



The class of '67 had its dreams

by Bill Breshears
Sports Editor

The year was 1967. The Vietnam war was raging. The movie "Bonnie and Clyde" was playing at the Drake Theater. The Beatles and self-proclaimed leader, John Lennon, were turning into hippies. They formed Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band and took a Magical Mystery Tour on record.

"All aboard, all aboard for the mystery tour.

"All aboard, all aboard for the mystery tour.

"The Magical Mystery Tour is waiting to take you away.

"Waiting to take you away, take you today."

Flower children preached peace and love. Young American males had three choices after reaching age 18. You stayed in school somewhere, fled to Canada, or went off to war.

"Come on, all you big strong men.

"Uncle Sam needs your help, again.

"Got himself in a terrible jam.

"Way down yonder in Vietnam.

"Put down your books and pick up a gun.

"We're gonna have a whole lotta fun," sang Country Joe and the Fish.

The war was a concern in Bolivar, but no one even remotely considered fleeing to Canada. Most of us were busy with our senior years and just fitting in somewhere.

Cruising was definitely IN. No anti-cruising laws were dreamed up by local politicians or merchants. They liked having us around. Most businessmen on the square — such as Claude Blue, Herm Braithwait and Lou Spainhower — knew each and every one of us. We knew them. They knew our parents. That kept everybody pretty-well in line.

We cruised around the square — all the way around the square, two, maybe three times — and down Springfield Avenue to the Penguin Drive-In. (The Penguin was inspiration, no doubt, for the movie American Graffiti.) We'd order a jumbo burger (forerunner to the McDonalds' Big Mac),

and a cherry Dr Pepper, (a.k.a. virgin surgeon).

Occasionally people would change their orders just to keep us car hops guessing. (Yes, I was a "fender lizzard" at the Penguin.) A special occasion might mean a Penguin Special (a hamburger with cole slaw on it — honest) or a purple cow (a delicious grape shake).

We went to the Drake Theater in the winter. (Watch out, Mr. Drake or Ted Sterling will get you with that long flashlight for sticking your feet over the railing.) We'd go to the Lucky 13 Drive-In Theater in the summer. (Pack two guys in the trunk and drive in alone. It was always 3-for-1 night at the Lucky 13.)

The class of '67 began its senior year in the fall of 1966. Rookie football coach Doug Potts greeted Bolivar High School football players for two-a-days. Senior Jerry Shelenhamer was the quarterback for the Liberators, who went 7-2 and tied Lebanon and Waynesville for the Skyline Conference title that year. (State playoffs were not yet invented in Missouri.)

Seniors Jerry and Terry DeGraffenreid anchored Ed Kessinger's basketball team. Ed was a fine coach when he wasn't breaking rulers in study hall or jumping out of his shorts in "phys ed."

Girls' sports weren't around yet. Life was simple. Boys were players. Girls were cheerleaders.

Senior captain Elizabeth Anderson was your typical cute, popular, bubbly, blonde cheerleader. She led the cheers for our Liberator players, especially the seniors.

Classmates Don and Linda (Freihage) Hendrickson got married midway through our senior year. Don was our class president.

That was 25 years ago. Many changes have taken place since those good old days.

Nationally, movies now come into your home via VCRs. Satellite TV receivers dot the landscapes. Drugs and hopelessness have filtered from overseas to big cities to small cities. Yes, even those in Polk County.

The Bolivar area has grown with the additions of Wal-Mart, Consumers, McDonalds and Citizens Memorial Hospital. All have added to the jobs to the area. Teters Floral Products and Southwest Baptist University have remained and grown.

Bolivar High School is still housed in the same main building. Nothing much has changed there.

The Bolivar area survived the mid-1980s closing of the garment factory to regain financial strength today via numerous businesses, including Micro-Magic and Tracker Marine.

Farming is a struggle today, but it was back in 1967, too.

The Bolivar School Board has searched far and wide for that just-right basketball coach to lead the Liberators to the promised land. Kessinger was followed by Bob Jones, Kelly DeGraffenreid, Kim Rohlfing, Rick Mill,

Kendall Ebersold and Dan Garringer.

Recent coaches were relieved of their duties after parents complained to the school board that they were too nice, too mean and too nice. I guess that makes current Coach Garringer vulnerable in the too-mean slot.

Bolivar High School Athletic Director and Head Football Coach Doug Potts has added some to his title, but he remains the man in charge of our young men who choose to learn about life through football.

Potts will be walking the sidelines once again Friday as the Liberators host Willard in the annual homecoming game. Our class of '67 will be sitting in a group along the sidelines. We're the featured 25th-year class this homecoming. We have definitely arrived — old.

As many of us meet this weekend to renew old acquaintances and reminisce, we'll talk about the good and bad times. The class of '67 has seen tragedy and triumph.

Jim Parrott was killed during our high school years in a car wreck. Derald Hood was killed shortly after graduation in the Vietnam war. Elizabeth Anderson died of illness.

On the plus side, Don and Linda Hendrickson remain married after all these years. They'll celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary soon.

Ronald Dean Jump has become one of the wealthiest land owners in Polk County. He, like many of us, was just another student to most while attending BHS.

The top athletes from the '67 class have traveled familiar roads. Shelenhamer became a coach, then a school administrator. Jerry DeGraffenreid became a coach, then an insurance salesman. Brent Butler, Hendrickson and others are now avid golfers.

Most of us made it through the '60s, '70s and '80s in pretty good shape. We found our niches in life and settled into society. Most of us turned out better than anyone — back in '67 — had the right to expect.

As we meet for the school assembly Friday and sing the school song, pardon us "old fogies" if tears come to our eyes.

"Mid the hills of old Missouri,

"At the gateway of the west,

"Stands the dear old Bolivar High School.

"Loved by all of us the best.

"Gather 'round her stately columns.

"Sweetest memories will reign.

"Of the days when dear old high school.

"Sheltered us beneath her wing."

It has been 25 years. We've walked many separate paths together. As tears well up in our eyes, one fact remains:

That has got to be the worst school song anywhere!

BHS, we love you anyway. Peace!