

November 22, 1963 (a reconnection)

Virtually all of us growing up during the 1960's remember the events surrounding the assassination of President John F. Kennedy and how we were affected personally. And those of us attending Seneca High School at that time can surely recall what class we were in that Friday afternoon when the news of the president's passing was announced over the intercom. In my case I was in a seventh grade general art class taught by Mrs. Elsie Middleton. As for two of my high school classmates, Ed Henson and Greg Stairs, they were sitting beside each other in a junior high core class taught by Mrs. Mae Johnson. Ed recalls that at that moment Greg tried to verbalize some thoughts as to what had transpired, but was told immediately by the teacher that it simply was not the right time to do so.

As they progressed through junior high and later high school, Ed Henson and Greg Stairs became close friends. In addition to having the same classes they played junior varsity baseball together, ran cross country together, and did things together socially. Upon graduation in 1969 the two friends went their separate ways in part due to attending different colleges and in part due to Greg's family moving to New Jersey a couple of years afterward. It was not until 30 years later in 1999 that the two friends were able to reconnect at our class reunion. Ed had remained in Louisville working as a media broker and radio station owner. Greg, on the other hand, was now living in Dallas, TX and working as a partner in a software business. Once reconnected, the two friends continued to stay in touch. And in 2006 Ed was to be in the Dallas area on business and got in contact with Greg, arranging a time that they could get together and catch up.

The two friends had an enjoyable time together. They first attended a Texas Rangers baseball game accompanied by Greg's son and a business colleague of Ed's. Then after the game there was an additional reconnection that took both men back to the events of November 22, 1963. Prior to taking Ed and his colleague back to their hotel room, Greg drove down the route the Kennedy motorcade had taken that fateful day. The group saw the spot where the president had been shot. They saw the warehouse from where the shots were allegedly fired. And they were taken along the route leading to Parkland Memorial Hospital, where the president was taken for treatment prior to his death. The guided tour that Greg provided that night was an opportunity for both men (and Ed in particular) to reflect on an event that shaped the lives of all Americans. And in addition, the visit reaffirmed a friendship that had begun years before during junior high school.

As the 50th anniversary of the Kennedy assassination approaches, perhaps all of us should step back and take stock as to how the events in our lives affect us. Sometimes those events may be on a national stage as the Kennedy assassination was. Sometimes those events are simply taking the time to reconnect with long lost friends. Ed Henson and Greg Stairs continue to stay in contact, having again gotten together in Dallas last year. And just like these two friends, we all should be appreciative of the people and the opportunities (whether within or outside of Seneca High School) that have been provided to each of us.

Sam Denny (Class of 1969)