WELCOME

Welcome to the 55th (and last, or maybe penultimate) reunion for the Hamilton High School Class of 1971!

Hope you enjoyed the background video and thanks for everyone's submissions. It's been fun putting these video projects together. All the errors, omissions, and various other screw-ups, I apologize for. They were completely my fault.

I'd like to thank Brooke and Dave for their contributions of time and resources in making this thing happen. I also couldn't have done this without the guidance, expertise, and just plain hard work of my very, very special friend and partner, Natalie Yovetich. Other folks have been involved in this effort – we'll get to them as the evening progresses.

IN MEMORIAM

At our 50th Reunion, Karen Haifley put together a wonderful memorial board. Maybe you recognized a couple of new faces we've had to add to her board – Rob Gaudin and Rod Wood. I knew Rob pretty well, but not Rod. Anybody?? Let's raise a glass – Rest in Peace to all of our classmates who have left us: Gone But Not Forgotten!

SELFLESS SPIRIT AWARD

Five years ago, at our 50th Reunion, our Class approved a new annual award for a graduating senior. The award was meant to recognize a student who exhibited unseen kindness to classmates, underclassmen, and teachers and staff. Not the jock, not the brainiac, not the head of the "in" crowd. We wanted someone who lifted up the people around them, not to win this award, but just because it was part of their DNA.

Some who called out bullies and used social media, not to disparage others, but to make people feel good about themselves.

I would say it has been wildly successful! Two years ago, a Dad came up to me after the ceremony and said, "this one is the most import award of the night." Last year, a father stopped me and said, after his son had won a shit-ton of other scholarships but wasn't selected for ours, "yours was the one we were really hoping to get."

Cheyenne London, Lily Monaco, Sierra Berry, Brynne Johnson, Layna Price, Dylan Casterson. These people have had a positive influence in their classmates' lives. Hopefully, they will serve as role models for all who knew them.

And I think, with our award, we HAVE, and ARE, making a difference!

Congratulations to all of you, my classmates, for being a part of this good cause.

Here's a **clip** that talks about what we are doing….

LIFE PARTNERS

This may come as a surprise, but we're not getting any younger. But many of us have been fortunate to share the majority of our lives with someone who shared our dreams, made plans to make them come true, raised and taught their kids, worked through the ups and downs, and sacrificed because of their promise and commitment to each other.

Look, sometimes it doesn't work out and we choose to, or seem forced to, move on. Nothing bad to say about that. But how wonderful it is to find, and cling to, that one person who has loved you through thick and thin. Right?

(Survey of long-lasting relationships …..)

Here's a **clip** to help us celebrate our life partners.

PAST AND FUTURE

Anybody know the mythical Roman God, JANUS? He's depicted as a head with two faces – one looking forward, the other back. In fact, the month of January is a nod to JANUS, as we transition from the old year to the new. So, to close out the evening, I thought it might be appropriate to think about where we came from and where we're going. In setting up this event, I learned so much more about all of you – your joys and challenges. I'm grateful for that. But sometimes, at our age, it seems like the challenges are winning. Nevertheless, we shouldn't complain about growing old – it's a privilege denied to many.

More importantly, I hope you join me in my enthusiasm for what's still to come. So much more to see and do! Some of us will travel, some will dote on their grandchildren, some will tend their gardens. We will continue to learn a thing or two. We will all take our time to reminisce about the best of times, like this evening with your high school classmates. Even though, as Mark Twain once said, the older we get, the more clearly we remember things that never happened. Still, I wish you happiness in all of these pursuits. As one of our musical icons, Rodney Crowell, has said, "it ain't over yet."

Please allow me to play one final clip that seems to capture this sentiment.