

# Has It Really Been Fifty Years?

*1960 Grundy County High School 50<sup>th</sup> Class Reunion*

Written by Jackie Layne Partin



Grundy County High School  
Class of '60  
50th Class Reunion June 5, 2010

On June 05, 2010, the 1960 graduating class of Grundy County High School had its Golden Class Reunion. Being a member of that graduating class and having never been to any of the many reunions, I decided it was time to attend. What kept me away so long? What caused me to want to attend now after all these years? How did I prepare myself to be with friends I had not seen in fifty years? And what did I bring away from the whole event—from the time I received my invitation until I lay down that night after the reunion and mulled over all the things that had happened.

Fifty years is a long time. I reasoned that I might not be around for the 55<sup>th</sup> Reunion, and I wanted to see my old classmates one more time. A couple of weeks before the actual event,

my granddaughter, Jocelyn MacKenzie Partin, was using me as a guinea pig by putting her toy makeup on my face. From time to time throughout the six wisdom-filled years of her life, she felt a need to make improvements in her “Granny’s” appearance. I began to tell her about my class reunion, and after explaining to her what was going to happen when I met old acquaintances after fifty years of separation, we began to talk about how I could improve my appearance for the occasion. I remembered that upon receipt of an invitation to a previous reunion, I decided I would not attend because I had grown **out** in all directions, had aged, and could probably never pull myself together to face all those beautiful folks with whom I had spent four years in high school. But Jocelyn decided that there was hope for me if I would only accept her advice. **Hope**—what a wonderful word. Recently, I was told by a gentleman that there was no hope for me! Could that be true? Or could my granddaughter be right?

After turning on a small tape recorder, I began to ask Jocelyn for her advice. When I asked her to explain what my hair looked like, she stated that the color was brown (*dyled*) and that I really needed a haircut. We discussed that not too long ago, it was grey, but it had now become streaked. Next, she recommended that I add some pink and purple streaks—not **stripes** but **streaks**—it was necessary that it looked streaked, not striped. Wow, did that youngster roll out the facts to me about all my needs for improvements? She was like a wind-up-doll that could not be turned off—my sons call her “Little Jackie!” I knew I was in bad shape, but my goodness, could it be that *bad*? More advice followed: brush and comb my hair, polish my fingernails and toenails, and of course, put on that makeup. Bless her little heart; she had so little to work with. I never polish my nails and makeup causes me to itch. But she declared that all those improvements would make me look so nice when I met all those other “beautiful people.” I certainly hoped that at least one or two old friends, maybe Christine Lawson or Daisy Custer, used hair color. I didn’t want to stand out like a sore thumb.

My body became the big issue at this point. When I asked Jocelyn to describe what I looked like, she reminded me that I looked old, fat and “not really pretty.” Quickly, as though she thought she might have hurt my feelings, she reminded me that I would most definitely look “pretty” after my visit to the hair stylist. She pointed out that my tummy was really big. I asked, “Do you really think I can get this huge tummy worked off in two weeks?” Without a doubt, in her mind it could be done with some “workouts.” Moving right along, she noticed that my fingernails were really “pointed,” and that I had freckles, some quite large, on my skin. I think that she was noticing my “old age” or “too much sun” spots from years of living and working in the garden and mowing the grass. Most definitely, she urged me to get help for my skin; maybe one or two trips to the tanning bed would make me look prettier.

When I explained to her that in my younger years Dr. Tom Roberts and other dentists had pulled some of my teeth leaving me with empty spaces, I asked her how I could keep from showing my poor dental condition. "Granny, if you have to smile, then smile like this!" she said with her lips closed tightly. I looked at her and said, "You mean, it would be better for everyone, if I kept my mouth shut!" She agreed. Mercy, mercy! Hopefully some of my classmates already have false teeth, and are worrying about losing them in the barbecue, or someone may have trouble keeping a partial plate in, so maybe I should not worry so much about my spaces. Now I must remember to look for all those folks who have false teeth—this would lift my self-esteem tremendously. And that part about keeping my mouth shut, how could I respond to Clyde Kunz's great philosophies if I couldn't open my mouth?

Next, shoes came into play. "What kind of shoes should I wear to this reunion?" I asked. Her answer was, "Well, Granny, you need some soft pink and purple high heel shoes to match the pink and purple streaks in your hair!" Now, I was doing pretty well until we got to the "high heels." I am a diabetic with an outrageous case of neuropathy in my feet and find it very difficult to wear any kind of shoe, much less a high heel shoe, but I solicited her advice and listened with all candor. I wondered if Loretta Lautzenheiser had already picked out her shoes for the event. Since I am more comfortable at home in my bare feet, I asked Jocelyn if she thought my classmates from the city would care if I attended the reunion without my shoes. She responded, "Granny, that would not be accepted by city people." I never got it quite clear if I was to wear one pink shoe and one purple shoe, or if each could have a mixture of the two colors.

One important decision that she had to make was the clothing I was to wear with those shoes. Two choices were presented: a pretty dress or a sassy dress; I didn't know the difference in the two, but she knew. A pretty dress could just be a plain dress, but a sassy dress was one that could be worn in a fashion show, and she advised that I get a blue and yellow, sassy dress with purple polka dots. It had to be large enough to cover my big "tummy." It was all coming together now. I could see myself floating up the ramp at the back of Jim Oliver's Smokehouse with all eyes on me and cameras flashing. Maybe there would be an announcement for each entrance as at a debutante ball:

*"Now entering the door to our dining hall is the former Miss Jacqueline Mai Layne wearing a sassy, blue and yellow, purple polk-a-dot dress. The purple and pink streaks in her hair and the purple and pink, soft high-heel shoes are wonderful choices to bring out the colors in her ensemble. Her pleasant smile and wonderfully made-up face make her one of the most beautiful 67- year-old women in the hall. And proudly offering his arm for her entrance is her appropriately dressed husband of fifty years, Grady Ward Partin also a 1960 graduate of GCHS."*

Finally, my little granddaughter's admonition to me was, "Granny, don't act so that your friends will say, 'this woman is crazy or nuts.'" She advised that I act my age which is sixty-seven, and offered a few words of encouragement, "Your classmates will all look 'really stylish' when they get to the reunion!" That exclamation really had me worried.

As I had done a few months back, I went to Tressie's Hair Styling for my second hair coloring. Tressie was waiting; she had been pumped by Jocelyn's mother to do my hair differently for the reunion. This was on Friday before the event. Like I said in a previous story, hair stylists have love affairs with scissors, but I happened to like what Tressie did with her scissors and color that day. If we had stopped there, all would have been well, but before I knew what was happening, the make-up came out. Tressie, her daughter Shelley, and another hair stylist, turned saleslady, and myself had a ball, an absolute ball, making me look like a sixty-seven-year old debutante.

What a "coming out party" it was! When I got out of my car at home, my husband looked out the window and thought to himself, "Who is that woman?" He quickly dashed to the bedroom to check to see if he was fully clothed. He came back to where he could see the woman clearly; then realizing that she had just stepped out of his wife's car, he took a closer look only to realize that his wife was looking him in the face. Then as usual when I do something out of the ordinary, he began to laugh. By the time I got into the house, the make-up had already begun to wreaked havoc on my skin. I was itching so badly that I had to get in the shower being careful not to mess up my new hairstyle. But by morning, it too had to be washed. Finally, I was my old self, but I still had the reunion to attend that night.

At six o'clock Saturday evening, Grady Ward dressed in his overalls and boots, and I dressed in my "pedal pushers" and sandals, walked up to the dining hall to greet friends of long ago. The make-up was gone; the wonderfully, well-placed layers of hair were amiss; there were no pink and purple colors, only orange and white. Two of the 1960 Grundy County graduating class members had just made their entrances into real life. Most who were pretty fifty years ago were still pretty, though some were not. Hattie Ruth Bennett, Bonita Burnett, Perky Cannon and Norma Shrum were still quite pretty. Those who were tall/short were still so. Those who were not-so-attractive years ago, were still not-so-attractive although some had improved. I probably had the largest "tummy," but Bobby Rose may have had me beat by a few inches. All in all, I thought we had held our own rather well considering the years gone by. The nicest thing about it all was the friendliness and unity of the group. No one put on airs; no one refused to join in; no one seemed to care how everyone else was dressed or what kind of vehicle each drove to the reunion. I think all of those attitudes come with age; thank goodness, we had all grown up.

Highlights of the evening for me were talking with Bob Lowrie, whom I had not seen in about forty-five years, and touching base with all the Monteagle Elementary friends who graduated with me there in 1956 and again in 1960 at GCHS; finding a distant “Perry” cousin, Roy Mae Perry, for whom I had been looking for over five years; reliving my fainting spell in 1960 half way up the Washington Monument in D. C. with Lonnie Stockwell who had carried me to an elevator causing both of us to miss the view from the top; checking to see if Rachel Dyer was still mad at me for putting a rubber spider on her blackberry cobbler in the school cafeteria—she was; giggling once again with Shirley Henley and Sandra Reider; and sadly remembering those fifteen classmates out of 114 who had passed on from us.

Some talked about favorite teachers, one of whom was Mr. Zeddie Walker. I never had the honor of being in his classroom, but I had the privilege of being challenged by several wonderful teachers whom I think of quite often—Miss Anna Mary Parker, Mrs. Evelyn Taylor and Mrs. Violet Wakeland—three of the best. And of course, we all recalled and praised Mr. John A. Anderson, our school principal. We worked desperately to decide who was drunk or drinking on the class trip to Washington, D. C., and why certain boys were on the girls’ floor and vice versa. I’m certain that many a sports game was replayed, but I missed those conversations.

My granddaughter would have been proud of me for not “acting crazy.” She was right in saying that all my classmates would be “really stylish.” They were stylish in character rather than fashion! I saw a special, united group of former Grundy County citizens. Yes, it really has been fifty years. No one has changed. Well, we are a little older, a little wiser and a little heavier. When the photographer asked for able-bodied volunteers to sit on the floor in front of the first seated row, I was the first to jump up, rub my tummy, and comment that I was in **good shape**, and easily sat down on the floor. I was followed by Pete Bouldin on one side and Bobby Rose on the other. I whispered, “Boys, it was easy to get down here, but we are going to have a lot of trouble getting up from this floor!”

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