

SUMMARY & REPORT

“50 LAPS AROUND THE SUN”

Class of 1963 50th Reunion

Ann Arbor Pioneer High School

by

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GOALS

The Steering Committee began working on the Reunion in the Spring of 2010. Our four goals were to:

1. Hold a memorable 50th Reunion in Ann Arbor, inviting as many classmates as we could find.
2. Make it possible that *everyone* who wished would be able to attend.
3. Design a budget that would enable us to provide funds for the enjoyment of the participants, and make a donation to Pioneer High School if any funds should be left over.
4. Enhance each aspect of the Reunion’s events, providing for at least one “WOW! Experience” for each of our Classmates. (When registrations exceeded both our expectations and our financial breakeven point, we were able to add this fourth goal of “WOW!”)

PROCESS

Five years ago, in a very short time, Mary Lou Covert put together a Committee to create the Class of 1963’s 45th Reunion. Diane Lindemann set out to pull together the class list. We hoped for 100 attendees, and we reached that objective. As the 50th Reunion Committee began its work, we met with the Class of ’61 & ’62 reunion organizers and received advice, many valuable insights and lots of ideas.

We decided to establish an Internet-based registration process, and a comprehensive Reunion website. We could then record registrations directly through it, while manually entering Classmates who wished to register by phone or U.S. mail. The resulting

spreadsheet was imported into *Microsoft ACCESS* where items were sorted and reports, lists, name tags, and tickets were created.

While setting up our planning procedures, we decided early-on that “up & down votes” would only create winners and losers. Thus, over our three planning years, very few votes were taken, and we always tried to operate with a consensus model. During our first year we developed a “Champions approach.” We decided that — after thorough discussion of ideas, suggestions, and proposals from Committee members — final decisions about process and method should be made by the member willing to take charge of managing each task, the “Champion” for that particular job. (For example, the Committee brainstormed and discussed many banquet decoration ideas, and a budget was set. Armed with this information, our “Champion of Decorations,” Carol Schonberger, took on this task and created a plan and method for making it happen.)

Treasurer Process: We decided early that a team of treasurers would make the system work well. Two of our members lived next to each other and took on the role of Treasury Champions. Unfortunately, both had to withdraw due to health issues, and the role of Treasurer passed to another Champion. *Quicken* became our record keeping system, and financial reports were created in *Microsoft EXCEL*.

Task Management Process: A “critical path system” was created to map the development and progression of each phase of planning. We were easily months ahead of what was happening, and this system worked well for *almost* three years...until the last several weeks prior to the Reunion. It was then that we discovered a couple of weak spots in our plan and our budget because we were not quite prepared for the surprisingly large influx of last-minute registrations in late May and early June. We had rocked ourselves into a feeling of security because of the time cushion we thought we had. When the “cushion got compressed,” we found ourselves having to scramble to make everything work out okay. (If we had it to do over again, we’d do things differently!)

PROMOTION We owe Classmate Lance Gillingham a large debt of gratitude for his help with **The List**. The class-list information we inherited from the 45th Reunion was a great start, but

over the intervening five years a number of holes had opened up — people with changed names that we couldn't track down, out-of-date contact info, and sadly a growing number of Classmates who had passed away. Having an accurate list was vital in keeping our class informed and promoting future events. In our second planning year, Lance took the lead as “Champion of The List,” and our directory grew in length and accuracy.

Our **50th Reunion Website** was the greatest reference forum we had. The number of hits — over 30,000 — was ten times what we had predicted. Butch Larkins was our skillful high-tech Webmaster, and his design and implementation were perfect.

Newsletters were the chief promotion medium we had. Classmates looked forward to them and loved the tone and the content. Stan Bidlack was our editor. The online publication cost us nothing but countless hours by our editor. Thus, we were able to publish quite a large body of material. (The USPS-mailed Newsletters cost \$1,760.35)

Personal Phone Calls rounded out our promotion efforts. As Reunion Summer approached, Committee members and project Champions took the class directory and scanned it for people they knew who had not registered. We began to send emails, write letters, and make phone calls to these Classmates — to say that we would miss them, and encourage their attendance. We got a good response. Classmates we didn't know very well were also phoned and written, but these contacts were less effective. And, in a small number of cases, people simply did not wish to be contacted.

EVENTS

Three July “Pre-Reunion Reunions”: On the second Saturday in July of 2010, 2011, and 2012, the Committee hosted pre-Reunion gatherings at Zingerman's Roadhouse in Ann Arbor. We encouraged local Classmates and Teachers, as well as those who might be traveling nearby, to stop in and say hello. We were gratified by an increasingly larger response each summer: 2010 - 30+; 2011, - 60+; 2012 - 100+. More than a few traveled hundreds of miles!

50th Reunion Weekend's Michigan Theater Reception: We had an original budget of \$700 for rent, name tags, and snacks. A cash bar was also scheduled. Our target

attendance was around 150. We had 269! The majestic Michigan Theater, with all the personal memories it held, made a perfect venue for Friday Night of Reunion Weekend. We were able to add the staircase photo, the finger food, and the Jazz Quartet as the increasing number of registrations allowed upgrades to this event. We spent \$3,332.35 for the Michigan Theater reception.

Big House Tour: The UM Stadium tour's cost was a modest \$164, leaving us a small surplus. The extra money was used to cover losses on the other tours. Survey feedback was overwhelmingly positive. Due to fairly significant walking distances, however, we should have spelled out the physical requirements needed to participate in this event. We asked for extra guides but only received two, we could have used six. Water may have been helpful, but with a 10:00 start it did not seem necessary.

Ann Arbor City Tour: This tour had a cost of \$880, plus \$68 in water and snacks. The tour was professional, and all feedback was positive. It got a late start however, due to a few delayed Classmates which cut the tour short.

High School Tour: We had 125 participants, and the tour cost was \$625, plus \$60 for the two student guides. Water and snacks were provided at an additional \$113.77. Originally, groups of thirty were to be guided by students. However, Pioneer High vetoed that idea, and faculty were not available. We were able to recruit Pioneer's band director, David Leach, who did a fine job hosting and guiding the big group.

We had one Classmate who became ill on this one, and we were lucky that nothing negative came of it. Somehow, we had not thought about a first-aid situation, and a plan certainly should have been in place. It was just something that we hadn't prepared for, and it was an oversight. We have advised the Class of '65 organizers to make sure to plan for an unexpected medical situation.

Saturday Night's "Final-Lap Finish Line" Banquet & Program: This was the culmination of all our efforts. In researching and selecting a site, we had a specific set of criteria: (1) an Ann Arbor location; (2) a hotel attached to the venue; (3) a large enough dining room for Saturday night's banquet & program; (4) a nice "memorabilia

display” & “quiet room” area; and (4) a full bar. As plans developed during the planning years, our venue changed twice — first from Washtenaw Community College to Weber’s Inn, then to the Kensington Court Hotel. Because of the required amenities and the capacity it could accommodate, the Kensington was the only one that satisfied all criteria.

As registrations came in, we were able to build from a basic Saturday Night buffet, with cheese & cracker reception, to a multiple-entrée, *four* service-line buffet. We added free soft drinks, all-night coffee, and a late-night pizza snack to enhance the party. (We received lots of positive feedback on these extras.) The registration room and the memorabilia & quiet room both made for a smooth transition from hotel entrance to dining. Four bars handled the large number of registrants. Priscilla Basom and her daughter supplied a very popular Photo Booth — at no charge. The Class of 1965 expertly handled Saturday Night’s registration duties, and this freed the Committee to concentrate on other tasks. We spent a lot of time researching and debating music and dance floor arrangements. As registrations grew, space became a significant issue and dictated our decisions. Carol Schonberger designed, purchased, and set up the decorations with volunteer help from a large number of our Classmates.

GUESTS

Honored Guests: Our teachers were located and managed by Stan Bidlack. The formal teacher invitations were created by Stan, Jean Gallagher, and Barb Burd. Seventeen teachers and guests were honored with dinner, program biographies, and “Pencil Awards.” Chuck Wilkins and Rick Weid designed and made the Teachers’ souvenirs. Twenty-five classmates donated to sponsor teachers and their guests; \$1,496 was expended on them, with \$83.00 left over from the sponsorships. This will be donated with other leftover funds.

SPONSORSHIP

Classmate Sponsorships: Judy Hindal and Blondeen Munson were the Champions of this effort. They designed the process to keep both the donors and those sponsored strictly anonymous. Suggestions were steered to Judy & Blondeen then screened and selected. Sponsored registrations were identical to the others. Classmates’ caregivers were also sponsored where needed. Thirty-six of our Classmates made donations —

some to sponsor a named classmate, all others to be selected by the process. The contributions totaled \$1,483. We spent \$1496 on nineteen classmates and escorts. The shortfall was covered from our General Fund. No classmate who wished to attend was denied access, even after registration was closed.

GENERAL FUND

DONATIONS

Classmates made donations to the General Fund throughout much of our planning process. These contributions enabled us to add a number of nice features to the Reunion experience. Early in our first planning year members of the Steering Committee personally provided “seed money” to establish our General Fund. This was done with the hope that these monies could be returned if and when our budget was balanced. We achieved this goal. We welcomed general donations as well, and \$2,801.06 was donated without designation by thirty-four classmates. This money kept the process rolling and allowed us to proceed with cash on hand. Any amount left at the closing of the books will be used to help fund future reunion events and projects within Pioneer High that provide aid to students. Such projects will be determined and announced at the close of the books.

SALES

Football DVDs: This State Championship season game-film collection was sold to benefit the Jay Stielstra Pay-to-Play Foundation. The proceeds from the video were presented to the Ann Arbor Foundation, which in turn supported student-athletes that could not afford to participate without assistance. We took on this role because our senior class were the leaders of that 1962 football season and the current Pioneer High Football Boosters were not prepared for online or by-mail sales.

FEES

Online Payments: Reunion registrations were processed through the online service PayPal. A total of 103 transactions were made through PayPal, and fees totaled \$367.52. This was a substantial charge, but the ease of payment & processing was so helpful to the Committee that it was well worth the expense. These fees were budgeted into the original spreadsheet, but the total number of PayPal registrants could not be anticipated in advance. **Bank fees** were kept low because of the style of account we were able to set up. There were a few additional bank fees due to check orders that necessitated the use of our account’s debit card.

BOTTOM LINE The final budget, built to \$32,183.51, was expended for our event. This was a substantial increase from the original budget. The terrific number of participants made it possible for us to do this.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Steering Committees are designed to plan and manage large projects, using shared insights and ideas in making decisions. We had five Committee task forces, but that number could easily have been expanded to include more of the jobs and responsibilities involved in our 50th Reunion.

The Committee took on many duties that involved hundreds of member-hours that could have been handled by task forces. Of course, hindsight is always “20-20,” and our learning curve as a Committee was somewhat steep for the first year or so. The good news is that our ten members, and our advisors, had the ability and time to accomplish each task.

We put in a great deal of work over the past three years. But we each sincerely feel that it was time well spent, and — we had a lot of fun along the way.

We hope that we did the Class of '63 proud!

INCOME		\$32,183.51
	Classmate Donations (General)	\$2,801.06
	Registrations	\$24,837.23
	Sponsors	\$2,190.22
	Tours	\$2,355.00
EXPENSES		(\$32,183.51)
	Bank Charges	(\$6.90)
	Decorations	(\$620.12)
	Filing Fees	(\$40.00)
	Final Lap	(\$22,252.54)
	Newsletter	(\$1,760.35)
	Office	(\$313.57)
	Pay Pal Fees	(\$367.52)
	Postage and Delivery (Non Newsletter)	(\$22.53)
	Promotion	(\$790.31)
	Theater Reception	(\$3,332.35)
FUTURE	Seed	(\$677.32)
	Donation	(\$2,000.00)