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To all members of Walnut Hills classes of '52, '53, and '54 (whose e-mail addresses I could find) plus Glen Mayfield class of '59 and Debbie Heldman:

Having left Cincinnati for Florida in the early sixties, and losing my yearbooks about the same time, I haven't exactly kept up with my classmates. I meant to contact the alumni office when I first moved but I'm something of a procrastinator. In fact, if procrastination were an Olympic event, I'd be good for a bronze at least. About 20 years ago I sent for an application to the Procrastinators Club of America. The president sent me the app with a note that said, "If you return it promptly, you can forget about joining." I've never returned it.

Signing up with classmates.com and seeing a lot of familiar names inspired me to shake the tree and see what falls out. I agonized over whether to contact (a) just those people I was certain I remembered, (b) those whose names looked familiar, or (c) everyone with an e-mail address in my own class and the ones before and after. Since, at one time, I knew the names of everyone in those three classes I leaned that way, but as usual when the tough decisions have to be made, I asked Ruth, my wonderful wife of 31 years. She said, "Don't sweat it, write them all. What's the worst they could do? Delete it with the rest of the Spam."

Remembering that Ruth graduated from Ashley High in Gastonia North Carolina where most of the girls majored in Home Ec. and most of the boys majored in race car maintenance, I said, trying not to sound too condescending, "Ruth, Ruth, Ruth. This is Walnut Hills we're talking about. A place where every time a teacher would give a really hard quiz and everyone would be hoping she'd take pity and grade on the curve, some Jewish kid would get a 100 and blow it out of the water. The "worst they could do" is hack into our computer, change all the threes to eights in our check register, and put your whole 401k into Worldcom!"

But I'm sure I'm being paranoid so I'm taking her advice. If anything in here offends you, just hit the delete key. If it offends you enough to take legal action, reformat your hard drive.

Having lost my yearbooks forty years ago I have difficulty connecting some of the names with faces. Not that my memory's going, mind you. Although, the other night a woman came on TV advertising Gingkoba and said "Are you more forgetful than you used to be?" I said, "I don't know. I don't remember how forgetful I used to be." There are some faces that are hard to forget though, like L. P. Stewart, Minnie Wilson, Marie "Boom-Boom" Becker (Lord knows I've tried.)

The latter reminds me of the end of my first semester at Ohio U. I didn't know there were four members of our class there until I met the other three at the Dean's List reception. You may recall that L.P. "inadvertently" listed our class as 250 on transcripts when it was really only 189 so that we would all be in the top 80% required to get into any state university in Ohio. As far as I know, the others may have been in that bottom 20% as I was but we all made 3.0 or better that first semester at OU. I made it thanks to five hours of 'A' in engineering math which was virtually a reprise of senior math at WH. I remember thinking I should send 'Boom-Boom' a thank you note but I figured she'd just put a "C-" on it and send it back with an acerbic comment. I remember in the fall of '52 when Life Magazine ran an article on colleges getting softer, pointing out that Miami of Florida now offered a course in water skiing. Miss Becker knew I was considering engineering school and when she called on me one day and I wasn't prepared, she did her usual bit where she would stare holes through you and let you squirm for a minute before moving on to someone else, then said "Well, Mister Flinn, I guess you'll be going to Miami University to major in water skiing." The class tittered but no one laughed out loud knowing, if they did, they would be called on next.

A story in the Miami Herald concerning the unfortunate riots in Cincinnati mentioned the judge hearing the case against the accused officer as Ralph Winkler. I noticed our own RW on the Classmates website. If I don't hear from him maybe one of you could tell me if they are one and the same.

I wrote to WH a couple years ago to get alumni info and got an immediate response, ... to make a donation to the building fund. Receiving a copy of the Chatterbox (or a fundraising letter cleverly disguised as such), I looked through it to see if I recognized names of kids who might be grandchildren of old friends. Imagine my surprise when the first picture I see is that of Glenn Mayfield, class of '59, Chairman of the fundraising committee, and younger brother of the first girl I ever dated. I was a junior at WH and Sally was a freshman at Hillsdale when our mothers, good friends from church, decided it was time for their eldest to go on their first dates. When I arrived at their house near Ault Park, Mrs. Mayfield, a very refined southern lady, had instructed her daughter not to come down until signaled and ushered me into Dr. Mayfield's den for what teenage boys of the day referred to indelicately as "the shakedown interview with the old man". Dr. Mayfield was an eminent brain surgeon whose study walls were covered floor to ceiling with medical books except for a couple of shelves containing his treasured collection of Civil War era brain surgery instruments. He proudly showed these to me, silver-plated, each set into its own velvet lined indentation in oaken boxes. Although I didn't ask him to, he took out a boring device about the diameter of what one might use to drill a hole for a door knob and explained that this was used to cut a hole in the skull preparatory to surgery. Very subtle and very effective. I never touched her, I swear!

It's funny the things that stick in your mind after half a century. I was remembering the other night going out for reserve basketball sophomore year and what a tough SOB our coach, Willard T. Bass was. I'm sure you guys remember how when he'd chew you out, he'd always talk with his eyes closed? After two weeks he still didn't know me from Adam, then, one day at practice, I charged in for a layup, determined I was going to dunk it (which I had, practicing at home). It felt like everything was in slow motion as I drove in, got the best spring off that cherry-wood floor I had ever had, whacked my forearm on the backboard and fell flat on my ass. Willard T. came over, eyes closed, and shouted loud enough that I was sure it could be heard in the girl's gym on the other side of the folding walls, "Flinn, you're as awkward as an old cow!" I got up bruised but elated. It was the first time Willard T. had ever called me by name!

The next day he posted the "cut list". I was on it.

I see all these kids today using things like Cliff's notes and think how easy they've got it. All we had was the Caesar's Gallic Wars "pony". I remember reading my "translation" in Mary Louise Creelman's ninth grade Latin class and she started reciting the wording along with me. She had heard the "pony" translation so many times she knew it by heart. (Remember how we used to leave the i out of her middle name?)

Every time I hear "Pomp and Circumstance" I get goosebumps remembering walking down the aisle in the auditorium. It also occurs to me that Elgar's composition has to be one of the most maligned pieces of music in the country because every June several hundred high school and college orchestras attempt to play it without the aid of their most experienced musicians.

Here's a trivia question for you: remember who was chairman of our graduation party? I'll give you a hint. When Starr Ford asked for a volunteer to take one step forward everyone took one step back but me. I did learn one thing that night that helped with my career choice: don't go into the catering business. Starr asked me later if I pocketed any money off it. I said, "Are you kidding? I spent the whole evening sweating how to break even." If there *had* been a profit, I would have been entitled to it considering I had to grovel with the supplier to take back 20 of 25 cases of Pepsi that weren't consumed. I was the one who had to say "We only had half as many people as expected and a lot of them were diabetic." This sounded better than "They were all drinking beer." At the end of the evening I calculated how many dollars we had left and told the lady whose property we were renting that's how many people we had at a buck a head. I told her we didn't get as many as we expected because that sounded better than "Most of them were down in the woods getting, uh, more beer."

A few years back I saw a story in the paper about a police chief in a small town in Ohio by the name of Robert Haygood. Our last couple years at WH the biggest and most powerfully built guy in our class had

the same name. He was also one of the nicest guys I've known. I remember seeing Bob break up a locker room fight one time and thinking "Haygood would make a good law enforcement officer." Does anyone know if they're the same guy?

Getting to and from school could be interesting since almost all of us lived at least five miles away. In seventh and eighth grade Jim Trout and I used to grab the trolley car at the end of the line in Kennedy Heights, get off at DeSailles and transfer to a bus. Remember those horrible wicker seats on the trolleys? I got up to give my seat to an old lady one morning and she said, "You're a polite young man." I thought to myself "Not really, I just don't want to show up in the locker room with cross hatching on my butt."

Our junior year Jack Davis and Chuck Simpkinson (both seniors) and I would sometimes catch a ride with Jack's Dad who was president of Kroger. He would impart jewels of wisdom to us, addressing us in the same august tones he might use on the board of directors, although always with a glint in the eye. "Boys" he said one morning, "I always said I was going to marry into money but I wound up marrying a girl who didn't have a pot to pee in. So don't make money a priority in looking for a good wife. But if you find the right one and you love each other and she just happens to be filthy rich, don't let the money stand in the way".

Our senior year I rode to school with Jim Trout in his Morris Minor, which for those of you who don't remember it, was slightly larger than the plastic pedal things they sell at Toys R Us. Since we were both well over six feet, getting in and out was a slow methodical process. One afternoon as Jim picked me up outside the auditorium, four guys ran up behind the car and lifted the rear wheels off the ground just as Jim was putting it in gear causing the engine to race as we went nowhere. With the presence of mind that told me "This guy's gonna' be a bank president some day", Jim put it in reverse, floored the accelerator, stuck his head out the window and yelled "Ok, guys, you can put it down whenever you want." After about 15 seconds he let them off the hook. If anyone remembers who the guys were, let me know. They would be the ones with the fingers still stuck in the bent position.

The only homeroom I remember is seventh grade. I don't remember the teacher's name but she taught zoology and I still get nauseous just thinking of the smell of formaldehyde. To get to our room you went in the front door and headed toward the back past a statue of a nekid guy getting ready to throw a small pizza (although I'm sure today's kids would probably say it's a CD of the "Best of the Carpenters").

Years ago when the TV series "Welcome Back Kotter" was on I remember thinking "This bunch of delinquents is a boy scout troop compared to my senior year in Dr. Lambert's physics class." Most of the inmates were guys in the class of '54, the incurable wiseacre Eddie Heekin, the certifiably insane Al Cole, and a cast of characters destined to drive poor Dr. Lambert to the brink. An experiment designed to show coefficient of expansion in copper wire involved an envelope draped over a slack wire between two vertical non-conductors. When plugged in the wire would heat up just enough to get taut and the envelope would rise. Someone had grounded the wire into a water faucet so when Doc plugged it in the wire glowed red hot and the envelope burned through and dropped to the table. Cole laughed so hard his face turned red, then beet purple. A year later, while home from college, I heard a news item on the radio that said "Funeral arrangements for Dr. Raymond Lambert were cancelled when it was discovered he wasn't dead." I didn't even have to ask. It had Al Cole's signature all over it.

Remember?

- How we used to guess at which of Miss Becker's eyes was glass?
- How Jan Marx used to refer to Groucho as "Uncle Julius"?
- The plaque on the wall of the bookstore listing all of Abe Lincoln's failures prior to becoming President?
- The horrible stench of chlorine in the swimming pools?
- How we used to say the Wilson sisters knew so much about Latin because they had learned it when it was still a living language?
- How the guy who made the lowest percentage of free throws at the end of practice had to do the laundry? (Pat Riley could learn from this).
- The lunchtime contests to see who could stick the most pats of butter on the cafeteria ceiling by hurling them upward on the ends of straws?

- The guy with the ice cream truck on the circle every day who was called Luca by everyone because the letters L.U.C.A. were on the door of the truck?
- When, if a guy on television mentioned 'E.D.', he was referring to a talking horse?

Since I've never made it to a reunion and probably won't make the fiftieth, I decided I should write a brief speech, reunion style, paying tribute to the Walnut Hills experience. Herewith, in 35 words or less, is said speech:

What Walnut Hills means to me, by Tommy Flinn, sixty-seven and a half years old.

Where else could a shy, quiet, eleven year old Methodist boy from Hyde Park go to school and, in just six short years, learn to say fifty dirty words in Yiddish?

Sursum Ad Summum

(Does anyone know what that means?
I also lost my 'pony' forty years ago)

Tom Flinn

P.S. A couple of years ago Art Buchwald had a column in the Miami Herald in which he recounted an article he had written about his infantry service in Europe during WWII. The article appeared nationally in 1946 and told of the fiendish sergeant he had in basic training. "Everybody hated him," Art had said in the '46 piece, "but you know what? I was a soft Jewish kid from New York when I was drafted and he made a man out of me." Art said he was reminded of the story just recently when he received a letter from the sarge's widow. She said he had recently passed away after weeks in the hospital. Tough to the end, he refused to allow flowers or get-well cards in his room. She told Art, "The only thing of a personal nature in his room was, hanging on the wall, next to his bed, a framed copy of your 1946 article." As I put the paper down, I swallowed hard and wished I'd sent that note to Boom-Boom.

TF



If I look older than you remember, it's due to a bug in JPEG.