



BENSON HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Great Memories Make Reunions Successful

Class of 1969

The Benson High School Class of 1969 50th Reunion was a resounding success! The numbers themselves provide the facts — 154 classmates from 23 states. Including guests, 210 attended Friday festivities and 240 attended on Saturday!

Friday: “Back to Benson”: The reunion opened with a group of 85 taking a tour of the school led by Benson principal Tom Wagner. Following the tour, all activities were held at the Benson Masonic Temple at the east end of the Benson Business District. Green-clad tables with “bunny” centerpieces and snacks greeted the classmates who collected their name tags that featured their senior photos from the *Cupola*. Optional tours of the downtown were led by members of the Benson Business District.

The Benson-based 402 food truck provided a terrific BBQ dinner while the Benson Brewery provided the beverage services. Music from 1968 and 1969 played in the background. The Benson Brewery also arranged for “specials” at several downtown Benson establishments.

Saturday: Party like it was 1969! Activities moved to the Field Club of Omaha for a buffet-style dinner that also featured green-frosting desert cakes. And we relished in the fact that it was also the 50th anniversary of the Apollo moon landing and Neil Armstrong’s moon walk.

Table centerpieces featured both “stuffed” and ceramic bunnies that went home with our classmates and lists of trivia from our senior year and national events from 1969.

Following the meal, a brief program was highlighted by the debut of a nine-minute video produced for our reunion. It featured interviews with classmates, video slips from inside and out-

side of the school and other video clips from the era set to the music of “Hey Jude” by the Beatles. The video can be viewed online at <https://vimeo.com/348568728>.

Completing the evening, all classmates received gift bags that included a CD of music from 1968 and 1969 and a stemless wineglass that featured an etched Cupola, the visual landmark of Benson High School. Those attending agreed it was an exhausting and awesome weekend!

— Submitted by Bob Knudson

Class of 1979

The Class of 1979 held its 40-year class reunion on July 20, 2019 at Legends-Cherry Hills in Irvington. There was a turnout of 94, including guests, and we all enjoyed reconnecting and reminiscing about the past 40 years over beverages

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You’re Invited to a Tailgate Party for Homecoming, Sept. 13 (Benson plays South)

Come join us at the Tailgate Party which starts at 5:30 at Benson High and stay for the game at 7 p.m. Enclosed find a free game ticket for two persons.

Retired teachers are being invited. They are eager to see their former students.

Alumni attending the tailgate party will be eligible for basket drawings.

The Alumni Association hopes to see you back home at Benson on Sept. 13!

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

By **Stu Pospisil**

Where did the summer go? As I write this, school is back in session and Benson High is only a couple weeks away from its Homecoming weekend.

Especially if you live around Omaha, please consider coming to the pregame tailgate party where there will be food trucks for your dinner pleasure — and, of course, stay for the football game. Beat the South High Packers!

Enclosed is a complimentary admission for two. Present the form at the ticket gate.

Some of your former teachers could be there, too. Let's talk about them. Many like being invited to reunion get-togethers. For those organizing reunions, the Alumni Association can provide email contacts for those who were at Benson at the time. A nice gesture is to make those attending your guests.

- Progress is being made on forming the Benson High Foundation. Paul and Djel Brown and Woody Bradford have taken the lead in this project. More to come.
- Benson principal Tom Wagner was unable to provide us this time with an update. Expect to see one in our next newsletter.
- Benson's home football schedule begins with Fremont on Sept. 6. After Homecoming, the other games are Kearney, Sept. 27; North Platte, Oct. 18; and Norfolk, Oct. 25.

GO BUNNIES!

2019 Reunions

If your year isn't included, please send your updated name, address, phone and email information to the Alumni Association. Include your class year.

1949 (70): Sept. 19th, 9 a.m., Garden Café in the Rockbrook Shopping Center, 108th Street & West Center Road. Full brunch buffet (all inclusive). If you can't make it, send a note on how you are doing and your contact information. Contact Jack Savage at 402-909-3443 or at 711 N 92nd Ct., Embassy Park, #2309A, Omaha, NE, 68114-6601

1964 (55): Sept. 27 & 28, both nights at German-American Club. School tour on Saturday at 10 a.m. Contact Gene Krepela at 402-639-6768 or gene@krepela.us or Bob Longacre at 402-681-2368 or rlongacr@cox.net.

Look for updated information on the reunion page at www.bensonbunnies.com.

Alumni Board

President

Stu Pospisil (1980) snpospisil@aol.com
402-677-0374

Vice President

Carolyn Grice (1971) clgrice@cox.net

Secretary/Treasurer

Karen Gardner frgardner@cox.net
402-457-5095

Board Members

Eric Bremers (1979) eric.bremers@msn.com

Jean M. Herman (1986) jmhfcp@yahoo.com

Shane Graeve (1988) shanetgraeve@yahoo.com

Andrea Haynes (1997) andrea.haynes@ops.org

Janet McMurphy (1971) pounder11@cox.net

Shawn Graeve (1984) sgraev222@gmail.com

Barb Kuhn (1958) bkuhn1940@gmail.com

Lisa Dale lkdale@cox.net

Cindy Harvey (1977) crharv@aol.com

Tom Wagner (principal) tom.wagner@ops.org

Board meetings for 2019 (open to Alumni members): Nov. 20, Benson High conference room, 7:30 p.m. **For 2020,** Feb. 19, April 15, and Nov. 18.

Hall of Fame Nominations

The Hall of Fame nomination deadline of October 1, 2019 is fast approaching. If you have someone in your class you'd like to nominate for Hall of Fame, please fill out a nomination form and send to Benson High School Alumni Association, Hall of Fame, 5120 Maple St, Omaha, NE 68104.

Nominees must be out 20 years for alumni and graduate boosters. Nominees cannot be currently on staff at Benson High.

Find the nomination form at www.bensonbunnies.com.

Reunions...

(Continued from page 1)

and hors d'oeuvres.

We were very sad that Class President John Benson and Vice President Connie (Marino) Yates were unable to attend, but we connected with John via Facetime.

Our very own classmate, Terrence Mackey, is now the head football coach for the Benson Bunnies. We had numerous gift baskets & prizes donated by classmates, and all the raffle ticket proceeds went to Coach Mackey & the football team. We raised \$983. Go Class of 79!

— **Submitted by Sheryl Nickolaison Leonard**

Class Notes

Please send us name, address, telephone number and e-mail address changes so we can keep our database updated. Also, be one of our reporters! Send us news about you and your Benson classmates.

Send to frgardner@cox.net

1946

Robert Sieborg of Omaha: "Thirty-five years with the Omaha Police Division. Then nine years with the Douglas County Attorney's Office. My wife, Carol, is deceased. I loved my four years at Benson High School and God Bless."

1948

Joe and Melba Ried Cook of Humboldt, Neb: "Joe is a farmer and owns over 600 acres of farmland. Melba is a part-time legal secretary."

1950

Harold Sage of Omaha: "Thirty-nine years with Sears management after graduation from UNO. I was

also a USAF Comm Pilot."

1968

Christina Pignotti Hansen of Osmond, Neb.: "Retired teacher with four children and 10 grandchildren. Family seems to keep us busy."

1974

Tavi Nelson Baker of Council Bluffs: "I am a 1976 graduate of UNMC College of Nursing. Forty-three years of service to Nebraska Medicine (Clarkson Hospital). I was a former kidney transplant coordinator and Nepurology coordinator. I have two children and four grandchildren."

1983

Kerry Newman of Glenwood, Iowa, is principal at Kirn Middle School in Council Bluffs and was named the state's 2019 Middle Level Principal of the Year by School Administrators of Iowa.

1986

Jerry Kalina of LaVista, Neb.: "Principal of Papillion-La Vista High School. Have been married to Amy for 28 years and we have a son, Jack (22) and a daughter, Nicole (23)."

In Memoriam

William Ruzicka, 1941, Ann Arbor, Mich., May 2019

Virginia (Cateron) Parsons, 1942, Casper, Wyo., March 2019

Robert Day Jr., 1946, Clive, Iowa, Aug. 2019

Donald Pederson, 1947, Lincoln, June 2019. Entered Benson High Hall of Fame in 2001.

Robert "Chappie" Chapman, 1949, Morrison, Colo., July 2019

Frank Roberts, 1952, New Glarus, Wis., July 2019

Lorraine (Benson) Mall, 1952, Cape Coral, Fla., July 2019

Robert "Jim" Olmsted, 1953, Surprise, Ariz., Aug. 2019

Robert Johnson, 1955, Council Bluffs, June 2019

Fred Henninger, 1955, Omaha, July 2019

Clarene (Haas) Klein, 1957, Elm Creek, Neb., June 2019

Mickey "Mick" Butz, 1958, Marion, Iowa, June 2019

Sharon (Schroeder) Engel, 1959, Omaha, July 2019

Warner Schliffke, 1960, Omaha, July 2019

Lynn "Ole" Olson, 1960, Omaha, Aug. 2019

Vickie (Schneider) Zach, 1962, Omaha, July 2019

Neil R. "Red" Hastings, 1963, Anacortes, Wash., July 2019

Frances (Petersen) Brown, 1967, Eldon, Mo., June 2019

Dennis Knight, 1967, Gretna, Neb., July 2019

Steve Rowe, 1968, Omaha, July 2019

Philip Scovell, 1969, Wheat Ridge, Colo., July 2019

Steven Johnson, 1969, Omaha, July 2019

Kevin O'Reilly, 1970, Omaha, Jan. 2019

Kathryn Gillaspie, 1970, Omaha, June 2019

Michael Marten, 1970, Omaha, June 2019

Steven Carlsen, 1970, Des Moines, July 2019

Fred Walden, 1972, Omaha, July 2019

Stephen Heater, 1974, Omaha, July 2019

The Story of Benson High: Nile Kinnick

By Stu Pospisil

He came from central Iowa, where he caught for Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Feller. He was in Omaha only because of his father's work situation in the Depression years.

But Benson High always will remember the late Nile Kinnick Jr., a Heisman Trophy winner in football and a Phi Beta Kappa in academics who was killed in a World War II aviation accident.

Kinnick spent two years at Benson — although he came from Adel, Iowa, as a senior in 1934. His parents wanted him thoroughly prepared for college, so he graduated with the Class of 1936. Kinnick's second senior year ended with his selection as toastmaster for the annual senior banquet and he was the class vice-president.

Classmates named him "most likely to succeed."

He was Benson's starting quarterback in 1934, leading the Bunnies to a 3-3-2 season that ended with back-to-back losses while he was sidelined by illness. He made the Intercity first team, but was only on the All-Nebraska second team. His All-Nebraska first-team honors came in basketball, in which he averaged 11 points a game as Benson took third place in the 1935 Class A state tournament. He also was an outstanding catcher on Benson's American Legion team.

Kinnick returned to Iowa for college and played on teams that went 2-13-1 as a sophomore and junior. He then led a dramatic turnaround as the 1939 Iowa "Ironmen" went 6-1-1, including upsets of Notre Dame and Minnesota.

The Iron Man of the Ironmen, Kinnick rushed for 374 yards and passed for 638 and 11 touchdowns — on 31 completions. He punted, played defense and rarely left the field, playing 402 consecutive minutes before being knocked from a game with a separated shoulder.

Kinnick's role was rewarded with the Heisman Trophy, then in its fifth year. Many consider Kinnick's acceptance speech one of the award's most eloquent.

"I thank God I was warring on the gridirons of the Midwest," Kinnick said, "and not on the battlefields of Europe."

He also received the Maxwell and Walter Camp Awards and was named the Associated Press Male Athlete of the Year.



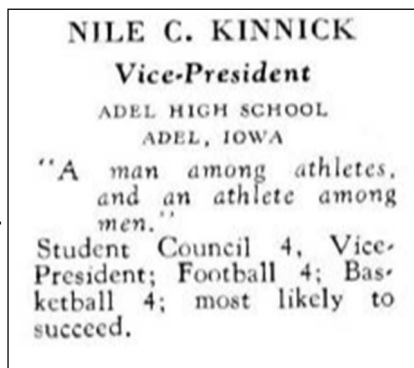
Nile Kinnick Jr., center, with younger brothers Ben, left, and George. Ben also died in World War II.

He was senior class president at Iowa and its commencement speaker in 1940 and entered its law school before enlisting for military service in the fall of 1941.

Ensign Nile Kinnick, died on June 2, 1943, when his plane crashed in the Gulf of Paria.

Kinnick was elected to the College Football Hall of Fame in 1951, was named Iowa's greatest player in a fan vote in 1989 and was picked as a defensive back on Sports Illustrated's all-time team for the first 100 years of college football.

The stadium at Iowa was renamed in his honor in 1972. In 2007, the



school unveiled a statue of Kinnick near the stadium's main entrance. The stadium at Omaha Northwest is also named after Kinnick, and in 2007, he was a member of the inaugural class inducted into the Omaha Sports Hall of Fame.

Additionally, a private high school in U.S. Fleet Activities at Yokosuka, Japan, was named after Kinnick in 1959. Among its graduates is actor Mark Hamill (Luke Skywalker in the original Star Wars film).

Kinnick's "Cupola" biography.

BENSON HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION MEMBERSHIP FORM

We would like to take this opportunity to reach out to our alumni and friends to express our good wishes to you and yours in 2019. Membership in the Alumni Association helps fund the scholarships we give each year to Benson High students, and with other school projects not covered by school finances. Being a member of the Alumni Association lets you keep in touch with the happenings at Benson High and with fellow classmates and friends through our newsletters. The association also helps your class keep track of its classmates for reunions.

Please consider a Benson High Alumni Association membership. We want to hear from you and keep in touch in the future. Do you know we have a website at bensonbunnies.com and we have archived the school newspapers and yearbooks at bhs.stparchive.com from 1929 to 2009.

Consider joining the association by using this form. If you are already a member, please pass it on to a classmate or friend who might be interested. Many thanks from the Benson High School Alumni Association. A free ticket to the Homecoming football game is also enclosed for your use.

Alumni Association Membership Application

✂ Complete This Portion and Return ✂

Membership options (please check):

Individual: One year (\$15) _____ Three years (\$35) _____

Seniors (40-year graduates): One year (\$10) _____ Three years (\$20) _____

Faculty/former staff: One year (\$10) _____ Three years (\$20) _____

BHSAA Life Membership: \$175 single _____ \$225 couples _____

Other donation (tax-deductible) _____

Name: _____
First Last Maiden

Address: _____
City State Zip

Year of Graduation _____ Email address: _____

Phone #: _____ I wish to receive newsletters by e-mail _____

Career/family update, other comments: _____

Please make checks payable to Benson High School Alumni Association and mail with this form to BHS Alumni Association, % Benson High School, 5120 Maple St., Omaha, NE 68104-3599. (AUG2019)

**Alumni Association
Benson High School
5120 Maple Street
Omaha, NE 68104**

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Please Donate to the Alumni Scholarship Endowment Fund

Help support the Alumni Association's scholarship endowment fund with a bequest or through a donation? Through your will or other estate plan, you can name the Alumni Endowment as the beneficiary of a portion of your estate, or of specific assets in your estate. Giving by bequest costs nothing now, yet it may give you great satisfaction to know that your future gift will live on.

The Alumni Association's intention is to raise \$100,000, with the goal of increasing both the size and number of scholarships as additional funds are raised. The endowment currently stands at over \$71,000.

The endowment fund is separate from the school's scholarship program and from the Alumni Association's general scholarship fund. It is administered by the Omaha Schools Foundation at no cost to the Association. The foundation has 501(c)(3) tax status.

Donor levels: **Benefactor** (above \$5,000), **Founder** (\$5,000 over five years), **Supporter** (\$2,500 to \$4,999), **Booster** (\$1,000-\$2,499), **Friend** (\$500-\$999), **Helper** (\$100-\$499) and **Donor** (\$25-\$99).

Donations can be sent to:

Omaha Schools Foundation

Attn. Benson High Alumni Scholarship Endowment (account No. 157)

3861 Farnam St., Omaha, NE 68131

Go to www.omahaschoolsfoundation.org, e-mail toba.cohendunning@ops.org or call 531-299-0250 for more information.

Homecoming 2019

JOIN THE CELEBRATION on Friday, Sept. 13:

5:30 p.m. — Homecoming tailgate party on the patio outside Benson’s north entrance.

7 p.m. — Homecoming football game at Benson Stadium, where the Bunnies meet (and BEAT) the South High Packers.

**RELIVE THOSE CRISP FALL EVENINGS WITH FELLOW BUNNIES AND
FORMER TEACHERS
AND
ENJOY THE SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF HIGH SCHOOL FOOTBALL**

FREE ADMISSION TO THE GAME FOR ALUMNI

----- Tear off and Present at Admission Gate -----

ADMIT TWO
BENSON-SOUTH FOOTBALL GAME
HOMECOMING
7 P.M.—FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 13
BENSON STADIUM

**PRESENT THIS TICKET TO THE ADMISSION GATE
ADDITIONAL TICKETS: Adults \$6, Students \$4**

NAME: _____ CLASS YEAR: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

NAME: _____ CLASS YEAR: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____