

Remarks to the class:

Helena High School 50th Class Reunion *1964-2014* Sept. 8-9, 2014

(Note: When speaking I tend to ad lib quite a bit so I have tried to include those ad libs as closely as I can remember saying them. They may not be exactly as they "came out" while I was speaking, but remember it is always "the thought that counts!")

Greetings..... Welcome back to the future and what might very likely be the last reunion of the first class of Baby Boomers to graduate from the oldest high school in the State of Montana!

Where have you been for the last 18,305 days since that warm Thursday evening of June 4th 1964? Well, I know the first stop was the All Night Party and then to Senior Beach!! It has been almost 500,000 hours - a long time and that is probably a good thing because if you think about it, time is nature's way of keeping everything from happening all at once! And, this would have been too traumatic to have happened all at once! But in the long run, and it HAS been a long run, you all seem pretty much the same. It appears you have all arrived at the third stage of life. The first being youth, the second middle age, and the third: 'You Look Fabulous!' And isn't "You look fabulous" a pretty good place to be? But always be wary of someone who says to you: "you're looking well, these days." That generally means the other guy is thinking: "I feel so much better than she looks!" It IS great to see all of you. You Look FABULOUS.....well, some of you are looking well, these days, too! And it's great to be seen!

Although I have to admit there is slightly more of me to be seen than the last time we met...and isn't that the darn trouble with this age: you claw your way to

the top of the food chain only to find out that the menu is restricted, tastes like cardboard then, maybe a dash of catsup - sugar free, fat free, taste free!

My biggest nightmare? having as a dietary consultant, a 23 year old college graduate in nutrition who looks anorexic, is vegan and thinks cheating would be eating like a vegetarian! My goal in life right now is to find a doctor who is overweight, at least a former heavy smoker and thinks that cocktail hour should be as regular as exercise! A doctor who understands a truly balanced diet - Choc - Choc!

Now, before we get going, I have a bone to pick with all of you!

Perhaps you remember, but then again, maybe you don't: I am Jim Hudson's twin brother. After 50 years I still have some serious questions for our class. You all voted Jim "Most Handsome" in our class, and my unanswered question these last five decades is: "What the hell were you people thinking?" **I'm the one with all the hair!**

{I must warn you : when you interrupt me that way, I tend, at this age, to get confused, loose my place, and have to start all over again... Welcome back to the future and what might very likely be the last reunion of the first class of Baby Boomers to graduate from Helena High School!}

Some of you may remember Jack Sprague from our class. During High School He left Helena with his '57 Black Chevy. OH, how I coveted that car (and then just like Jimmy Carter, I lusted elsewhere) But, better yet, I could have done with a 64 $\frac{1}{2}$ red Mustang. I don't think we had invented the term at the time, but they

were both real chick magnets, weren't they!? Well, I finally have my chick magnet: it has taken 50 years of complete inattention to details (moi) BUT, it even has five speeds: Stroll, amble, meander, loiter and sit! Its best function is as a "hug-mobile" and I'll demonstrate. My first wife Jane will be helping me. Actually I must stop calling her my first wife because last night she told me to knock it off or she would begin calling me her former Husband! [demonstration] Anyway, you wouldn't believe how well it works: "May I help you, Sir." "Is there anything I can get for you, Sir!" "Are you comfortable, Sir!" "Would you like to pre-board, Sir?" Only problem is the attention comes from empathy for old age, and any lusting I do these days seems to be only in my head!

At this time, I would like to have the co-Chairman of the Reunion step up as he has some business for you. I had written Jim Brown once by email during the planning stages but I needed to have a conversation with him. I decided to call him so I looked up his name at "whitepages dot com". There are 65 James Brown's in the State of Montana and I thought I had the right one when one listing said James B. Brown, age 68, associates may include Laura G. Brown. Wanting to be sure, I pushed the "view complete information" button and up pops a screen with check-off boxes that showed things like public records marriages, divorces, etc. The first boxes to pop up were "speeding tickets - check, misdemeanors - check, felonies - check, lawsuits - check. Well. If this James Brown had all these, I knew I had the right one! So would you welcome the loyal and able, if not felonious Jim Brown, one of the masterminds of the cartel putting on this do. Jim:

[JIM DOES HIS PRESENTATIONS]

Once upon a time, there were kids in a small town in the mountains of Montana, who, in 1961, all ended up together as a class, in a place for study, a place for fun, friendship, and forging a bond so strong that 50 years hence, they who were still able, gathered one more time. After sharing the various stages of puberty and the first shaky steps of adulthood they split up. They went their separate ways in 1964, to live their lives in what history will likely label the Golden Age of America!

That was US my friends, and now we are back to the future! We are once again together making memories that will last for...well, last at least until morning! But what is it really that keeps bringing us back? What's the glue that binds us? We were friends and acquaintances before we knew ourselves, who we would become.

Before we had our professions, our spouses, or our divorces

Before our children and grandchildren

Before the Surgeon General said smoking causes lung cancer and the mouse was attached to a computer

Before bubble wrap we knew each other!

We were together before Casius Clay was Mohammed Ali

Before we knew for sure the moon really wasn't made of green cheese!

Before every day things like air conditioning, HD TV, super-sonic travel and space missions

We were friends and buddies before BFF was a **BFD!**

When we were first friends we still had school dress codes and Neighborhood Watch was people sitting on their front porches in the light of old fashioned street lamps!

We were friends when having sex was as rare as it is at age 68!

We knew each other when it was cool trying to get one up on Mr. Voiles even if that did involve motorcycles in the halls of Helena High, or trying to tease Miss Ramey to embarrassment. I know many who would have liked to see her quit!

We were buddies when a group of us had a pact that if we were stopped by the cops for any form of mischief, our name was Bobby Trerise! And, our Dad was Wally who worked at Union Bank! Sorry Bob!

We knew each other when Doris Marshall had 40 cats in her house on Jackson Street and at the same time was recognized as one of the finest teachers in the nation in Readers Digest. We became friends when we didn't realize the huge impact all those adults around us called teachers would have on the rest of our lives - yes, even when Fern Flannagan almost kept some of us from graduating due to poor performance (and I thought, until I read a recent confession, I was the only one!)

And, we knew each other when getting together meant going to someone's house, not their homepage - located in a place we could never have imagined or found - cyber space!

We knew each other when inflation was only 1.28% but then, what was inflation to us anyway and who cared? The DOW was 874 then, and now we can remember it losing that much in one day!

A new house cost an average of \$13,000.00 which was more than we could fathom especially when we probably couldn't even afford the average rent of 115.00 per month. If we wanted that shiny, new Mustang, we might have paid more than the average of \$3,500.00 for a new car in 1964. If we bought that average new house today the cost would be 100,000 dollars. But then, comparable rent today is \$884.00 and that new car average of 3,500 bucks would set us back about 27 thousand dollars today. The 1.25 we paid for a movie equates to 9.61 today. If memory serves me well, which it may or may not, you know how that goes, minimum wage was 1.25 in the mid-sixties. At the equivalent of about 9 and a half dollars now, there's a good argument for the wage discussions today!

All this represents a cumulative inflation rate over the last 50 years of about 668%! Conversely, the 75.00 floral bouquet I bought Jane for our 46th anniversary in June this year would have cost me 9.75 in 1964, or 87% less than I paid! Throwing figures around and making comparisons like this can be kind of enlightening. In fact, where we live in the winter months there are a lot of Canadian nationals and so I have decided to learn the metric scales, too. I have since made the decision to refer to my age in Celcius from now on. Next year I am looking forward to my 21st birthday!

At any rate, what all this proves is that everything is relative. The average salary of the mid-sixties at \$6,000 per year would be slightly over 46,000 today and a gallon of regular gas would be just under \$2.90. Things seem to be just about what they should be. Well, almost what they should be.....[insert large print page] OK, now that you know I don't see that well, I confess I have probably dripped, dropped and drooped everywhere we would never could have imagined 50 years ago! BUT I STILL HAVE MY HAIR!

Just as prices today seem to be relative to then, our reasons for reuniting must be relative to our experiences a half century ago. Last time we talked on this occasion, our 40th, we talked about what we had said in 1964, we were going to do and what we had actually done. In most instances they were very different. There must be reasons for that. We were successful but perhaps not in the way we had imagined we would be.

I believe four events in our graduation year had profound effects on our entire culture and us. And, NO, I am not talking about scoring out at Senior Beach or in the back seat of that '57 Chevy! I am talking about events whose effects trickled down to each of us as we found our way through the next five decades. The first, at the beginning of our senior year: the assassination of JFK. I'm willing to bet every one of you still remembers where you were when the news broke. I hope you do because that single event caused the first crack in the innocence of our generation. I'll never forget the sledding party we had that Friday night up the gulch towards Unionville. We built a campfire, Lucio Bellinini, our exchange student from Italy was there and as dumbfounded as the rest of us. No one felt

like sledding - we just sat around the fire and talked. (Maybe some of you here were there?) That night, we started baby steps towards adulthood!

The second event having a great effect on us was the arrival on February 2, 1964, of the Beatles. The British musical invasion of America paved that yellow brick road all the way to Haight/Ashbury and everything that lay beyond including the "Summer of Love", 1967. I don't know about you, but I, too, never inhaled - Really! Honest, Ramberg, I didn't! At least not that year!

The third was the signing of the 1964 Civil Rights Act by Lyndon Johnson. Into that one act you can throw the Mississippi murders of the three civil rights workers, the ascent of the NAACP, the coming million man march and "I have a dream speech" and the eventual assassinations of MLK, Jr. and RFK. While being relatively isolated in Montana, we were about to descend into a world profoundly affected by these sea changes.

Finally, number four, the stake driven cleanly through the heart of our innocence was the signing of the Gulf of Tonkin Resolution by President Johnson on August 7, 1964. That act, affecting everyone in this room whether directly or indirectly, authorized the President to act unilaterally, without Congress, in initiating direct military action without a formal declaration of war. That legislation is still pertinent and well debated in today's world.

At the time, we probably took these events in stride, maybe they went barely noticed, or even have caused us to shrug our shoulders, but as we ponder the last 500,000 hours, consider how these changes may have affected your life choices.

No good or bad here, just the fact that the life you have led has been a result of choices you have made. And, remember all the while that it really is all about how you handle Plan B! Look back to that first big decision that shaped your life. You have undoubtedly already realized that good judgment comes from experience (and a lot of that comes from bad judgment!) Kidding aside: Always remember no matter how successful, financially secure or seemingly happy, everyone has had to deal with something: from disabled children to mental health issues; from surviving breast cancer or other illnesses; to broken relationships or addictions. Living Plan B can be a race through a mine field. But, you have arrived and if you are really lucky you can look back and say "I'd do it all over again!" Kudos to you on your successes and suffice it to say as Nelson Mandela once quipped: "Well done is better than well said!"

I saw a short clip of Joan Rivers a couple of days ago and she was saying: "Natural aging...DISGUSTING!" But, there is nothing we can do about our aging: it doesn't matter how hard we worked, how fit we are, or how loved we are. Each of us becomes more and more like ourselves with every passing decade. I don't know why we still keep returning to these reunions.

This I can tell you: I am honored to be standing here and deeply humbled by knowing each and every one of you. I am in awe of your accomplishments and successes, in business, education, military careers, medicine, government and almost any field of endeavor one could conjure, the greatest of all these being our children and grandchildren. I am proud to have known you and thankful that our friendship and acquaintance has enriched my life beyond measure. Maybe that's

why I come back every ten years and maybe it's because we all started out together in the same place! Perhaps because this small mountain town is where our love of home, of friends and of country were shaped. Maybe it's because as Tim McGraw has said: "We all take different paths in life, but no matter where we go, we take a little of each other everywhere."

You know, I just don't recall from past reunions that we have made a great deal of fuss about classmates who have passed. Perhaps it's because of a fear of confronting our own mortality. But, at our age, we must be thinking, at least to ourselves, that the sun is approaching the horizon. And even though each of us is looking forward to a lot more sunshine before dusk it does us well to stop for a moment and as an old Nigerian proverb urges: "Hold a true friend with both hands." While we hold those departed friends in the hands of our minds, remember the two word phrase from the Old Testament we learned ten years ago right here: Miz-Pah! "The Lord watch between thee and me when we are apart from one another". From many places in Israel, to places as far from there as Minnesota and New Jersey, to a Jewish congregation in Missouri, to a steamboat and a US Navy patrol boat in WW II the epithet Miz-Pah appears. It can be found on charms worn around the neck, on memorials and tombstones. Miz-Pah describes an emotional bond between people when they are separated, whether it be geographical or by death. That emotional bond applies no less to those who were our classmates, who in our collective memories, we still hold and call friend.

I think it appropriate for us to remember our 60 classmates who have departed with a salute. Would you join me by standing. Hear these words spoken by Francois Mocuriac: " No love, no friendship, can cross the path of our destiny without leaving some mark on it forever." And now, raise your glass or even a hand like this and repeat this salute after me: "To our departed classmates, our friends, Miz-Pah!" Thank you.

I'm proud to be an American where at least I know I'm free....

Have you thanked a Veteran today...if you haven't, why not? From the "fields of Vietnam to the mountains of Afghanistan" we have been well served and protected throughout this last half century by those who answered the call of our country. We in turn, are called to honor those who have made sacrifices for our benefit. While the times they are a-changin' , the sure constant in our lives is the security we derive from those of you who have been or are in service to America. Because of you America will continue to be the light for freedom everywhere. Thanks, to all of you here, and everywhere, who have sailed the seas, flown the skies, suffered the heat of deserts, the steamy hot of the jungles, and the cold of forsaken mountain passes. To those of you who have marched blisters into your feet, and those of you who carry the scars of battle: know there are many, many who are grateful and appreciative. And every time we acknowledge our passing flag, or every time we stand for a chorus of the Star Spangled Banner, or sing any patriotic anthem, know we do so in salute to you. For all my classmates: Thank you!

As I close tonight, I would like to thank you for allowing me to stand before you to do this. For a while it was touch and go because you see I have been awake since I got up this morning and now it's past my bedtime.

I have been so moved by reconnecting and talking to you these last two days. Your life stories have touched me deeply.

It is my sincere hope that over the course of these 50 years your sorrows have been divided and your joys multiplied. I try to chart that course for myself every day. And, to that end I remember sharing with you, 10 years ago, some of my precepts for a long and happy life like: being at the top of the food chain wherever I go; no needles stuck in me while I am conscious; pain not building character and on and on.... Well, another ten years gone and I have added to my list and I thought it might be to your benefit if I shared. Adding to my list are these vital points: never let your mind make any agreement your body can't keep! Next: never take a sleeping pill and a laxative on the same night! Always dress in the same color as the food you will be eating! And men, never pass up a urinal. This should not be hard to remember: Never, ever store your Viagra in a bottle with a child-proof cap! (at least, so I am told!) Don't see through people, see them through! And finally: kneel before God so you can stand up to anyone!

My friends, it has been great and I leave you with three challenges:

1. Love
2. Do no harm
3. Be of use

If realized: It really all boils down to this: HAKUNA MATATA! No worries for the rest of your days!

NOW, go party like you're pushing 70!

Miz-Pah !

Thank you, good night, God Bless you and God Bless America!

[Singing of "God Bless America" led by Jim Brown]

Remarks by Gerry Hudson

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