

## Reflections on the Class of 1966

Almost all of us entered Pekin Community High School in the fall of 1962. Some of us arrived in later years; some of us left to attend other schools before we graduated. Some dropped out. Not all of our classmates have survived. However, those of us who have been blessed to live this long all have the common bond of having been in the halls of PCHS at some time between the fall of 1962 and the spring of 1966. More than five decades have passed! As we prepare to gather for our 50th reunion, we must all be thinking, "It can't be happening! I can't believe it's been 50 years! Where has the time gone?" As we absorb this shock, our thoughts must certainly start to call up our memories of those years. What are your reflections of your years at PCHS?

We did not think of it at the time, but we were the last freshman class to experience being on the old campus with all high school students together. We got to go to school with guys who shaved and drove cars! Girls who looked like young women! Young adults who were planning careers and college! Upperclassmen who were taking subjects such as hard math, 4th year English, languages, and drivers ed! We just tried not to act like goofy freshmen, prayed that we wouldn't fall down (or up) the steps in the red building, worried about getting lost, and hoped that no one would laugh at us. In spite of our inner fears, freshman year was great. We experienced that super-crowded Leeway, we learned how to go outside between the old and new building, we experienced our first homecoming (bonfire, pep rally, football game, and maybe the dance). We got to go to basketball games in that old echo-y gym, and we certainly got to know a lot of new people. We learned how to adjust to many classes and teachers, and by springtime, we felt at home at PCHS.

Our sophomore year was a shock. East Campus had opened that fall, and it felt weird on the newly-named West Campus. The student population was cut in half, the Leeway and the Dragon's Den weren't so crowded now, and we missed our upperclass friends. Some of us took buses for a few classes, club meetings, or after-school sports held at East Campus. Some of our favorite teachers were at East. We were the top dogs at our campus, but somehow, it didn't feel right. We looked at the new freshmen and felt sorry that they had not experienced what our freshman year had been like. The tragedy of the Kennedy assassination hit us that November. However, sophomore year wasn't all bad. We were starting to be able to select more electives in our schedule, we still had lots of excellent, friendly teachers, and our boys' basketball season culminated in winning the state championship of 1964. Remember that March day when all of us walked from West to East for the all-school pep rally? To see the whole high school together again was so exciting!

Junior year. We felt more grown up than ever now that we were upperclass members of East Campus. The new school seemed huge but maybe without the character of the old one. Remember that high-pitched electronic whine (instead of a bell) that signaled the change of classes? The 200's, 300's and 400's classrooms and their hallways all looked alike. We had gym classes in the gym, in the Annex, and in the wide concrete spaces on either side of the gym or in nice weather, outside, down the hill to play field

hockey, flag football, tennis, archery, or just to run. Our junior year continued to have exciting sports to watch or play (much more for boys) and many great extracurricular clubs, teams, bands, choirs, plays, dances, and competitions to join.

Finally came our senior year, the year we had anticipated for so long. We were now the real top dogs at PCHS, those guys who shaved, those girls who dressed and looked like women (well, almost), those who had driver's licenses and were planning their futures past PCHS. The year zoomed by in a hurry, with all of us taking our hardest courses, trying to keep our grades up, and many of us trying to fit in a lot of fun along the way. The closer graduation got, the more we felt anticipation, emancipation, accomplishment, and . . . a bit of nostalgia. Graduation day came, and the weather was threatening rain. For four years, many of us had dreamed of the outdoor ceremony in the stadium, and some of us went to the assistant superintendent, Mr. Holman, and begged him to let us have it outdoors. The memory of the deluge on the class of '64 was still fresh on his mind, and he said no, so we had graduation in the gym (and it did rain that night). Our disappointment was short-lived, however. In our rows of red and white caps and gowns, we proudly received our diplomas, and the ceremony was just as good as outdoors. Our happiness was tinged with some sadness. We would never see this many of our friends, classmates, teachers, and family members at PCHS again!

My reflections as a member of the class of 1966 include a great deal of gratitude. I am grateful that Pekin decided to continue to have one high school instead of creating a rival high school when the student population just couldn't fit into West Campus any more. I am grateful that PCHS had some of the best teachers ever, teachers like Harry Langley, Larry Fogelberg, Henrietta Davis, Judy Streid, Edith Harrod, Barb Waddell, Lorene Ramsey, and Delmar Smedley (just some of my own favorites). I am grateful that PCHS offered huge numbers of choices in classes, extracurricular activities, and planned fun events. I am grateful for friends that I had known from kindergarten and for friends that I didn't meet until high school. And, I am grateful that PCHS prepared me with many lifelong skills that have served me well.

I hope that my reflections on the Class of 1966 will help you reflect on your time at PCHS.

by Claudie Glick Huey

P. S. How did I do, Mr. Smedley?