

TO A “BAD BOY”—WITH RESPECT

During my years at Seneca High School I was a member of the largest graduating class the school has ever produced. As such there were a number of classmates who I never crossed paths with due to differences in academic course work, differences in outside interests, or both. One of those people was Tom Bush '69, who I only got to know within the last four years. I had my first real conversation with Tom in late 2012 at a class gathering located at a Louisville restaurant. Up to that time I was aware of Tom only by reputation. In his own words he was a “bad boy” who was more interested in fast cars and socializing than in the academic side of school life. Yet as Tom interacted with the group at large it became apparent that this was an intelligent, well-spoken man who cared about people from all walks of life. As it turned out, both Tom and I had a mutual interest in maintaining ties with our classmates. As such we exchanged phone numbers and agreed to stay in touch.

Over the next several months Tom and I had a number of phone conversations. As we talked I was taken as to how much we had in common. It seemed that we had utilized comparable skills in our working lives—Tom as a union steward and mine in financial services. Our values as to what we looked toward in life also turned out to be quite similar. And I knew I had a valued friend when one day my computer was hacked with a scam message stating that my wife Linda and I were stranded overseas and needed money. That night I received a call from Tom. Though he fully realized the E-mail was a bogus message, he still was concerned and was checking to see if we were OK. Relationships were important to Tom. The length of a friendship or how it had evolved was never an issue.

As our 45th high school reunion drew near Tom Bush became an integral part of the planning process. He worked to set up arrangements with a local restaurant for an informal gathering, helped to decorate the outdoor pavilion there, and the day of the event welcomed each of us as we arrived. After the reunion Tom continued to work keeping classmates updated and helping to plan future class events. And on Labor Day weekend, 2016 Tom left home headed for a class gathering prepared to assist with grilling hamburgers for all in attendance.

Tom Bush never arrived at his destination. On the way there he was involved in a head-on collision with another vehicle and was killed instantly. Our group of over 30 learned of Tom's death while the get-together was in progress. All of us in attendance were in shock as to the news. What made this all the more overwhelming was that Tom Bush, a man who loved cars and loved people, was traveling in his most recently acquired vehicle to be with a group of friends he cared deeply about. He had died doing the things he most wanted to do, but knowing that did not made his passing any easier to process.

Each year when the Seneca High School yearbook was issued it was customary for students to get their friends to sign on one of the pages. Usually an additional message would accompany the signature. As Tom Bush and I did not cross paths during our high school years, neither of us would have had an opportunity to sign the other's yearbook. Were I to have the opportunity to sign Tom Bush's Seneca

High School yearbook today, my message would be one that hopefully would fully describe our short but fulfilling friendship. What I would write to Tom would be simply this:

"To a 'bad boy'—with respect."

Sam Denny

Class of 1969

With thoughts and prayers to the Bush family