

**BENEDICTION OF TEMPLE HIGH SCHOOL CLASS OF 1971
FORTY-FIVE YEAR REUNION**

When Bubba first pitched to me the idea of a closing devotional for the reunion, he concluded by saying, “I have a hunch this will be the most hung-over group you have ever preached in front of.” I thoughtfully responded, “It might be the most hung-over delivery they have ever heard.”

In the book of Deuteronomy from the Hebrew Bible, the people are instructed to come together once a year to a certain place— to party! (14.sel.)

“Set apart a tithe of all the yield of your seed that is brought in yearly from the field. . . . then you may turn it into money. . . . spend the money for whatever you wish—oxen, sheep, wine, strong drink, or whatever you desire. And you shall eat . . . rejoicing together.”

I have no trouble believing that the Lord who turned water into wine, so that a joyful occasion could continue, is not less joyful for us the next morning.

Thank you Class of ‘71 for offering me this gracious opportunity to offer you a blessing before you depart this morning.

First, I want to share with you the Bible text I believe fits well with our day. For those who haven’t been to Sunday School in a while, the setting is Jacob’s separation from his Uncle Laban. You remember the patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Well, Jacob had been living a while with his Uncle Laban, and now their families were parting ways. The text comes from Genesis 31:48-49.

Laban said, “This pile of rocks is a witness between you and me today.” Therefore he called it A Pile To Remind Us, and the pillar he named Watch, for he said, “The LORD watch between you and me, when we are absent one from another.”

Time separates us; time hides one from the view of the other, but the Lord watches between. Some will leave here today who will not sit here again. The Lord watch between us!

And one more brief text from Paul’s letter to the Corinthians—two words of Jesus: “**Remember me**” (11:23).

And before I enter into the message, I know that you know that some sixty of our classmates have not lived to enjoy this reunion. I suppose I could say that I have had the “gracious honor” to bury many of my friends. And the memorial service of one friend, there were given out copies of a poem that I keep in my Bible to today.

When I'm Gone

~Mrs. Lyman Hancock

When I come to the end of my journey
And I travel my last weary mile
Just forget if you can, that I ever frowned
And remember only the smile

Forget unkind words I have spoken
Remember some good I have done
Forget that I ever had heartache
And remember I've had loads of fun

Forget that I've stumbled and blundered
And sometimes fell by the way
Remember I have fought some hard battles
And won, ere the close of the day

Then forget to grieve for my going
I'd not have you sad for a day
But in summer just gather some flowers
And remember the place where I lay

And come in the shade of evening
When the sun paints the sky in the west
Stand for a few moments beside me
And **remember** only my best

The Russian novelist Fyodor Dostoyevsky once wrote lines that encompassed the thoughts of memory, home, education, and even salvation:

“You must know that there is nothing higher and stronger and more wholesome and good for life in the future than some good **memory**, especially a memory of childhood, of **home**. People talk to you a great deal about your **education**, but some good, sacred memory, preserved from childhood, is perhaps the best education. If a man carries many such memories with him into life, he is safe to the end of his days, and if one has only one good memory left in one's heart, even that may sometime be the **means of saving us**.” (*The Brothers Karamazov*)

Following are some of my own high school memories. They are my personal **memories**: I know you have countless of your own. And I tried to confine the recitation to those memories closely associated with campus.

- * I remember pep rally's and football games. He was in the class of '70, but most all of you knew George Brindley. He sat behind the drum section in the bleachers, and would frequently shout out, “Break his leg!” I still think it is so ironic that he is now an orthopedic surgeon
- * I have a memory of learning to type on a manual typewriter.
- * I have a memory racing to our cars at lunchtime to make it to Burger Chef or Ki's. You know, if I had only realized it then, but Ki was “Ki Aldrich”, the all-American football player from T.C.U.!
- * I have a memory of cramming all night to read *The House of Seven Gables*.
- * I remember considering home-making class because that's where all the girls were but
- * I remember being too shy to go and grab for myself the girl who was my heart-throb (and there were many).
- * I have a memory of being reprimanded for forging hall passes for everyone in study hall and spending the remainder of my senior year study hall solitary confinement.
- * I have a memory of “*playing*” dodge ball in P.E. with deflated, red rubber balls, and the ridiculous P.E. shorts we all had to wear.
- * I remember the smell spit-valves and brass in the band hall. Have you ever noticed that all band halls smell the same?

- * And Band bus trips (I wouldn't play football because I might get squashed by the likes of Butch Wall or Ernest Knox.)
- * I have a memory of being part of a High School class, so full of cliques and groups, rich and poor, that true social unity was never even considered; yet, forty-five years later, a collegiality grown so close that we continue to celebrate the births of each other's grandchildren, mourn the passing of each other's parents, and offer condolences and prayers for those who have cancer.

Summer of '42 is a 1971 American coming-of-age comedy-drama film based on the memoirs of screenwriter Herman Raucher. It tells the story of how Raucher, in his early teens on his 1942 summer vacation on Nantucket Island, embarks on a one-sided romance with a young woman, Dorothy, whose husband had gone off to fight in World War II, and who soon dies in action.

One evening, "Hermie" goes to her beach house and find she has just heard the news. He consoles her. They are intimate.

The next day, Hermie goes again to her house to find a note on the door, to him from Dorothy:

Dear Hermie: I must go home now. I'm sure you'll understand. There's much I have to do. What I will do is remember you. And I pray that you be spared all senseless tragedies. I wish you good things, Hermie. Only good things. Always, Dorothy.

And then follow the last lines of the movie:

I was never to see her again. Nor was I ever to learn what became of her. Life is made up of small comings and goings. And for everything we take with us, there is something that we leave behind. In the summer of '42, . . . in a very special way, I lost Hermie forever.

Over the past forty-five years, we have left much behind forever: "childish ways" as the apostle Paul phrased it. But think of all that God's blessings have allowed us to take with us:

- * a true pride in our Alma Mater
- * our first lessons of romance and love
- * the life-lessons of all our regrets, from which perhaps we learned most
- * the lesson of humility (and old age)—that "all glory is fleeting"
- * the lesson that makes valuable our friendships—that all human relationships will one day come to an end.

In his classic novel, *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, Colombian author Gabriel Garcia Marquez tells of a village where people were afflicted with a strange plague of **forgetfulness**, a kind of contagious amnesia. Starting with the oldest inhabitants and working through the population, the plague causes people to forget the names of even the most common everyday objects.

One young man, still unaffected, tries to limit the damage by putting labels on everything. "This is a table," "This is a window," "This is a cow; it has to be milked every morning." And at the entrance to the town, on the main road, he puts up two large signs. One reads "The name of our village is Macondo," and the larger one reads "GOD EXISTS."

One of the messages I get from the story is that we can, and probably will, forget most of what we have learned at Temple High School, even the names and faces of ones whom, to us,

have become dear—and all that forgetting will do us no true harm.

But if we forget That which binds our hearts to one another, and if we forget the *One* whose very own nature binds us together, something profoundly human in us will have been lost.

And so His admonition: “Remember me.”

That which binds us together is voiced in the lyrics of Sam Cooke:

Don't know much about history
Don't know much biology
Don't know much about science books
Don't know much about the French I took
But I do know that I love you
And I know that if you love me too
What a wonderful world this would be

The words of Jean Paul Sartre were the motto of the Class of '71: “There may be more beautiful times, but this one is ours.” A wonderful hope for the Class of 2017 would be that their time will be at least as beautiful as was ours.

Just verses beyond the text I shared with you, as Jacob left that pile of stones, he met angels. The daily grind of piling up stones—the daily grind of advancing life— is redeemed by the prayer, “Lord, watch,” and the promise that God’s angels are nearer than we think.

**The LORD watch between you and me,
when we are absent one from another.**

Now may the Lord bless you and keep you.
The Lord make his face so shine upon you and be gracious unto you.
The Lord lift up his countenance upon you and give you peace.

