

Lorain High School Memories

When I think back to my high school days, I lived a very similar life depicted in the TV show “Happy Days” and the movie “American Graffiti” which include the following memories:

- Meeting and talking with friends at our lockers before school
- Making life-long friends
- Traveling with the Acapella Choir to perform in competitions
- Watching lunch-time movies in the auditorium
- Being elected class president
- Attending Friday night football games at George Daniels Field
- Participating in the operetta, “South Pacific”
- Playing the role of “Joe,” a juvenile delinquent, opposite my friend, Darryl Dobras as Reverend Peter Marshall, in the spring play “A Man Called Peter”
- Enjoying the prom at The Crystal Palace
- Social clubs like the Jokers, Dukes, Cavaliers, Debs
- Cruising Broadway on Friday nights with my friends in my used 1955 Bahama Blue Ford (christened the Bahama Mama by my friends)
- Ordering hamburgers, French fries and deep-fried mushrooms, and hanging out at the Hoop Drive-in Restaurant
- Hanging out at Redman’s Bowling Alley, McGarvey’s Restaurant, Yala’s Pizzeria, and Lorain Creamery
- Going to movies at the Palace and Dreamland theaters
- Watching the sunsets at Lakeview Park in the summer, and afterward enjoying the water in the fountain change colors
- Listening to Mo Town music from Detroit and Cleveland on the radio

Undoubtably, my participation in the Acapella Choir’s operetta, “South Pacific,” stands out as a highlight of my senior year. It all began in the fall with the highly anticipated posting of the cast after the auditions. I had tried out for the role of Emile de Becque and was eager to see the result of my effort. Much to my surprise and shock, I had been selected to play the character of Luther Billis. Somehow our choir director, Mr. Hansen, had made the decision to showcase the character traits that I didn’t even know I had!

Next began the preparation process to validate his trust in me to successfully execute the role. I began by watching the film version of South Pacific several times to capture the essence of Luther Billis and truly have fun with the part. From then on until the performance of the operetta, rehearsals on weekends and after school occupied much of my free time. Memorizing the script and the numerous songs I would sing took care of the rest. Then it was showtime. So began the ritual of having a ship painted on my stomach before each performance by John Fox. He performed miracles as an artist on a not-so-optimal canvas.

All the hard work and dedication to produce a successful show came to fruition during a high school assembly, and shortly afterward several performances attended by parents, relatives, friends, and the public. Judging from the accolades, South Pacific was a hit!!

Having grown up in a very conservative, religious family, I wasn't sure how my parents would react to my rendition of Luther Billis. When they attended one of the shows, they were quite surprised that I was able to respectfully and successfully play the role....coconuts, grass skirt and all!

I had a great time playing Luther Billis and acting with the rest of the performers. The cast of South Pacific was talented and fun to work with; from Igor Berdekof as Emile de Becque, Donna Kokas as Nellie Forbush, Jerry Fulton as Lieutenant Joseph Cable, and Doreen Poor as Bloody Mary, to the group of Seabees who supported my version of Luther Billis. It was truly a memorable and enriching experience for me that added to my well-rounded education.

As important as the extracurricular activities in high school were for me, I strongly valued the outstanding academic program I received in high school with well-prepared and dedicated teachers. For example, Mr. Edwards, my tenth-grade biology teacher, had a contagious enthusiasm for the subject and a quality curriculum that added to my interest in the area. These qualities influenced the future path I would take in my formal education. I would eventually graduate with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology from Ohio State University and begin a teaching career in grades 7-12 teaching biology and earth science before eventually becoming an administrator in education. Mr. Edwards' dedication to his craft and the ability to successfully share his knowledge with students was mirrored by the other classroom teachers with whom I came in contact during high school.

Several years later as a teacher or an administrator of grades K-12 and college, I appreciated even more how my high school education had prepared me for success in life. Even a kid from a blue-collar family in a small town like Lorain could aim high with the proper and effective education.

Being a high school student in the late fifties and early sixties was the best of times. Life was simple and the future held so much promise for those who prepared for and sought it. Good times were had, and good memories were made during my years at Lorain High School.

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Class of 1961B