

Kirby HS reunion “Under the Magnolias”

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Kirby High School reunion honored the Class of '69 with an artful theme, “Under the Magnolias,” the Woodville Elementary School cafeteria decorated in green with fresh Magnolia blossoms all around on Saturday, May 5.

This 22nd reunion, perhaps unique in the nation, honored the class of '69 which received its first invite 50 years from graduation. Nostalgic roots, indeed, under the Magnolias.

Mary Alice Nagypal, coordinator, welcomed the 200-plus, and all sang the National Anthem with music by renown blind musician Walter Plant.

As with tradition, the honor class of '69 was seated in front of the stage, and Nagypal noted they also recognized the classes of '49 and '59. She proceeded with a few events from each of those pivotal decades.

In '49 the U.S. signed the North Atlantic Treaty, Truman was the president, life-expectancy was only 58 years, and .45 records were sold for the first time.

In '59, unemployment was 5.5 percent; Rawhide, Bonanza, and the Twilight Zone debuted; Alaska and Hawaii became the 49th and 50th states; and the Boeing 707 came into service. Sadly—Richy Valens, Buddy Holly, and the “Big Bopper” J.P. Richardson died in tragic plane crash in a snow storm—the crash later to be dubbed the “Day the Music Died.”

In '69, the Beatles gave their last performance, the Boeing 747 debuted, Pontiac made the Firebird Trans Am, Woodstock attracted over 350,000 rock-n-roll fans, and the first man landed on the moon.

Nagypal recognized all the class agents, thanks several others, and introduced Master of Ceremonies Fred Sullivan.

Sullivan resonated with a few jests on his health, and recollected that to get one's first invite they had to be about 68 years old. Many empathized with his ailments.

With a bit of humor and history, Sullivan lightened the air with reflections on Barbara Bush who had joked about her "not being recognized" at heaven's gates with so many replacement parts. Another round of laughter ensued.

After a scrumptious lunch of stuffed pork loin, garlic mashed potatoes, and more, Sullivan recognized the loss of Jessie Lazenby, class of '38, who had been so faithful to the class reunions. He had attended the year before for his 75th year after graduating. Lazenby's family and widow, Cecile, were present and stood.

Sullivan recognized honored guests Coach Sergio Ramos, Lionel Reese, Norman Turner, Brenda Stringer, and their spouses, who had taught or worked at the Kirby High School in 1969 and forward—a legacy most cherished.

Sullivan named the class of '69 superintendent and several teachers.

Their football team won district championship with a 9-0 lead. Sullivan's wife had taught English, which brought a humorous recollection. A student approached him in his store, Sullivan's Hardware, and said, "Fred, be sure and tell Mrs. Sullivan ... she learned me English."

Debbie Davis Utley and Junior Lewis came to the stage to tell a few fond memories in the class of '69. Huntley Kenneson spoke for the class of '59, and he had challenged his class to give \$600 to the Food Service scholarship fund. Surprise—he pointed to his table—and his fellow students raised a large five-foot sign representing a check of \$1,200. Their hearts glowed.

Only one student from the class of '49 was present. Though he declined to come to the stage, Sullivan related a story from their senior trip to New Orleans. The teenage Maxie Young was challenged to kiss their English teacher, Mrs. Click, and he did. To a round of applause, Young rose and took a bow.

In memorial, Nagypal read the names and class years of their beloved fellow students who had departed to their eternal treasures, and Alva Cook led a moment of silence.

Nagypal recognized the Woodville Food Service Committee, noting they all volunteered to host the lunch with all profit going to scholarships for Woodville ISD students. To date, they had given over \$96,000 in scholarships.

After the benediction by Ron Poindexter (class of '69), Nagypal and Sullivan led all in singing their beloved school song, "Hail Kirby High School."



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