

I Remember

By Jerry Stevens

Many if not most of my St Joe classmates who know me today probably met me at high school reunions, but didn't know me during our high school years. That's because I was very introverted and disinclined to join any extracurricular activities at all and in 4 years I never did. No football games, mixers, plays or prom for me. If you do remember me from St. Joe's, it's likely because your last name begins with S through U and we were in home-rooms together or you lived in Mentor and we shared bus rides. I got poor to average grades at Mentor's St. Mary Elementary School and they didn't improve when I got to St. Joseph High School, but I muddled through both. Back then I'd never heard of attention deficit. I just knew that unlike my 7 siblings, I wasn't good at classroom learning. I still have my report cards. You'd think I'd be over it by now, but I still wince when I look at them. That's not to say I didn't benefit from having attended St. Joe's. I did. But it was in unexpected ways. I learned a lot about human nature and a bit more.

Among the most memorable days were my first freshman day and my last senior day. On my first day as a freshman an upperclassman introduced himself by gleefully slapping the tall stack of books out of my hands as I trudged up the stairwell, sending them cascading as I struggled to gather them. I was not traumatized, correctly guessing this was a one-time initiation. Welcome to St. Joe's!

On my last senior day, I sat in the stands outside with some classmates wondering what was next in my life since I had not applied to any college or planned on military service. At 17 I had no idea. In between the first day and the last day are memory snippets. I remember eagerly anticipating my first physical education class, sure that I would blow the doors off all these city kids with my blazing speed, well-honed during years of backyard sports contests out in the country. Instead I finished near the back of the pack. From this I learned genetics. I am slow. Nurture would only get me so far if nature held me back. I needed to find things I was



good at, and not waste time trying to develop talents I did not possess. I remember being told in December of our freshman year that our classmate Robert Bajorek died in the gym, and telling my mother at the end of the day. She at first thought I must have misunderstood. 14-year-olds don't die in gym class. From this, I learned at a young age to contemplate my own mortality.

I remember being fascinated and impressed by one teacher's life stories only to be laughed at by classmates for believing him. What I don't recall precisely is which teacher it was. Was it Hank Wroblewski or Dan Gillespie? Whoever it was, his B.S. artistry was renowned and I was the last to know. From this I learned to be skeptical. I remember Bill Gutbrod, our biology teacher, telling us to take notes while he pushed one transparency after another to the overhead projector to keep us occupied while he prepared for a football game. From this I learned time management.

I remember being allowed out of class to attend football pep rallies in a dingy gymnasium. This unimpressive building was reverently called "The Purple Palace". From this I learned about marketing. I remember the boredom I felt as a sophomore, staring out a study hall window and seeing the vortex created as high winds entered the rectangle formed by the adjacent walls. With no teacher in sight, we folded paper into airplanes and threw them into the vortex, competing to see whose airplane could make the longest most impressive flight. From this, I learned the value of improvisation, experimentation, and competition.

I remember discovering that some people, such as geometry teacher Frank Macuga, could silence a room of rowdy boys simply by entering it. And I noticed Thomas Mengelcamp never could control our study hall no matter how hard he tried. From this, I learned the power of command.

I remember being in Mr. Kirchendorfer's English class the day Norm Stalker invented a game where he softly said "nice head" about Kirchendorfer's freshly cut hair. The object of the game was to say it just a bit louder than the previous player without getting caught. After a few successful rounds, Kirchendorfer wheeled around, pointed at me and exclaimed: "See me after class!" From this, I learned risk-reward analysis.

I remember Jim Vick's English class (St Joe Class of 1965 with my brother Tom) He had a cool, trimmed beard and an impressive collection of sweater vests. He once mocked the idealistic assertion of a student that we all had equal ability. He assured us we did not. From this I learned the wisdom of our elders. After all, I was only 17 and Jim Vick was 23.

I remember Spanish I with William Kysela & Spanish II with Frank Bokausek (St Joe Class of 1960 with my brother Bob) Spanish was one of just a few subjects I liked and was even a little bit good at. I

practiced correct Spanish pronunciation and accents and Bokausek complimented me and a classmate on our performances. From this I learned how to motivate others.

I remember Ralph Srp who taught us what is now known as “key-boarding” but was then called “typing”. Unlike what I learned in geometry, this is a practical skill I use every day. Despite my C average in this class, thanks to Mr. Srp, I am not a hunt and peck typist. This reminds me of a receptionist I worked with many years ago. The sign on her desk read: “I type the way I live. Fast, with a lot of mistakes.” After a few aimless years following high school, I realized that successful people stuck with one thing and committed my efforts to the radio business. I chose radio because in the 1970’s radio revenue was growing fast, compounding at 15% per year. Despite my introversion, I chose sales because it didn’t require a 4 year degree and while low paying, it offered the potential to grow if I could become good at it. I found that people with the stereotypical sales personality are often not that good at it and I could beat most of them. I got married and we have two sons. I became good enough at sales that I was promoted a few times. I ran clusters of radio stations in Savannah, Hilton Head Island, Destin, Florence, SC and my final career stop was in Greenville, SC where we live today. I stayed in radio until 2009 when I ran out of tricks to manage my career in the face of radio’s decline.

I discovered the Internet in the late 1980’s before there were even web browsers. Coding became a hobby. I found I am better at online learning than classroom learning.

I’m in a phased retirement, working part-time as a freelance business writer and web developer. Hail Red and Blue.

STUDENT NAME	STEVENS JEROME KEVIN		1968-1969		23							
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PARENT'S NAME	MR MRS ROBERT J STEVENS				YEAR	STUDENT NO.	PARISH	TELEPHONE NO.				
INST	PER	TIME	SUBJ. NO.	SUBJECT NAME	INSTRUCTOR'S NAME	ROOM NO.	M	T	W	T	F	SEM.
15	1	0845	046	AMER HIS	MR GASPERAK	0204	X	X	X	X	X	1
76	2	0930	050	INT PHY SCI	H WRUBLEWSKI	0310	X	X	X	X	X	1
41	3	1015	047	ALG 2	MR MACUGA	0208	X	X	X	X	X	1
42	4	1100	0981	STUDY HALL	MR MENGELKAMP	0216	X	X	X	X	X	1
01	5	1145	041	RELIGION 3	BRO ALLEN	0303	X	X	X	X	X	1
30	6	1230	043	ENG 3 ACAD	MR INTORCIO	0315	X	X	X	X	X	1
17	8	0145	035	TYPING 1	BRO GENSLER	T004	X	X	X	X	X	1

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ST. JOSEPH HIGH SCHOOL
STUDENT SCHEDULE