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Reunion — Class of '35

By Sylvia L. Camp

An aura of excitement filled the air as the town of Tipton, Oklahoma, began to fill with people.

It was the fifty-eighth consecutive year for the Alumni Association of Tipton High School to meet. Annually, graduates of THS have gathered for a business session, banquet, and entertainment on Saturday night before Easter Sunday in Tipton, an attractive little town in a fertile valley located in Tillman County in Southwestern Oklahoma.

On this latest occasion, agendas were filled with activities. There were luncheons, an open house, a banquet, and parties. Class reunions were planned for separate classes.

This was a special time for the Class of '35. It was the fiftieth reunion for Robert ("Hass"), LaVera, Earl, Marion, Mildred, Doris, Alan, Libby, Audra, Norma, Lorene, Juanita, Frank, Margaret, Opal Don, Sylvia, and Robert.

The class met for a luncheon in a special room provided by a utility company. Each new arrival was surrounded at once by those already there. They were called by name as they were warmly greeted and embraced. LaVera had lettered name tags for each one.

There were such exclamations as: "Oh, it's been too long!" "I would know you anywhere!" "You look just like your mother." "Are you really the boy who tap-danced at the banquet?" "How do you do it? You haven't aged."

Sylvia brought a scrapbook which she prepared from mementoes. There were pictures, programs of school plays and banquets, newspaper clippings of various school activities, a receipt for \$2.00 (rental on her cap and gown), and passes signed by the teachers, which permitted readmittance to classes after absence.

The scrapbook provoked many to ask, "Do you remember...?" as it circulated back and forth among the

guests. It served as a reminder of memories which might not have surfaced otherwise.

"Whose old car was that? We hardly got out of Tipton in it," Marion said.

"Didn't Mildred make a great flapper?" Opal Don said.

Back during those high-school days, it was tradition on April 1 for the Senior Class to play hookey. It was called "Hobo Day." The students were a motley lot! Some were dressed as hoboes, others as a little boy or girl, still others as storybook characters, and some as "tacky."



Illustration by Kelley Doyle

All seniors attended the morning classes but left the school campus at night for a jaunt to a neighboring town — quite a relief for the teachers. The whole morning was bedlam. All the classes picked up on the excitement, so

there was no semblance of a teaching situation.

Even though it was expected that the seniors play hookey, the rules held. Each one had to go to the office to obtain a readmittance slip. Time also had to be spent in detention hall.

Several snapshots made on Hobo Day were in the scrapbook. Alan probably deserved the prize for the unique costume. He looked like a model of the well-dressed man except he forgot his pants! His mom "proofed" some "long handles" by sewing them together in strategic places so he took no chances on being embarrassed by "gaposis." The pictures showed the approval of the girls. Each one wanted to have her photograph made with him.

There was a typed note from Juanita. In eleven short lines, there were sixteen typing errors.

"Well," she said, "I was just a first-semester typing student. What do you expect?"

The menu listed in the Junior-Senior Banquet program was a source of much amusement. No one could remember what was served but agreed it was different. The bill of fare included Spring Spirits, Pet Birds, Eggs in a Nest, Poppies, Roses, Snowballs, Buttercups, Frozen Faces, and Breath of Spring.

The program for the Senior Class play, *THRU THE KEYHOLE*, was also in the scrapbook. Libby, Frank, Audra, Juanita, Alan, Norma, and "Hass" had roles in the play. Not a single one remembered the character each played. They decided it must have been some production.

In the scrapbook, Audra found two notes which she had written to Sylvia while in high school.

"Why did I want you to loan Frank a handkerchief?" she asked after reading one of the notes.

"Because he had the sniffles, and it was bugging you" was the reply.

Later, Audra found Sylvia again.

"No one but you would have kept such a note," she laughed.

This note read, "I present you with one of my dear fingernails. Now don't lose it." Inside that note was the ragged nail.

It was interesting to see how the guests seated themselves at the delicious luncheon hosted by Doris, LaVera, and "Hass." The "best friends" in high school were side by side. Audra and Libby talked and giggled as they sat together. Norma, Juanita, Frank, and Alan formed a foursome. Earl, Marion, Robert, and "Hass" talked football. Mildred, Margaret, and Doris chatted as they ate. Everyone moved about for a visit with each group.

At the banquet, seating for the guests was designated by a sign showing a graduation year. Each class was publicly introduced as a group. When the year was called, members of that class stood and gave a big yell. When the class of '17 was called, one sweet, tiny lady slowly and carefully got to her feet, raised her arthritic arms as high as she could and gave a weak little "yea."

The program for '85 was a pep rally, complete with a band and cheerleaders. The band was made up of former members. Pep squad leaders of years past were crowded onto the stage and overflowed into the balcony. They led all who were present in a giant pep rally. Yells and the band must have been heard all over Tipton. Noisy? Yes, but each one present must have been filled with nostalgia, especially when the band burst into the familiar school

fight song.

The climax of the reunion was in the early hours of Sunday morning. After the banquet, most of the class drove out to Norma's "Farm House." This was the home where she was reared and which she inherited at the death of her parents. For the class of '35, it was the icing on the cake. Many happy hours had been spent there at class activities, dinners, and slumber parties for the girls. The "Farm House" held happy memories for the group.

There was casual visiting for a while. Then Lorene said, "You're taller than I remember, Opal Don." "Yes, I grew even in college." Then Opal Don added, "The men aren't as tall as I thought they were." Lorene agreed.

Since Margaret attended THS only her senior year, her presence at the reunion was evidence that she was a vital part of the class.

Norma and her daughter, Linda, had prepared a huge table loaded with refreshments. Soon, everyone gathered into the large dining room. Sitting in a circle, they began to reminisce.

Juanita suggested a Christmas card exchange each year to keep in touch. The idea met with instant approval.

The fourteen who had died weren't forgotten either. Woodrow had been a favorite with everyone. He was a leader — usually the class president and captain of the football team. Faye and Iva were victims of cancer. Milton was thought to be the first one from the class to die. He had suffered several years from rheumatoid arthritis. Clyde was missed, too. He and Robert, brothers, were inseparable. It was sad that no one there knew about the deaths of the rest of the fourteen.

The closeness and love for one another in the Class of '35 was manifested over and over throughout the celebration. Each one had a private visit with the others. Genuine interest was shown in their families and in their lives after graduation.


It was hard to leave when the time came. Those fifteen glorious hours spent together did much to bridge the fifty-year separation. The alumni were grateful for the rich heritage Tipton had provided. They also felt that their classmates had made a definite impact for good on their lives.

Some people from elsewhere won't attend class reunions. They say they don't enjoy them. They feel no particular friendship with their class members. They can't recall the name of a single one.

The Class of '35 is different. Why? Is it the bonding of relationships begun in the first years? Most of them were born in the Tipton community. They started to school together and graduated together. Such ties bind for a lifetime.

Two — Four — Six — Eight.

Who do we appreciate?

Tigers! Tigers! Tigers! 

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