



The Reunion



My rural mail carrier delivered an envelope dated November 2016.

The letter heading said...

Key West High School Class of 1967 - FELLOW CONCHS

You are cordially invited to attend our class 50th reunion". The date was set for October which I noted was some 11 months away. It was signed Carol M.....- Andrews, 1967 Senior Class 50th Reunion Notification Committee.

I remember Carol M.,,,, long before she married a Mr. Andrews. She was in a couple of classes my senior year including my Civic's, Government and Communism class. Carol was an attractive girl and dated Allen, one of my surfing buddy's.

I thought about the possibility of going, hemmed, and hawed and mostly dismissed it.

One afternoon weeks later, I happened by an auto salvage yard and noticed a 1966-67 Dodge A100 window van very much like the one I had in High School.

An idea formulated in my mind, would it be cool to restore an old van as I had it, and attend the reunion?

The old van was well used, no engine or transmission but rust free as it had been registered in California. I asked about it and was told \$3200 would buy it

Well with no engine or transmission, I pointed out that was out of the question, and offered \$1200 cash. We agreed on \$1700 and I needed a trailer. The van was hauled to my property and eased in to my garage.

The short story, 5 months, all fresh suspension parts, some minor dents repaired, a fresh appliance white paint job, new Cragger wheels, new brakes all around, and tires.

The installation of crate 318 CID V8 and new rebuilt LoadFlite Automatic and the old van looked and ran like it was 1967 all over again.

I began to plan the trip, with an eBay sourced surfboard on top,

The same style pale cream curtains in the windows and the Dewey Weber decals. The Dodge conjured memories of 50 years past.

October arrived and I loaded up and headed south, Orlando to Key West almost 400 miles south.

Arriving at the Reunion site Hotel just after dark. The Van was drawing



was drawing a small group of admirers. I heard comments “I remember this thing” and “COOL” and other such chatter!

The Reunion Committee had arranged to have it parked out front at the entrance and a Banner **“Welcome Conchs - Class of 1867 50 YEARS Reunion “** attached.

Some distantly familiar faces were seen in the lobby, but only name tags allowed identities. A few I recalled as acquaintances, none so far were running pals.

“Roger” I heard from across the hall, turning I read the name tag

“Linda J.....” I knew HER!

Linda was a friend from our Junior High days. She looked just as she had in High School. Sweet face and long straight brown hair with a slight flip.

She said “you haven’t changed a bit” I was flattered but I knew better.

My longish mop top hair, now with a wide central part and white hair replaced the sun bleached brown it had been. My 158 pounds had grown some too, as had some inches, of course I was still the same 5’ 9”. Tall.

I had noticed a bit of odd light and the room took a foggy atmosphere an eerie glow with long shadows.

There was Steve W. (Ski) & Tim C. both surfing pards, we had surf safari trips in the Dodge many times up the east coast. Steve and I, all the way to New Jersey shore once. Ski (Stephen actually) , still looked like I had remembered him the last time we saw each other in the mid 70’s, Thin, taller and the longish blonde hair. Tim and Barry W. having joined us also looked nearly unchanged. In our sophomore year, Berry and Linda

were steadies. My own girlfriend in high school, was not attending as the Pre-registration list showed.

Linda was widowed, Steve had married twice, his second was the charm, although She was not in attendance. My own wife of 40 years also chose not to attend as it was not yet her 50th. Tim never married, and Berry never mentioned his marital status.

There we were the old gang, surfing buddies and not so delinquent hell-raisers. We attended both banquets, each of us meeting and greeting more old school chums. At the final Luau BBQ, out on the pool deck we hatched an idea. Linda lives in Cocoa Beach, Barry in Miami now, and Steve in Hollywood Fl. We decided, why not take one more trip in the Dodge, dropping each of them off in their communities as we motored up the coast.

It seemed the perfect ending of the 50th reunion.

So, on Sunday after checking out, the five of us loaded in the Van and pointed north on the overseas highway. I notice the fuel gauge near 1/8th of a tank and stopped for gas on Sugarloaf key.

Now back on the Road, Linda was now driving. We noticed Tim was not in the Van. Where was Tim? He was not there with us. Well you see, Tim had served in the Army after graduation. Tim C was KIA in Vietnam in 1969.

I looked at my friends, and noticed each were looking some older and some graying hairs. As we traveled the 7 Mile Bridge, it appeared there was only water, no bridge just seemed we were gliding over water.

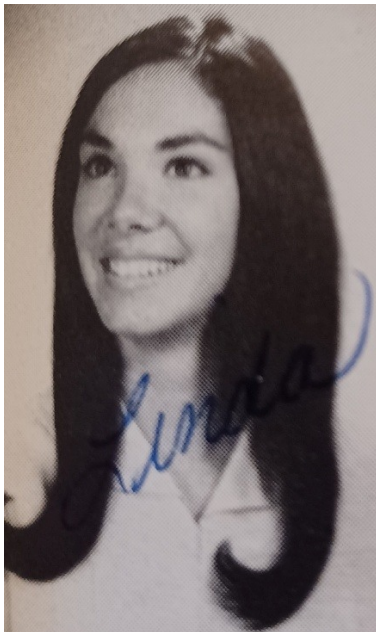
The old bridge build by the Henry Flagler railroad had been replaced by a brand-new structure in the early 1980's. Parts of the old bridge was made in a fishing pier and is no longer a passable roadway.

Just outside of Miami we dropped off Berry at the senior center he now called home. Berry looked far more feeble than he did just yesterday as I remembered him in Key West.

Driving again, and in Hollywood Florida, Steve wheezed and coughed as he got out of the van. After graduation, at the age of 19, he married his first wife. Steve became a 2 pack a day smoker. The Years had taken its toll. Steve's long blond hair was gone replaced by a balding pate. As we said our good byes, he was greeted by his wife and they ambled on inside.

Linda and I, spoke and reminisced on our 4-hour ride to Cocoa Beach.

Linda's still long hair now streaked in white, still had her ageless beauty. She lives alone, but manages a Surf shop she and her late husband owned. I had a crush on her even when she & Berry were dating.



I hugged her and said good bye, then drove to my home just south of Orlando. There was one last glance in the mirror to see my face in real time. The man I looked back at, now 50 years older, recalled back when when he was just 18.



I sold the 1967 Dodge A100 Time Machine several years ago.

Roger R.

The account is fictional obviously, based on some fact.
Names are real but abbreviated, and some places a fabrication.

