some of you, to others there will be a sly grin and a remembrance of days long ago. I am one of the latter because I grew up in a house with no inside bathroom facilities and remember, during cold weather, taking a bath in a galvanized washing tub. During warmer weather, we always had the creek to take a bath in.

Did you ever take yore Saturday bath
an' try to wash an' scrub
While squattin' down on yore haunches
In a galvanized washing tub?

If not, then you ain't missed a thing
But I'm telling you what's right.
I done it until I wus almost grown,
An' every doggone Saturday night!
In summertime it wuz bad enuff,
But in winter it wuz really rough,
Spreadin' paper, filling buckets an'
kettles
An' all sorta stuff,

But getting ready for that ordeal
Wuz only half o'th' rub
O' takin' a bath on Saturday night
In a galvanized washin' tub.

Did you ever stand there stripped to th'

skin,
A woodstove bakin' you' hide
A-dreadin to put yore dern foot in
For fear you'd burn alive?

Finally you got th' temperature right
and into th' tub you'd crawl,
That cold steel'd touch yore back
An' you'd squeal like a fresh stuck hog!

You'd get outta th' tub next to th' stove
An' stand there drippin' and shakin'
The front o' your body's a freezin' to
death
While the back o' yore body's bakin'

That's the price I had to pay,
That awful ordeal will haunt me
until I'm old an' gray.

I ain't thur yet - there's somethin' else
That I been wantin' to say,
I wuz the youngest of all the kids
What bathed each Saturday,
Now we all bathed accordin' to age

An' I fell last in order
Which meant I had to wash myself,
an' in their same dad-blamed water.

I'm a woman o' clean habits,
An' believe in a bath a week
It helps to keep clean an' healthy,
An' it freshens up my physique,

But if I had my druthers,
I'd druther eat a bug
Then to take my Saturday bath again
In a galvanized washin' tub

WHS class of 1954 reunion

By Wes Nicklas - WHS Class of '54

Yep, it was the 55th, and maybe the best
one ever.

Credit must go to known plotters

Shirley Eliason, Helen [Tony] Roberts, and Betty [Martin] Schwab. There may have been others, but they stayed hidden. Let me see: I was in love with Helen in 8th grade, dated Betty in HS, and failed to respond to Shirley's invite to attend the Methodist Church late in HS. I chickened out.

Since it took the form of a picnic at the Schwab's home, the planning may have gone like this:

"We really should do it, since we may never have another chance. Betty, you have a big place on Third Street, so that's how it will work." Then Betty had to beat up on Roger to get him to promise to spiff up the place, trim the grass, and turn two spaces of his four car garage into a nice dining area. This included carpet on the floor and a lot of tables and stuff for 40 plus people.

Back to the facts; we were driving to Waterford and I had a horrible thought -- what if it rains? Where can everyone park? Will we have a good turnout? Wife, Gwen reminded me to quit being a worry-wart. When we did arrive there were acres of parking space in the Schwab back forty and not a drop of rain. Betty was so confident that her Mustang was parked outside with the top down.

Arrived just in time and all the guys were sober -- they even stayed that way. Lots of food was laid out and it was time to eat. After eating too much I talked to some of the ladies to find out if there was any recent gossip. We are way behind the times, but they were all too polite to pass anything on. Maybe they had forgotten. They all looked good though.

The class members have always made Gwen feel welcome, so I asked her to talk to Bill Hunt, and find out what he had been doing.

We avoided health subjects, but I found out that Dick Powell had quit smoking about five years ago. He'll probably live to be a hundred. Dell and Bobbie helped me out with recognizing old friends.

Dave Rockwood was there and I could mostly recognize him -- it had been 55 plus years since we last talked. He is still the quiet man. Don Holder and I talked about machine shop stuff, and Norm Brumagin told us about avoiding brass castings. Roger and I talked about cars and guns just like we used to. Gerry Brace may have come the greatest distance, since he lives in Texas.

Clyde McGinnett is now living in Mill Village after retiring from USDA -- I think. I wonder how it would feel to return to the old home town. Betty Schwab reports that there is a bit of "on stage" thing one has to take care of when getting out of a red convertible with people watching.

Phil Hazen was there from Maryland, which has become home to several of our class members.

Honorary members of class of 54 present included Carm Bonito, Lois Byers and Bill Rhode.

Glad they can still put up with us.

Buck Brace and Martha stopped in and we caught up a bit on old times. I meant to spend more time with Buck and Gerry, but stuff happens.

Bob Catlin, the editor, was there, with shiny white suspenders. We thanked him for all the good Bisonalities output. He claims membership in the class of 56 and also claims Maryland as home.

Another good thing about the picnic format was the second meal we ate at eight o'clock or so. For many of us, the total "visit" time was nearly nine hours. By the time we left,

around 8:30, Heritage Days was history and the tents and booths were gone from the park.

We missed more class members than I can squeeze in here, but Ray, Tom, Bill and Sandy have to be mentioned. Hang in all.

Thanks again to our hosts. (Shirley, your place in Heaven is now secure.)

Send gossip, complaints and corrections to: wnicklas@live.com

Enjoy!

See you next quarter!