

Missing Persons File (March, 1999)

Over the years I have had the pleasure and privilege of being a part of several reunion committees for the Seneca High School Class of 1969. As the planning process for each reunion progressed committee members took on roles best suited to both their interests and capabilities. In my case the role soon became that of locating missing members of the class. Many of the classmates I have located over the years were found prior to the rise of social media. And perhaps the most enjoyable experience I have had in locating a missing classmate centered around someone I had not had contact with for 30 years.

Greg Stairs '69 was a teammate of mine in a couple of sports activities. We played on the same Senior Little League baseball team for a couple of seasons with his father being one of the coaches. We also were on the same team for a season playing in a weekend pickup basketball league. As such I was surprised when in the spring of 1999 Greg Stairs turned up on the missing classmates list. I remembered that Greg's family had moved to New Jersey a couple of years after graduation. After learning what town the family had moved to I called telephone directory assistance in New Jersey asking for a listing on Greg's father. I was told by the operator that there was no listing for Greg's father but that there was a listing for an "S. Stairs." Recalling that Greg had a younger sister named Susan, I asked for the listing and from there took a shot in the dark by calling the number.

To my surprise (and I suspect far more to Susan's surprise) I found myself in touch with someone who could help me in locating Greg. I explained my reason for calling and then added I would end the call should it become uncomfortable for her. Susan graciously agreed to talk with me during what turned out to be a pleasant 30 minute conversation. I found Susan's demeanor over the phone especially refreshing in that it conveyed a calm and soothing presence while at the same time retaining the youthful ness of the cheerleader she had once been. At the end of our conversation Susan passed on to me Greg's contact information. From there I thanked her both for the information and for the enjoyable conversation we had had.

From there I made a couple of attempts to reach Greg by phone, leaving a message each time. Then one evening about six weeks after I had talked with Susan I received a call from Greg. The voice on the other end of the phone was upbeat and conveyed a zest for life that radiated throughout. Over the course of an hour Greg and I traded notes as to both our high school years and where we had journeyed in our lives since that time. Greg was in attendance at our 30 year reunion. As with our phone conversation I was able to enjoy in person his upbeat nature and zest for life. Greg seemed to be enjoying himself as well. As Greg put it to me later "I made the reunion AND I HAD A BLAST!"

It strikes me as interesting that as more and more means of communication have become available to each of us, there seems to be less and less actual communication between people. Were I trying to locate Greg Stairs today I simply could check nationwide phone listings via the Internet and discover that there are but two listings for Greg Stairs in the entire country. Or perhaps I could have utilized

Facebook, Twitter, Constant Contact, or any other number of social media sites. However, I would have never had the opportunity to enjoy first the refreshingly soothing demeanor of Greg's sister Susan and later the upbeat and engaging personality of Greg himself. So the next time any of us may want to reach an old friend perhaps the more traditional means of communication—a handwritten letter, a phone call, a personal visit—may turn out to be more rewarding and enjoyable both to you and also the person you are reaching out to. All the best to each of you as you continue to connect with those who have been a part of your life's journey.

Sam Denny
Class of 1969