

Rallymaster speech brings classmates back 50 years

**By Brian Roebke
Editor**

Bill Newhouse from the Kaukauna High School Class of 1974 headlined the 88th Kaukauna Alumni Foundation Rally on June 15 at Van Abel's of Hollandtown.

After being introduced by Chairwoman of the Board Kristine Landreman, Newhouse said he was so glad to have taken speech class from Barb Roloff because he thought he might need it 50 years later when the class marked 50 years since graduation.

"I remember the first thing she taught me," he said. "You get up in front and you picture all of them in their underwear."

He said everyone looked great and it's hard to believe it's been 50 years. He said he talked to a 30-year-old in the bar the night before. "He was a little half in the bag but he came up to me and he said, 'are you part of this 74 class? God, you guys look so good for that age,' and he added there were a lot of 'hot ladies' in their class," he said.

He remembered looking at The Kaukauna Times when he was a kid and seeing the 50-year class in the pictures and how old they looked.

"I can't tell you the honor it is to represent such a good group of people that we had in our class," he said.

They had 120 people committed to attend their Friday night reunion party and at the end of the night, there was just one unclaimed name tag.

He asked for a moment of silence to think about the around 40 classmates who are deceased.

Newhouse then brought up the northside versus southside rivalry that existed when they were growing up, followed by asking how many people married another KHS graduate. There were plenty of them, but not as many who were classmates.

"It's so cool how many of you found partners in Kaukauna," he said. "It says a lot for the school that we were able to generate good people and people we wanted to spend the rest of our lives with."

Newhouse also talked about growing up in the Glenview Acres neighborhood that was new at the time with a lot of young families, asking all of them to stand up.

He also asked his classmates some trivia questions, with prizes he thought were near and dear to many of their hearts, small bottles of booze.

Who was the prom king our junior year? Answer: Tony Schmidt

Who was the prom queen our junior year? Answer: Jane Nelessen

What was the nickname of our high school principal? Answer: Bucky

Who was our class valedictorian? Answer: Beth Van Zummeren

Who won the Lang Trophy? Answer: Diane Haen

Newhouse noted that classmate Jane Lang did not win that award, even though her name was on it, but his research found she took a very close second. He also complimented her for contacting many people from the class to get them to come out to the Friday and Saturday reunions.

Who was our Homecoming queen our senior year? Answer: Cork Thon

Just for fun, can you name the others who were on her court? Answers: Bill Jansen, Diane Potter and Diane Haen, Reed Giordana, Scott Jensen.

Which classmates' dad was the mayor when we were in high school? Answer: Ron LaPlante

Which classmate not here tonight has a nationally known radio talk show out of Milwaukee? Answer: Mark Belling.

Newhouse noted Belling often substitute hosted for radio legend Rush Limbaugh. "It was pretty cool to have a guy I went to high school and grade school with that did that," he said.

What was the most popular Vets dance song? Answer: Color My World.

"The least favorite dance I am told was a Led Zeppelin song to slow dance was Stairway to Heaven because it was too long," he said.

He talked about the struggles dancing to that song because not only was it long, but it started as a slow song and ended as a fast song. And, it could be torture or exhilaration to be with the particular dance partner.

"It was the best dance and the worst dance at the same time," he said.

What was the No. 1 Billboard song of 1974? Answer: The Way we Were by Barbara Streisand.

He recalled some of their hangouts out of high school: The Iron Horse, Vets dances, northside pool hall, Dick's Drive In, Rich and Sally's Bar, and Steve Zenisek's basement.

He remarked about the clothing styles that he saw in the yearbook. "What were we thinking guys?" he said.

Newhouse started to end his speech by challenging everybody to be that person who brings energy into a room. “When you get to be our age a lot of people start to get grumpy (about our bodies) but we’ve gotten this far and we’ve all had pretty good lives and we have a lot to be happy about, and our attitudes should show that,” he said.

He suggested they compliment people they see whether they are co-workers, people in their volunteer groups, or classmates they run into and give them a big positive attitude.

“One thing that was taught to me a long time ago, I don’t remember who it was, who said, ‘I start every day with five pennies in my left pocket and every time I compliment somebody, I move one penny to my right pocket.’ He said, ‘I don’t let the day end until all those pennies are moved to my right pocket.’”

He ended by encouraging everyone to enjoy the rest of the night, drink responsibly, “Not like we did in 1974,” but if they have a designated driver, they can “party like it’s 1974.”

Tony Penterman photo

Bill Newhouse entertained the Class of 1974 at the Kaukauna Alumni Rally with a walk back in time to when they were Kaukauna High School students.

Brian Roebke photo

Dot Schmidt was a “class mom” to many members of the Class of 1974 and she was one of the guests of the rallymaster, Bill Newhouse.