

MHS 30th Reunion

July 30, 2011

Welcome to the Big Night. It is hard to believe it has been thirty years. I was asked to say a few words and I gladly accepted. If you don't remember me I am Bob Olson, many of you know me as Coach Olson. It was my first job out of college and in 1981 I was in my mid 20's. You have no idea of the fond memories I have of this school and the students who went there. It is hard to believe that you are now twice as old as I was when I taught or coached you. Many of you who are here in town know that I went on to become a principal for more than 20 years. A few of those years right at the old Middleton campus. What I learned during my years as a Razorback laid a great foundation for me as my career continued.

For those of you that don't remember Middleton was about 10 years old in 1981. The building was built as a junior high and then converted to a high school around 1970. That explains the low drinking fountains, narrow hallways, small cafeteria and the undersized gym.

The City of Charleston was expanding. The title of your yearbook which was called the Variations was:

IN the Middle of it All and stated and I quote....

“In the center of annexation efforts between the city of Charleston: between St. Andrew's and Summerville, its two worst rivals, surrounded by an ever increasing number of apartment complexes, Middleton was “In the Middle of it all.”

Your senior year edition of Variations was award the Best South Carolina yearbook. Mrs. Janice Shealy the faculty advisor was named the South Carolina Advisor of the Year.

Your senior was a busy year.

- 289 students worked part time jobs
- 271 students were members of the 15 athletic teams.
- 233 parents attended the Open House held on September 21st.
- More than 800 parents belonged to booster clubs or the PTA.
- Pep rallies, held weekly in the fall and winter, involved more that 65 people to set up the gym. That included people to put down that red and gold tarp to protect the wooden floor.
- 241 seniors rehearsed in the gym and then graduated at Gaillard Auditorium
- About 400 students attended summer school in the summer of 1980. It was unbearably hot as the school had no air conditioning.
- Paula Woosley was appointed VP of Charleston County Student Council when she wasn't busy chasing Citadel cadets and hiding from her father who taught at the school. I

got to know him well and he always suspected that she changed into short skirts after getting to school. Occasionally he would walk around trying to find her to see if it was true. That wasn't true was it Paula??

- Curtis Joyner and Sherron Humphries won State PTA art awards.
- Hank Aaron visited the school and spoke to students in the gym. I will never forget how thick his wrists were. He huge arms obvious contributed to his nickname, "Hammering Hank Aaron."
- Senior Honors English students feared Sandy Pell and her required Shakespeare's MacBeth skits.
- Volume II of the RAZORBACK newspaper kept students up on what was going on at school.
- The Middleton Singers performed over 40 times during the school year beginning the year by winning first place at the Coastal Carolina Fair. They also travelled to Disney World in the Spring. They were amazing!!!!
- Students, yes students, drove the 26 buses to school and really had very few discipline problems on them.
- Fiddler on the Roof was the Spring Musical led by Mildred Almond. It was amazing, despite a power outage which delayed opening night!
- Allison Caine was crowned Miss Middleton.
- You talked with each other constantly.... at school ... sometimes too much.. and that was before Facebook.... and from what I see on Facebook now you still haven't lost that habit. Oh, thanks Shawn Couch for faithfully sending me energy for Mafia Wars!!
- You were the last Senior Class in the school district to have "Open Campus", meaning you could leave for lunch.
- You were also the last class who could smoke legally on the school campus. Both privileges were taken away in the 1982-83 year by the school board.
- Middleton won the Exchange Club Division One School of the year for the third year in a row your senior year.
- Your class also won the CCSD Key Club of the year and all four Y Clubs were also named clubs of the year.
- Your senior year Middleton led the county in academic test scores for the third consecutive year.

Taking you back if you remember Seniors tried hard to avoid:

- Fraternizing with the Freshman
- Parking outside the Senior Parking Lot
- Riding the school bus
- Eating in the cafeteria

- And as the yearbook stated....”Reminiscing about how great high school was”.

Boy was that off base.

I am sure that you will all agree with me that those golden years at Middleton were probably some of the best years of your life. They were mine!

Athletics played an integral part of the school.

764 students participated in 31 extracurricular sports or activities.

Pep Rallies were a big part of the school as just about every Friday in the Fall and Winter roars could be heard coming from the gym.

Early Fall Pep Rallies were “boiling over” with not only enthusiasm, but also extreme heat as you remember the gym was not air conditioned.

This young teacher and coach from Illinois had never heard such noise, seen so much excitement or been sooooo hot as after witnessing a Middleton Pep Rally.

I still have not seen that much energy..... some 30 thirty years later. I wish all schools could experience what you did. It was great!!!

The girls won the school’s first volleyball conference title in 1981. With a record of 22-10, Queenie Grant and Debbie Rentz were nominated as All State players. They were coached by Nancy Kennedy.

The FB team was 7-4, with close losses to Berkeley, Summerville and Battery Creek. Many of the younger players were in training to win the State Championship in a few years. They were taught well by you and the coaching staff.

The Senior Class decided not to have a homecoming parade that year but rather a “Mini Olympics” at the Homecoming Pep Rally. The torch was brought into the gym by Ted Pestorius and the games began. Six games determined the Olympic winner. The Junior Class triumphed despite protests from the other classes. I still think you should have won..... The judges must have been paid off!!!

Lori Tisdale was crowned Homecoming Queen during halftime of the game that evening.

The day of the first BB game each year was declared Middleton’s Birthday and for the first time in the history of the school Mr. Razorback was named. That honor went to Stanley Huggins. Spirit was high that day and the all were dressed in red and gold as it was announced that those not wearing red and gold would get “pinched”

The BB team was 14 -11. Jim Atkinson coached the team and later that year was promoted to be an assistant principal.

Clement Fields was undefeated in wrestling during the regular season. He later spent some time as a professional wrestler. I had to get that in as I was the wrestling coach!

Soccer went from not winning a game the year before to 10-4 record tying Summerville for the Conference Championship.

The girls track team won 29 track meets and were crowned conference champs for the first time in the school's history. They were coached by Jackie O'Rourke.

The golf team won the conference tournament and beat rival Summerville three times that year. Bryan Hill received a golf scholarship to Baptist College. Wayne Stonaker was the MVP.

Our big rivals were Summerville and St. Andrew's. Before the football game with St. Andrew's it was tradition that a dead pig would be delivered to the front office of Middleton and Black Roses delivered to Pep Rally at St. Andrew's. The Sunday before the Summerville football game the coaches from both schools would meet at the county line to exchange game films. Let's just say that they were pretty "heated" rivalries.

When I was named the principal of St. Andrew's in 1990.... I remember pulling into the parking lot for the first time... feeling I was entering "Enemy Territory."

You participated in a lot of events at the school.

Voted the "Best" by their classmates were (Please stand as I call your name):

Fonda Cummings and Yancy Mitchell as Friendliest.

Bernadine Kennedy, Allen Wilson, and Karen Alston as Best Dressed

Lyn Everman and Jimmy Lee as Most Spirited

Cathi Butler and Stanley Huggins as Best Looking

Marla Kinne, Mark Reeves, and Kevin Ziman as Biggest Flirts.

Kim McBride and Chris Brown were voted Cutest.

Queenie Grant and Keith Silver as Most Athletic.

Cynthia Washington, Mark Moberg and Courtney Drews as Most Courteous.

Ginny Hanlon and Dallas Harken as Most Dependable

Gail Gresens and Raymond Minis as Most Intellectual.

Toby Smith, Scott Peebles and Cindy Fennessy as Most likely to Succeed

Jim Knight, Susan Fish and Ellyn Harvey as Most Talented

Lisa Canacaris and Ronnell Hicks as Wittiest.

Laurie Tisdale and Jeri Rowe as Best All Around. Jeri was also crowned Mr. Middleton.

I would like to add another student superlative category.

There was a group of guys that were known as the New Zoo Review. Members included Jeff Nickles, Jimmy Lee, David Rowell, David Bobo, Ronnell Hicks, Ernie Murray and a few others. They started at Pep Rallies doing weird things. As the time went along their antics became more and more bizarre. Students looked forward to seeing what in the world they would do next. Teachers and the administration kept their fingers crossed that they would not cross the line of decency. If we have any of them here would they please stand.

I had personal experience with many of them as for some strange reason many of them were assigned to what I called my “Welcome Back Kotter’s” class.

The class was officially titled, Health: Human Sexuality and Social Issues. The students called it SEX, DRUGS and ALCOHOL.

Top students in the class included Jeff Nickles, Jimmy Lee, David Bobo, Daniel Smith, Johnny Brooks, Herbert Washington, Keith “Skywalking Bucket” Davis, Alfred Hamilton, T.C. Jones and others who I will not name I see some of you others out there smiling who were also in that class. I will not call your names. Principal Coury tried not to laugh when I showed him my class roster. Assistant Principal Trayer shook his head wondering how I would make it through the semester. It was the only semester this class was taught and it was not offered again... to this day.

Let’s just say it was an interesting class. You can imagine the lessons and conversations we had as I taught sex, drugs and alcohol to essentially the members of the New Zoo Review. I vividly remember some days in that class...like the day I walked into the room seeing a pair of underwear hanging from the ceiling.....or.... hearing someone yelling out from a locked cabinet in the room. I could go on... but this is a mixed crowd, you are probably tired of listening to me by now and I still do work for the school district so enough said.

Let me close by talking about your teachers.

Working at the school as a teacher and coach was a big challenge.

The facilities were terrible, there was no air conditioning, and the district and school were severely underfunded.

Yet, I feel comfortable in saying there was no better place to work. We all worked together as a group and had the pleasure of having a great Student Body.

I remember a school filled with “pride” and “tradition,” despite it only being ten years old at the time.

Your leader was Dan Coury, who fought hard to get what the school deserved from the district.

Gene Trayer and Jim Atkinson were your assistant principals trying to keep you in line.

John Kennedy ran the Night School program at the school and later one of the most successful District Community Education programs in the nation.

Bill Royal was the Director of Guidance leading a very caring group of counselors.

Department Heads were:

- Johnnie Harvey – English and cheerleading sponsor
- Mildred Almond- Social Studies teacher and director of the Spring Play
- Edie Gregg- Mathematics
- Betty Edmondson - Science
- Paige Kelly – Chorus teacher who was named President of the SC Music Educators Association’s Choral Division that year.
- Jim Werden – Athletic Director who went on to lead the FB Team to a State Championship two years later.
- Laura Cline and Chuck McCarter – Student Council Advisors who orchestrated events throughout the year.
- Lee Newton – used his chain saw to clear out space for the practice field behind the school for a few years. He had a lot of substitute teachers those years. I can still picture his classes being taught by substitutes and in the background hearing the chain saw whining.
- Nancy Kennedy and Carolyn McElwee (Newton) – gave their all to the school and are still teaching at West Ashley High School.

I know I have not mentioned many others but I will say that as a group I cannot think of a more dedicated staff in my 34 years of education.

You were lucky to have them as teachers, mentors and coaches.

As I have told students over the years. Teaching is a special job.

Low pay, long hours, great amounts of stress and very challenging situations.

The greatest reward we have as educators is to see former students be successful.

Please do myself and your teachers a favor ,

When you see them on the street go up to them, introduce yourself,

tell them what you are doing

and if they helped you thank them!

It means so much when that happens to me and I know it means as much to all of them !!

So..... To the Class of 1981, I salute you As Bob Hope used to say thanks for the memories!

Enjoy your time this evening together and keep in touch with each other.

Thank you for letting me share this evening with you.