

AHS Reunion Handbook

Basic Information for Planning Class Reunions

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The intent of this handbook is to provide authoritative information about the subject matter covered. The reader should use his or her own judgment regarding applicability of any of the ideas, recommendations and suggestions found in this handbook to his or her specific circumstances.

You are welcome to share this information with others.

Thank you to Rosalie Seltz for proofreading this handbook and correcting grammar and punctuation.

*Compiled and distributed courtesy of
Austin High School Alumni & Friends Association*

Preface to

AHS Reunion Handbook



Austin High School Alumni “Stay Connected”

The graduates of Austin High School hold significant leadership positions throughout the world. All of these people combined form an amazing network of business contacts and friends.

Your graduating class itself offers a tremendous network of resources, plus professional and personal contacts. Meeting and socializing with your peers add value to your educational experience and fosters your life-long learning.

Class reunions are popular events and have historically played an important role at Austin High School. AHS reunions represent the largest annual gathering of AHS alumni. No matter how far from home classmates roam, they are always eager to return home and re-connect with family and friends, former classmates and their alma mater. Reunions happen because humans are social beings, and therefore have an innate need to come together and celebrate their lives as communal entities. Reunions are special gatherings that bring people together with particular ties...a common thread that binds a group with a shared past. While it is this common past that draws them together in the first place, the reunion does more than celebrate the past. It also lays and strengthens the foundation for the future.

The AHS Alumni & Friends Association encourages you to maintain ties with your former classmates and offers you assistance in organizing your special events. We can provide advice and guidance to you as you plan your reunion, and have prepared this handbook for reunion chairs and committees to provide the tools you will need in your planning.

*Jim Ruud
Chairman
AHS Alumni & Friends Association*

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In the Beginning

As with everything else, it all begins with a seed and the idea in someone's mind. But in order for that seed to germinate and take root, it needs a great deal of help. Unless you are considering a very small reunion or enjoy a great deal of punishment, you should immediately enlist a few kindred spirits to form a reunion committee. In fact, the success of a class reunion depends in large part on the active participation and commitment of class volunteers. Reunions are typically planned by a committee, led by a reunion chair or co-chairs. Classes have found that having a large, active committee not only makes reunion planning easier but also encourages participation in the reunion.

Whether you are planning your first reunion or your tenth, your reunion committee needs to create something special to entice classmates to come back for their reunion.

Creating a Committee

It has been said that the camel was created by a committee asked to design the horse.

The keys to creating a successful reunion involve an efficient reunion committee and as much advance planning as possible...at least a year minimum (18 months are better yet!) As simple as this may sound...it really is important. Too many reunions start too late. The reason is that many people have

to save money to travel, and some have to reserve vacation time at work. This follows from the basic premise that “everyone has the right to attend his/her own reunion.” The best reunions are planned as the previous reunion is ending.

Committees are important. They help pool talent and spark creativity. However, they often get off track to ineffective results. To help your committee be more effective and productive, have a “mission statement” and goals or purposes clearly defined, set agendas for each meeting, make commitments to action, and hold those who have made commitments accountable for results. Committees that discuss and further discuss and never take action are an unproductive use of resources.

To plan an event successfully, you need to identify the key organizers and establish a working committee to coordinate the entire event. An active group of doers is a necessity for a successful reunion. This is the crew that will steer the reunion ship from home port to the very end of the cruise – through storms, mutinies, and yes, all those sunny days, too. There’s no denying the hard work involved, but neither is there a reward quite like the deep gratitude and warm smiles of all those happy classmates.

You also need some idea people and new people so that you don’t get into a rut.

It is desirable, but not essential, that the reunion chair live in or near the reunion location. Most classes choose someone who has experience as a reunion committee member or who has been a class officer.

The reunion chair is responsible for recruiting committee members. Select a reunion committee of 5 to 10 alumni, depending on the size of your class and the size of the event. Reunion chairs use a variety of techniques to recruit committee members.

Some chairs send a letter or make personal phone calls to ask specific classmates to join the committee. The most effective committees are those that are well organized and involve a broad range of classmates. Assigning specific responsibilities to committee members will help clarify their role in the reunion planning process and will position your committee for success.

Generally, the reunion committee chair and the treasurer should not be the same person.

Here are tips on how to put a committee together:

- Ask reliable friends to help out first
- Send an email asking for volunteers
- Find classmates in the city of the reunion location to help

Tips for Successful Committees

Managing a committee effectively can be a challenging task. Listed below are a few tips to help make your committee successful.

1. **Assign specific responsibilities to committee members.** Based on the job to be done, determine what qualities are necessary and select a committee member for that role who is a good match. Effective delegation can help a committee reach its maximum potential. To make delegation work for your committee, the chair should give clear instructions, grant the necessary authority and inform members of resources and information available to assist them in their tasks.
2. **Establish goals for your reunions.** Setting goals can help provide focus to the work of the committee. Goals may be finding missing classmates, reunion attendance, etc.
3. **Establish effective communication within the reunion committee.** Reunion committees should determine the best way to communicate with one another to share information and report on

progress. Conduct regular in-person meetings. These meetings can be supplemented by other communications such as sub-committee meetings, conversations between the chair and sub-committee chairs, or use of a committee email list.

4. **Make the most of committee meetings.** It is important to use this time well.
 - Define the purpose of the meeting and set an agenda
 - Distribute the agenda and necessary background materials in advance so members will be prepared
 - Keep the conversation focused on the topic and encourage group discussion to get all points of view and ideas
 - Write up and distribute minutes, including action items and delegation decisions, within a few days of the meeting.
5. **Recognize accomplishments.** Your reunion will be a success because of your efforts. Take the time to recognize individual and committee accomplishments and acknowledge milestones in your planning. Be sure to thank classmates who are involved for their assistance.

Committee Job Descriptions

The reunion chair and committee members all have specific responsibilities that contribute to the success of the class reunion. Providing job descriptions can help insure that the chair and committee members understand the responsibilities of their position. Job descriptions for common reunion committee positions are listed below.

Reunion Chair

- Appoint committee members and sub-committee chairs. Because one person cannot accomplish the planning and implementation of a reunion, the reunion chair should recruit capable and reliable classmates to serve on his/her committee
- Organize and manage reunion committee meetings. Frequency of meetings varies, but experience has shown that chairs need to hold committee meetings at least monthly during the year of the reunion
- Oversee sub-committees and monitor their activities to ensure that tasks are completed on time
- Develop a reunion budget with the Finance Committee Chair
- Authorize expenditures related to the reunion and give bills to the Financial Chair for payment
- Coordinate with the Publicity and Communications Chair to plan and send class reunion mailings

Sub-committees

As you begin your planning process, organize your committee into sub-committees. Even if each sub-committee consists of only one person or a single person takes on more than one sub-committee, it will help spread the responsibilities, insure a more manageable workload for each organizer, and keep people accountable. The following sub-committees are the basic ones that any committee should have, but feel free to add and subtract to suit your own needs:

- **Food & Beverage:** Members of this sub-committee will plan the menus and be responsible for providing all food and beverage for the reunion
- **Activities/Social:** This group is responsible for planning and organizing all the events that will take place at the reunion. It will also send invitations to speakers/special guests, plan decorations and entertainment, and greet classmates as they arrive at events
- **Finance:** Perhaps the most important of all, this person will be responsible for collecting and keeping records of all monies involved. They work with the reunion chair to prepare the budget,

keep an accurate record of bills that have been paid, and be responsible for the bank account. The treasurer also signs contracts on behalf of the committee and, after the reunion, prepares a budget report for the reunion chair/committee. Previous accounting/bookkeeping experience would be an asset

- **Classmate search:** This group is in charge of locating classmates
- **Fundraising:** Necessary only for larger reunions whose activities require more funds than can reasonably be covered by registration fees. A part of the responsibilities of this committee would be donations for class gifts
- **Logistics:** This group will be responsible for all arrangements regarding locations for activities, hotel reservations, transportation arrangements, etc. Since this is a heavy load, preferably it should be a shared responsibility
- **Publicity and Communications:** One of the best ways to encourage participation is to develop a strategy for marketing your reunion to your class. Getting the word out in a variety of ways will help you have a successful reunion. Have a committee member who is computer literate and loves to write do a press release in local newspapers regarding your upcoming reunion. Don't forget radio and TV stations, cable companies, online alumni sites, and notices in P.S. THE POST SENTINEL. All correspondence, newsletters, flyers, telephone calls and any other form of communications with classmates are the responsibility of this group. A part of this group are the following:
 - **Webmaster:** The webmaster is responsible for creating and maintaining the class web page. In a reunion year, the page should be updated regularly to disseminate new information about reunion plans when details become available. The webmaster should work closely with the committee to ensure consistent communications to the class
 - **Email List Editor:** The email list editor's duties revolve around electronic communications with the class. This is particularly important in a reunion year, as email is playing a growing role in the class reunion communication strategy. Committee chairs should also keep the email list editor informed regarding plans for the reunion and the reunion gift campaign. The email list editor works closely with the committee, especially the webmaster, to ensure consistent communications to the class. One person sometimes serves as both secretary and email list editor
- **Secretary:** Maintains records, takes notes at the reunion committee meetings, puts all names of class members in a database, makes mailing labels, creates an email list, etc
- **Reunion Book Editor:** Meets with reunion committee to discuss style, production, and budget and develops a cover letter, biographical form and/or questionnaire, which will result in the publication of a class reunion book or CD-ROM
- **Memento Chair:** Researches an assortment of items and chooses items to be given as class mementos during the reunion and consults with reunion chair and finance chair on the price of the items
- **Other committees** can include a kids' games coordinator, babysitters, set-up and clean-up coordinator, etc

Get organized! Set-up a binder with sections for each of the following: copies of Invitation list and invitations, copies of contracts from hotels, a list of activities planned, reunion timetable and to-do-lists, etc.

Don't ignore the internet. How about creating a class reunion website and/or email address?

Timelines help the committee stay focused on what needs to be done as well as when. Set a timetable for what is to be done, by when, and by whom. Distribute this timetable to everyone, on every

committee, so all know what is going on and what is expected. Don't forget to create a communications timeline as well, so that your classmates receive information in an organized and timely manner.

Why and When to Have a Reunion

In addition to holding more frequent get-togethers, many alumni members realize it is important to consider the major anniversary years as "must-do" reunion opportunities. These are those significant years when alumni from all over the globe will want to return to Austin to catch up on the comings and goings of their classmates. Benchmark years are usually considered to be the 10-20-25-30-40 and 50-year reunions.

One potential rallying point for your reunion is a challenge to your classmates to give back to your school. Organizing a reunion as a fundraiser for the school will help to ensure continued growth and prosperity for current and future students. We have included a pledge form at the back of this handbook for this purpose, and/or you may call the Alumni Office at (507) 460-1938 for assistance. Why not consider a donation to the Austin Public Education Foundation or a scholarship award in the name of your class, for example? And don't forget to join us as a member of the Austin High School Alumni & Friends Association. The benefits you received are outlined on Pages 32 and 33 of this handbook.

Another class challenge for you to consider is to ask all classmates, whether attending or not, to write a brief "Mini-Bio" to share in the alumni newsletter. We publish P.S. THE POST SENTINEL on a regular basis, which outlines alumni's career paths, family updates, travels, and other activities. We have included a form on page 37 of this handbook to update biographical data.

Remember, the Alumni Office is available to answer your questions and concerns as well as to offer advice and guidance. In addition to the points in this handbook, we will share our experiences with you as requested. Feel free to contact us.

Planning Your Event

Once you have your committee together, the next step is to plan your events. Reunions are planned to give classmates a full schedule of activities ranging from learning, networking, sightseeing, and catching up with each other. Committees should plan activities that encourage participation. It is important that you keep an open line of communication with your committee treasurer during the planning process so that you can plan events that your class can afford. That will save time during the decision-making process.

Budget

Before looking at venues, choosing meals, or planning entertainment, set a per-person pricing goal for what you would like to charge for your event. For example, if you know that you would like to create an event priced around \$50 per person, the committee can focus on the needs of that event for that price. Working with the committee treasurer, the committee can determine how many events can be planned and what the cost of each will be. This will also help determine if your class can help subsidize some events out of the treasury.

Types of Events

With a rough budget set, what type of activities do you want to offer your classmates? The sign of a successful reunion is when classmates don't want to go home.

Conduct your first meeting to brainstorm and develop an initial plan. Many different types of events can be organized. Whether it's a bar night, a sporting event, a dance, a dinner or dozens of other possibilities, you will need to plan the details to ensure the event goes smoothly.

Some rules-of-thumb as you begin your planning:

- *The farther your participants are coming from, the more lead time you need to give them. They will need to arrange for vacation time and save the dollars they will need*
- *The farther your participants are drawn from, the longer the reunion tends to be. (Surely one would not expect participants to travel from overseas or the other end of the country for a picnic)*
- *The larger the event, the more planning time it requires*

Locating Classmates

You need to generate a mailing list. The committee can brainstorm to come up with as comprehensive a list as possible. Class lists in school archives, yearbooks, and even retired teachers can be of assistance. Often the list will continue to grow as more people find out about the reunion. If you have the use of a computer and a willing helper with computer savvy, you will save a great deal of time and make your life a lot simpler by creating a database. (Once the database is in place, you can generate mailing labels and as many lists as you care to.) You can also

- *Post a reunion notice in P.S. THE POST SENTINEL*
- *Contact the Alumni Office to help locate classmates at (507) 460-1938 or check out our website at www.apefoundation-ahsalumni.org*
- *Call all classmates with whom you have stayed in touch*
- *Ask classmates to contact their alumni friends*
- *Contact classmate family members in Austin or elsewhere*
- *Use whatever other facilities are available, e.g., search programs available on the internet*

Make a list of missing classmates and begin a more extensive search to locate these people.

Deciding on Date and Duration

Almost the first thing you have to settle is the date(s) of the event. Obviously you will want to go with a date that suits the majority of classmates. However, the decision may not be quite as simple as just picking a date. It will certainly be determined by what venues are available for your activities and accommodations. It may take a few telephone calls and a few days of waiting before you can finally settle on the most ideal date. Of course, no matter what date you choose, it will not suit absolutely everybody. When organizing an event, allow as much advance time as possible to prepare. Some committees begin preparations 18 months before the reunion if it is a large-scale event. For smaller gatherings, a few months of planning may be sufficient.

Be sure to choose a date, time and season that are suitable for the type of event you choose. Summertime is generally the most popular because of the ease of taking off work and school for most families. If attendees are retired, other times of the year may work just as well. Verify that your event does not conflict with another upcoming event. The duration of your reunion will depend on the number of activities you want to have. The reunion can range from one major event on a single day to a gathering that runs over a weekend or a few days with a wide variety of activities.

Where?

This is the next major decision. First you have to decide where your reunion will be held and then scout that location for specific venues for individual activities. Locations should fit the theme of the event and accommodate everyone. While researching venues, keep in mind how you would like the room setup. When scouting out the best location, consider package deals including room, food and beverage. If booking at a hotel, speak directly with the Director of Sales and negotiate a group rate. Call well in advance to reserve the venue for your preferred reunion date. Ask about any initial deposits up front and inquire about the refund policy. Remember to get everything in writing.

Other reunion location ideas include Austin High School, Riverland Community College, church halls, private club facilities, community centers, arenas, museums, historical buildings, parks, fairgrounds, civic theatres, bed and breakfast inns, restaurants, hotel ballrooms, golf courses, J.C. Hormel Nature Center...any place beautiful, interesting or romantic in the area.

Send out a “Save the Date” flyer or card to remind attendees to calendar the date.
This card/flyer should be sent out as soon as you have solidified your date and location

for the reunion, preferably one year before so that classmates can make arrangements to attend. Include a missing classmate list and ask people to respond if they have any information about the lost alumni. This is not the official invitation (which should be sent out about six months prior to the actual reunion date), but will serve as a reminder of the date.

Soliciting Suggestions

Gather ideas for the reunion event and discuss what’s best for your group.

- *Ask classmates to submit suggestions to the reunion committee. You have been given the responsibility to plan a reunion for everyone in your class. One of your goals should be to have high participation. The types of events you plan can affect attendance. Asking your classmates what they would like to see happen during your reunion will help in your planning and ensure events your classmates will enjoy*
- *Post announcement in P.S. THE POST SENTINEL asking for suggestions*

Deciding on Activities

This is probably the most challenging task, but because you are dealing with people who know each other and are of the same age and quite often share the same interests, this makes the challenge easier. Based on the ideas you have gathered as a committee, you can now put together a program. Many different types of events are possible. Your reunion can offer a variety of activities, or you can have one major event. It is also important to remember that if you are planning to invite a prestigious speaker or well-known individuals, you should provide as much advance notice as possible. Some reunion events can be held at Austin High School. You could also arrange an event that “piggybacks” with a school event such as Homecoming or a community event such as the Spamtown USA “Freedom Fest.” Here are some ideas for possible events:

- *Formal dinner & dance*
- *Potluck dinner*
- *Picnic*
- *BBQ*

- Noon luncheon
- Tours provide sightseeing opportunities for classmates. AHS and the Alumni Association can help arrange a variety of class-specific tours, such as
 - Tour Austin High School & AHS Alumni Museum (It's amazing what memories and stories come back and are shared)
 - Tour the renovated Wescott Athletic Complex
 - View the video "Reflections, a History of Austin High School"
 - Participate in event(s) organized around AHS
- Other tour ideas include
 - Spam Museum
 - Historic Hormel Home
 - J.C. Hormel Nature Center
 - Historic Paramount Theatre
- Sporting event(s)
- Night at a local sports bar
- Golf day
- Bowling
- Tennis doubles event

Also check with the Austin Convention & Visitors Bureau regarding possible activities and visitor "Welcome Bags."

Speakers

Classes are encouraged to schedule a presentation by an AHS administrator or a member of the faculty during one of their class events. This gives the class an opportunity to hear more about what is happening at Austin High School. AHS and the Alumni Association can assist you in recommending speakers and inviting them to the class event. Requests for faculty speakers should be made early in your planning process.

Entertainment

Music can provide the right atmosphere for your event. Think about what would fit your needs...perhaps a CD player, podium, and speaker system are all you need. If you have a more formal event, a DJ or live band may provide that special touch. Don't forget about a Master of Ceremonies.

As you celebrate your various reunions, it is easy to get in a rut. Try new things every time so as not to become repetitious and boring. There is no right or wrong in this game – just whatever works best for your class.

Unique ideas for your class reunion:

Choose a "Class Reunion Theme" and make sure this theme is evident in every detail throughout your festivities, from invitation to activities. *The theme sets the tone of your reunion and can lead to a great time. Events from the past, musical eras, fashions of a particular decade - all can serve as stimulating themes that permit endless variations and encourage creativity. For example, one reunion chose a "Hi Ho Silver" theme and had hay rides, western themed food, decorations (checkered tablecloths), etc. Class reunions are a specific example of events that are organized around an anniversary. When all else fails, use a "Return to AHS & Austin" theme.*

Develop (design) a “Class Logo” to be used on all correspondence (letterhead, envelopes, registration forms) and also on any class mementos like T-shirts, coffee cups, key chains, etc.

Make “Name Tags” for all attendees. On the name tags, have a photo of the person as shown in the senior yearbook so people can identify each other more easily (if it is not cost-prohibitive).

- Use different colored name tags for class members and spouses/guests to make it easy to tell who is who. For the spouses/guests, you might consider having the name tag, along with “spouse of _____” or “guest of _____.” (Fill in the blank with your classmate’s name)
- Have extra “blank” name tags printed so you can use an indelible marker to write names of last-minute arrivals
- As we get older, it gets hard to see small print. Make sure the names (especially the first name) on your name tags are big enough to be seen from a distance. Many name tags have the first name printed much larger than the last name
- Use name tags with magnetic fasteners instead of safety pin fasteners or clip fasteners

Have a welcome night that is very casual and intimate where classmates can come for drinks, light snacks, etc. A restaurant or any other place where you used to hang out during your school days is perfect for this.

As attendees enter the main event, have a reunion “billboard” with memorabilia, awards, news clippings, yearbook photos, etc., from your class.

Place disposable cameras at every table and continually have your DJ/Band/MC make announcements reminding attendees to take candid photos of each other. Or maybe you just want to designate someone to take photos or to hire a photographer. Once the reunion is over, post photos on a website and send links to all classmates, or

Produce a reunion “Keepsake” publication with a sampling of photos and directory for alumni. Ask attendees to send alumni histories with their RSVPs. Create an inexpensive “Memory Book” with then-and-now for each student, or

Prepare a slide show or video compilation for the main event. Ask attendees to send their own clips for inclusion and return all clips at the event.

Balloons are an inexpensive way to decorate for reunions. Decorate the center of tables with balloons in school colors and relics from your school era. Also consider centerpieces.

Talk to your DJ/Band/MC about ideas they have done at previous class reunion parties. One DJ dismissed tables for the buffet by asking trivia questions unique to the school and class. For example: “Who got booted out of English class and sent to the Principal’s office for writing notes too many times?” “What was our class prom song/theme?” etc.

Have your DJ/Band feature songs from your era or bring your own stereo or boom box and play modern CDs as well as favorites from your school years.

Have a caricature artist come and do classmate portraits during your main evening event.

If there are classmates too ill to come, create giant “get well” cards and have everyone at the reunion sign them.

Be sure to recognize those deceased members of your class that are “gone but not forgotten.” Perhaps have a “Memorial Board” that may include pictures of deceased classmates and place a bouquet of flowers by it.

Be sure to recognize “Classmates Married to Classmates.”

Class Nostalgia

Class nostalgia can make a reunion special as well as bring out qualities that make your class unique. Whether it is having a AHS yearbook at events or a t-shirt with a class design on it, items that can spark memories will foster good feelings about getting together.

Another way classes can incorporate nostalgia during events is by singing school songs or a song your class is endeared to. Classes can take advantage of AHS locations that hold an important memory for classmates as well.

Favors and memorabilia

Many classes have mementos at their reunion to set a special mood or spotlight a particular memory from days gone by.

When considering a reunion memento, keep your budget in mind. Decide whether you want to subsidize the cost of the memento and what price range is within your budget. Some classes give a memento as a gift to all alumni who attend their reunion. Other classes make the memento available for purchase.

Below are some items classes have used to build nostalgia at reunions:

- Class directories
- Reunion books
- Coffee cups or glasses
- Key chains
- T-shirts
- Photos or Photo CD-ROMs
- Coasters
- Hats & caps

Reunion Books

The reunion committee should decide well in advance of the reunion whether or not to publish a class reunion book.

A reunion book is generally published for milestone reunions, such as 10th, 25th, 40th, and 50th. If you decide to publish a book, an editor should be chosen. He/she should be selected on the basis of ability, interest, and time. Editorial and technological experience is a great help.

The class reunion book may be an expensive undertaking for the committee both in terms of time and money, so plan and budget carefully. Decide how you will distribute your book (in person at the reunion or mailed after the reunion) and who will receive the book (only those who attended the reunion or everyone). These decisions will influence your production timeline and your budget. Select a printer

and decide on style, layout, pictures, and costs. Investigate cost-effective printing and binding options – many small copy shops can produce a fine book at a fraction of the cost of a commercial printer.

The editor should plan a biographical form or questionnaire that should be mailed to the class no later than the fall before the reunion (include a return envelope). Plan to use your class website and email list to help market the effort and allow classmates to submit information electronically. Plan a follow-up postcard mailing or email message to encourage those who have not returned the bio form to do so.

In general, a bio form asks alumni to provide information about career, family, hobbies, and other personal activities. It typically provides space for photos. Often classes choose to post a “then,” with option for “now,” or candid family photo.

Be sure to make arrangements for distribution of reunion books by mail or in person to classmates who should receive a copy.

The committee should also make arrangements for storing extra copies.

The AHS Alumni Museum has an archive that may be able to provide relevant historical information, photos, and news articles for your project. Alumni may schedule appointments to visit the archives or to discuss their project. Please provide two copies of the book to the AHS Alumni & Friends Association for archival purposes.

Other Reunion Book resources

***American School Pictures** will have a photographer at your reunion to cover the event and take portraits of alumni and their guests. Photographs of all participants attending the reunion plus activity and candid photos will be used to compile a pictorial reunion book. There is a charge for this service. For more information, contact:*

American School Pictures, Inc
Reunion Division
4650 Beidler Road, Willoughby, Ohio 44094-4603
(216) 975-4477

CD-ROM Reunion Books

Reunion committees can create CD-ROM reunion books instead of a traditional print version. Among the benefits are cost savings and flexibility with creative efforts. Producing a CD takes a dedicated committee effort.

The CD-ROM book puts the best of the print book onto an interactive CD-ROM. It may contain text, the class census results, photographs, and video and audio interlaced together to provide a memorable experience. The class provides copies of the pictures, videos, sound clips and any other media required for the development of the CD-ROM. Be sure you know the required format for pictures, video, sound clips, and computer files so that classmates can supply the proper materials. Just as the cost of traditional print books depends on many variables, so does the cost of CD-ROM books.

Because producing a CD can be a complex process, we highly recommend appointing members of the committee who are familiar with technology to spearhead the effort. They will be able to best determine their level of expertise and if the committee can successfully complete this project on its own, or whether it should involve a production company.

Class Census

A class may also choose to develop a questionnaire class census, seeking data from which to compile class statistics or a class profile. The class census can range in tone from serious to comical, and in format from multiple choice to short answer. A sample class census is included on pages 30, 31 and 32 of this handbook.

Census forms can be mailed to your classmates, or you could consider posting the questions on the class website. Classmates should be encouraged to complete the form whether or not they plan to attend the reunion. Depending on the nature of the questions, you may receive a greater response if census forms are anonymous.

Responses should be returned to a dedicated committee member for tabulation.

Compiled class census data can be shared with the class in a variety of ways. The results can be presented at the reunion, included in the class reunion book, posted on the class website, or mailed after the reunion to all classmates.

If you are including the results of the class census in a class reunion book, the census form should be sent, along with the biographical form, in a mailing no later than the fall before your reunion to allow time for follow-up marketing and to collect data.

Miscellaneous Planning Tips

- Create, assemble and print program booklets
- Sell advertising in your "Class Directory/Memory Book"
- Find sponsors and/or businesses/companies to provide door prizes and awards for the event. Businesses can receive logos and advertising in the reunion event schedules, directories, etc., in exchange for their donations
- Send out thank-you notes to contributors and sponsors
- Make multimedia presentation of class memories and past reunions
- Make a class reunion video
- Distribute a class newsletter every six months or so

Keep up with the latest thinking on reunion planning. Ask for help. The Alumni Association can provide assistance in a variety of ways. If you don't ask, you don't get!

Typical Reunion Programs

Pay attention to the details and logistics. Great ideas are useless if they are unaffordable or undoable or require significant resources to accomplish. The old KISS approach still holds. Remember, all of the doers are volunteers with a life outside this activity.

One-day event: A single-day event will usually consist of a single meal-related activity, such as a picnic, BBQ, or dinner/banquet. There may also be some group activities during the day (e.g., talent show, musical entertainment, or a campfire at night).

Weekend event: Plan an entire weekend around your reunion festivities, since many attendees will be traveling from out of town solely for the event. Have a welcome night mixer that is very casual and intimate where classmates can come for drinks and light snacks. These are used to welcome classmates back or to set the mood for later events. This may be on Friday night with registration and a non-structured evening. A local bar or small restaurant where you used to hang out during your

school days is perfect for this. Take advantage of this event type because it is very easy to put together and relatively inexpensive.

The main banquet or gathering is usually held on Saturday evening, with the day given over to golf, games, tours, etc. The banquet may be followed by musical entertainment (perhaps with classmates participating), class trivia, awards presentations, etc.

Most weekend events begin Sunday with a group worship service. If this is not a scheduled activity, time should be allotted for individual church attendance. More often than not, the worship service is followed by a post-reunion brunch or picnic, which becomes the “farewell” activity of the reunion.

Don't over program. Leave lots of free time so that the reunion attendees can relax and visit with each other. Pay attention to non-AHS (spouses and guests) reunion attendees and have a reason for them to attend. Remember, they may not be interested in seeing old AHS classmates or going to AHS functions.

The Price Tag

When setting a reunion budget, the reunion committee must decide whether the treasury is able to subsidize any of the reunion expenses or whether all costs need to be passed along to members of the class. The reunion should stand on its own (unless someone wishes to underwrite some or all of it). Consider your style, budget, and all economic levels of reunion attendees. Just about anything you plan is going to have a price tag attached to it, but the trick is to keep overall costs manageable for everyone. Budget each activity and stay within it. If there is a surplus at the end, put it in the class treasury. Reunions should be run in a businesslike manner. Clearly state what the price of an activity includes (dinner, music, open bar, etc). Prices for class events are often set to cover the meal price at a minimum, and in many cases these events are completely self-supporting. Bar service and alcohol can be a considerable cost for classes. Your event should determine the appropriateness of cash versus open bar. If your class is producing a reunion book or CD-ROM, you must decide whether you want to send this memento to classmates without a charge or to just those classmates who have pre-ordered and pre-paid.

Setting a realistic budget at the outset and then living by it is an important tool for keeping costs under control. If reserving a block of rooms at a hotel or other venue, be sure to negotiate an advantageous deal. Reunions planners suggest that you have specific numbers at your fingertips and are well-organized when you begin your negotiations. Be sure to let the property manager know that you realize you are bringing them a valuable chunk of business. And make it clear that you are shopping around. And do so.

You should be able to get a preferred room rate as well as a few other perks, such as a free meeting/hospitality room, welcome beverages upon arrival, and a discount on your banquet if you choose to hold it at the same venue. Of course, your bargaining position would be stronger if your event was at a time other than the property's peak season. Use similar bargaining tactics when negotiating a banquet or major reunion meal.

Refunds for Reunion Activities

If a member of the class cancels his/her reservation before the cancellation date, a refund is usually issued. After the cancellation date, all refunds are at the discretion of the reunion chair and treasurer, and alumni seeking refunds are directed to them.

Fundraising

This is not an activity that most reunion organizers will have to delve into, especially if you are able to keep costs manageable. Since T-shirts are considered a staple at most reunions, much like a name-tag, they are usually sold at cost. However, by marking them up a dollar or two, you will be able to collect a few additional dollars that could be used for the inevitable gratuities and stipends that are often forgotten about during the budgeting process or for a “little something” for the clergyman who is kind enough to participate in your reunion.

Mealtime

There are different types of meal situations you can plan. Depending on the event, you will need to determine if you would like your meal served buffet-style, pre-set, or plated. Remember to plan for vegetarian, kosher, low-salt or low-fat alternatives to accommodate all of your classmates' needs. Naturally, the method you choose will depend largely on the number of participants you gather as well as the flavor you wish to give your event. Breakfast, brunch, lunch or dinner are times when classmates can socialize and just hang out. There are several options to choose from.

Potluck: *If a picnic is part of your reunion (either as the primary activity or as just one of the activities), you may choose this option. This is a very simple and inexpensive choice that has the added bonus of making everyone feel involved as well as adding spice and variety. If, however, the picnic is only one activity of a multi-day event, there will likely be participants from out-of-town who will not be able to prepare food. The option of purchasing some food items, purchasing non-cooked items such as beverages, disposable plates and cutlery, etc., or making a cash contribution should be made available to them. Of courses, the potluck option can also be used successfully for an evening meal. If the group is either unable or unwilling to incur the expense of an elaborate catered meal, a potluck supper can be every bit as enjoyable, and perhaps more so, for its more personal touch.*

Catered: *You may consider having your main meal or banquet catered. Naturally this will be more expensive than the potluck option, yet there are many types of catered meals, too. While the banquet at a hotel or restaurant is probably the most expensive route, there are other less expensive options as well.*

You can rent a community or church hall and have the meal catered by a professional catering company or a local service club. There are church and community based women's groups that cater to such events rather inexpensively. If your reunion is a smaller one that will be held in a private home but the hostess would rather not do the cooking, you can still have food brought in by a caterer or a service group. Or perhaps you can order the meal as a take-out from a local restaurant. Remember to add gratuity and tax to all food and beverage if the event is catered.

Communal Cooking: *This option refers to a team of people from the reunion group getting together in someone's kitchen (preferably a large one) or the kitchen of a rented hall to cook the meal for the entire group. A backyard BBQ would be a special form of communal cooking, where one team does the barbecuing while others provide the salads, breads, desserts and beverages. In order to keep the costs uniform for all participants, perhaps everyone can pay a set fee, which will be used by a separate team to purchase all the necessary foodstuffs for the meal.*

Private clubs, hotels or restaurants may be the easiest to consider: They offer complete service and facilities and can generally coordinate all aspects of your reunion. However, you must conform to their availability and scheduling.

Private homes and gardens can offer more flexibility with regard to personal desires and time schedules.

If this is a family-friendly event, don't forget to include children's pricing.

Alcohol Policy

We all want to be assured that we are taking consistent, appropriate, and reasonable steps in the use of alcohol. The following guidelines are recommended when planning reunion events:

- Events need to conform to local regulations and/or restrictions regarding serving alcohol
- Do not serve alcoholic beverages at an event; this should be done by an establishment that has a liquor license (restaurants, hotels, professional caterers)
- Be aware that if your class hosts an event in someone's home or private property, the property owner's insurance will be the primary object of any possible claim
- Non-alcoholic beverages should be made available
- Food should be available at any event at which alcohol is being served

Additional reunion tips

- Consider a central place easily accessible to most attendees
- Make sure you see the actual room where your event(s) will take place
- During your site inspection, ask size of table - 5-foot round, 6-foot round, 8-foot banquet - and determine how many seats you can fit comfortably at a table
- Is a security deposit required? If so, how much? When is it refundable?
- Are there discounts on certain days of the week?
- If outside, are there heaters provided?
- Can you bring in your own caterer, or do you need to use theirs?
- Are there restrictions on alcohol? If you bring your own, is there a corkage fee?
- Discuss the menu selections and per person cost. Does it include tax and service charge?
- Can you order a cake through the property? Can you bring your own? If you do, will the facility charge a cake-cutting fee?
- Food stations and buffets encourage people to get up and mix and mingle more than a sit-down, served meal
- Make sure you have adequate serving staff
- Find out what equipment is included and what would be extra. For example, are linens, set-up and clean-up included? Do you need to rent a dance floor, microphone, sound system, etc? What other audio/visual requirements might be needed? How much are they?
- Check out music restrictions
- If you hire a band, make sure that there is adequate staging, lighting and power for instruments
- Are decorations and flowers handled separately, or are they provided? If you bring your own, will their staff set them up? If not, at what time can you gain access to the room to decorate? What are the decorating restrictions?
- Are there adequate rest room facilities for your gathering?
- Confirm parking: Is there enough? Is it handicapped accessible? Do you need to arrange for a valet?

- Know exactly how long you may have at the facilities and when you have to end your event. Make sure this time is in writing from your site coordinator.

Tracking Expenses

Track expenses to calculate an accurate total cost for the reunion. Covering your costs is crucial to the success of your event.

Most facilities will provide you with a cost estimate for the activity you are planning.

- Open a checking account (beware of “Dormant Account” service charges that drain your account between reunions)
- Create a spreadsheet to track income & expenses (remember to list **all** expenses pertaining to the event)
- Calculate a fee for each classmate

Finalizing Critical Details

Double check all details:

- **Reunion theme**
- **Reunion date**
- **Reunion time**
- **Reunion location**
- **Reunion activities**
- **Reunion costs**
- **Confirm availability of any special guests**

Keep the owner or staff of the venue informed throughout the planning stages, whether the event is in a classmate’s backyard, hotel, country club, etc.

Participation Goals and Strategies

Your reunion committee has planned some great events. So how do you get your classmates to attend, and why should they care to? Classes have discovered that some terrific benefits result from high reunion participation. Consequently, reunion committees now spend as much time crafting a strategy to increase reunion participation as they do planning events.

Reunion participation goals

- Record attendance at a reunion
- Encouraging participation in events in non-reunion years
- More complete records of contact information (including email addresses for the class email list)
- Greater number of visitors to class web page
- Greater number of submissions to P.S. THE POST SENTINEL

High participation generates some great benefits, such as

- Stronger connections between classmates
- A strong class identity
- Establishment of class traditions
- More people mean more fun

Creating a participation strategy

Classes have discovered that the best way to encourage high participation in their class activities is to develop a participation strategy. A participation strategy is all about communications...telling your classmates about the wonderful events you've developed. This communications can be divided into two categories.

The first type of communications is directed to the class as a whole, such as

- *Print/direct mail*
- *Email via your class email list*
- *Class web page*
- *Notes in P.S. THE POST SENTINEL*

The second type of communications targets individuals. Examples include:

- *Telephone communications*
- *Networking (i.e., reunion invitations extended through personal contact with friends via telephone or email)*

Classes with the best participation are those that do a little bit of everything on this list. Then they tweak it. They choose one or two elements that they think classmates will respond to and put special emphasis on those elements.

Tools to build the foundation of your strategy

Very often classes begin planning their participation well in advance of their reunions. You want to make sure that the tools to execute a successful participation strategy are in place. Some of these tools include

- *A high percentage of email addresses on the class email list*
- *Updated class web page*
- *Active class secretary and webmaster*
- *Small number of classmates without contact information ("missing" classmates)*

Although this should be an ongoing effort, the year before your reunion is a good time to make sure you have these tools in place.

Communications during your reunion year

As your reunion year approaches, it is time to finalize your strategy for communicating with your classmates. Each communication method has advantages and disadvantages associated with it. Consider what you are trying to accomplish when putting the elements of your communication strategy together.

- *What information do your classmates need and when do they need it (e.g., accommodations and registration information)?*
- *What messages and information do you want to convey to your classmates (e.g., details about class reunion events, reasons why they should come to the reunion)?*
- *What is the best method of communicating this information?*

Direct Mail

Direct mail is an effective way to reach the entire class, as classes often have more mailing addresses than telephone numbers or email addresses. One of the advantages of direct mail is that you can get information in front of classmates without requiring any significant action on their part. A letter can include details about reunion events. A postcard announcing the dates of the reunion can be posted as a reminder to register.

Email

Classes have effectively used email lists to encourage participation and to update class members on new developments. Like direct mail, email is an easy way to get information in front of a large number of classmates without requiring any significant action on their part. Email is particularly effective when used in combination with the web. A short email can be used to generate excitement and direct class members to the web for additional information or for taking action, like registering for the reunion online.

Web

The web is a great tool for providing detailed information to your classmates about your reunion. However, members of your class must actively seek out the information. For that reason, the web is most effective when used in combination with other communication tools. For example, in your direct mail and email communications, you can describe the reasons to come to the reunion and then refer class members to the web to register or find additional details.

Each class is encouraged to develop its own web page. A class volunteer should be recruited to design and maintain the page.

P.S. THE POST SENTINEL

Many alumni read the alumni newsletter, P.S. THE POST SENTINEL. This provides committees with the opportunity to communicate with class members two times a year. The reunion chair should coordinate with the communications sub-committee to include reunion dates and other pertinent information in P.S. THE POST SENTINEL.

Telephone Communications

Although broad-based communication with your class is important, the most effective way to encourage participation is often peer-to-peer contact. A fun way is to organize a group of volunteers to call classmates and encourage reunion attendance.

Networking

Informal peer-to-peer networking can also be an effective way to spread the word among classmates. Networking can be an element of a participation strategy. Hearing from a classmate who shared a specific interest can be a very meaningful and persuasive strategy for encouraging reunion attendance.

Sending Official Invitation

Now is the time to send out the invitation for the reunion to your classmates. More than one person should proofread the invitation. Enclose a registration form. The completed form will give you all the information you need – it can have as little or as much information as you feel you require. Be sure to include details such as the registration deadline, and method(s) of payment, a contact person, website, telephone number, and/or email address in case any classmates require more information. If a portion of the proceeds are going to support Austin High School, be sure to include information about how the funds will be directed. (You may wish to include the pledge form on page 39 of this handbook.) Once you have double-checked and proofread your invitation, you are now ready to distribute the invitation by

- *Mass mailing*
- *Email*
- *P.S. THE POST SENTINEL*

Remember, provide detailed information about location, date(s), theme, activities, cost, deadline for payments, if children are invited, contact person, subcommittee chairpersons, group hotel rates, discounts, etc.

Keep classmates involved and informed on the planning projects. There may be more interest for the actual event when more people are involved, and classmates may be able to assist if they know where help is needed.

Important note on accommodations

All reunion planners recommend that organizers should not take on the responsibility of making accommodations reservations. You should get all the necessary information, and even go as far as to make tentative block reservations, but let each participant make his/her own reservations directly with the property. Along with the registration package, send out accommodations information and the deadline by which they have to register with the property. This will save you a great deal of work and possible heartache and money, too.

Collecting Money

Major problems to avoid are the failure of organizers to collect enough money to cover expenses and failure of participants to pay their fair share. One way to avoid these pitfalls is to collect money before the reunion. It is easier to collect money before an event than after.

- *Decide on methods of payment: credit cards, checks, and/or cash*
- *Set a payment deadline*
- *Decide on discount for early payment and/or fee for late payment*
- *Decide whether to include the pledge form (see back of handbook) to generate donations to Austin High School*

Registering Classmates

State the registration fee on the form and, most importantly, state the registration deadline. Don't be shy to take a hard line on this item, because reservations you have to make (for meals, venues, services, etc.) depend heavily on receiving accurate information in a timely manner.

Give classmates an opportunity to register (and pay) early, with a reduction in the registration price as an incentive. Classmates who register during the “regular” registration period pay the “regular” fee, and classmates who register after the registration deadline pay a higher fee.

Several different sources estimate that from 10% to 25% of a class will attend a typical reunion and many of those will wait until the very last minute to sign up. This last-minute sign-up may cause problems with your banquet hall or caterer. One strategy is to increase everyone’s fee by a small amount and then use the additional money to order several extra dinners when you submit your final count. Then if several people show up at the last minute, it is no problem to add them. You may want to charge an added premium for the last-minute registration.

Make the actual registration process as simple and quick as possible. If your registration process includes an “about you” questionnaire, many classmates may set it aside until “later” instead of just writing a check and registering. If you’re going to ask your classmates for additional information (like biographical information), consider doing a completely separate mailing so that if your biographical questionnaire gets set aside until later, you’ve still got their name, address, telephone number, the name(s) of the people who will be attending, and their check.

- *Determine the format of registration: email, direct mail, telephone, etc*
- *Send reunion fees to the finance person or committee chair*
- *Keep a list of attendees*

If you have already prepared a database, you can add all new registration information to it and be able to print out specific reports related to events, accommodations, meals, etc. If you choose the manual route, you may wish to use a system of simple index cards to keep track of all your participants. For the sake of convenience, and in case of electronic failure, you should keep hard copies of all your computerized information in a handy binder, along with all your other reunion documents (brochures, timetables, contracts, etc).

Sending a Reminder

A friendly reminder should be sent to those classmates who have not yet paid. People have busy lives and may thank you for the reminder.

- *Send a reminder by mail, email, or telephone*

Confirming Attendance

Confirm registration and payment received from all classmates attending.

- *Mail, email or telephone stating registration received*

The Home Stretch

After the registrations have been received and recorded, you move into your final planning phase. Now that you have final numbers, you can make your reservations for activities, services, rental items, and venues. This is also the time to start putting together your reunion packages that will be given out to all classmates when they check in.

Reunion Packages

Again, just as with everything else, these can be as simple or as full of information as you want to make them. They could contain all or some of the following:

- *Complete reunion program/agenda*
- *Name tags*
- *List of all participants (from your database or mailing list)*
- *Maps for activity venues*
- *Information on local attractions (from Visitor Information Center)*
- *Information on restaurants and places of worship*
- *T-shirts that have been ordered and paid for*
- *A notepad and pen (could be solicited from local businesses)*
- *Any other trinkets that you have gathered from hotels, restaurants and other businesses that you will be patronizing during the reunion*
- *Any other treats that you feel like including*

If you would like some publicity for your reunion, be sure to send a press release to the local media two or three weeks prior to the event. If you have an activity or a personality that will be of interest to the public, remember to make mention of it, along with some pertinent details.

At this time you should also make detailed daily schedules and “to do” lists for everyone with a job to be done during the reunion.

Decorating is a highlight for many reunion organizers who take the job very seriously. Some of them go far beyond the usual flowers, banners, and streamers. Displaying class photographs is one idea.

Potential Problem Areas

- *Most reunions have someone show up after the meal is served, expecting to get in free. Late comers may argue that they shouldn't have to pay full price, and some may slip in without paying (yeah, this sometimes happens). On your registration form, make it clear that classmates are welcome to join you after the meal, but they will need to pay their fair share of the reunion costs. Determine that amount by subtracting the price of the meal from the normal ticket price*
- *Make sure that all your classmates know that there is a deadline for ordering souvenirs and that the budget does not allow any/many spare souvenirs. Spares will be first come, first served to latecomers. They are welcome to pay the late fee, even at the door, but they may receive fewer goodies*
- *Classmates interested in complaining, or offering constructive criticism after the reunion, should first fill out an “I volunteer to help with the next reunion” form*

No matter how well you plan, expect things to go wrong. Roll with the punches. Remember, no one except the committee knows about the goofs...everyone else will remember a good time.

Show Time

All those weeks and months of planning, and finally the big day has arrived. If you have been well organized throughout the planning phase, you should not have to get stressed at this point. Granted, you will probably be very busy, but there should be no need for stress. Keep reminding yourself that the primary goal of the reunion is getting together with classmates for the sole purpose of having fun. Also try to schedule in some private, relaxation time for yourself...a walk, a swim, or even just some quiet time with some favorite music and a warm beverage.

Assemble all your volunteers and make sure they each have a schedule and know where they have to be.

Registration/Welcome Desk

This will be the first point of contact for all participants...both the organizing committee and classmates. Anticipate congestion at the check-in table. Make sure that the volunteers at this station are cheerful and relaxed and immediately make visitors feel welcome and at ease. Special consideration should be paid to newcomers to the class group. In addition to giving people their reunion packages and directing them to the various activities for the day, you may want to dispense a welcome beverage and snack.

When reunions involve several classmates who have not previously met each other, some organizers schedule an "Ice Breaking" session at the start of the first day to make people feel more at ease. This will also encourage classmates to visit not just exclusively with the group of friends that they chummed around with but also to mingle and visit with everyone. This will make the reunion a lot more enjoyable. Remember, you want everyone to relax and have a good time.

A simple suggestion that would make life easier for all classmates is to have members of the organizing committee clearly identified so that they can be accessed whenever needed. The simplest way of doing this is to make T-shirts (and only theirs) in a different color and add the word "ORGANIZER" on the back. Announce this to the whole group at the beginning of the festivities so that all will know whom to go to for help.

Let the fun begin! *Although you will continue to be in "organizer" mode throughout the event, be sure not to let that dampen your fun. Spread the responsibilities evenly among your helpers, let your hair down, and enjoy the great event you helped put together.*

For the Record

You may wish to engage a photographer to produce a class portrait or a videographer to record highlights of the reunion. A "Class Directory" is a simple task to produce, yet can be a most valuable document for every class member. This can easily be produced from your database, all of which you have already collected from your registration forms.

During the Event

Have a good time! And take lots of pictures!

How to Plan Fun Games

Now is the time to ensure that your class reunion is as entertaining as it was exhausting. Try to avoid cliché awards which subjectively bestow “greatness” and “success” on some and not others (i.e., “the most successful,” “who went the farthest,” “who drives the nicest car”). Instead, make the awards more fun. For example:

- *First and last to register*
- *Person with the oddest experience*
- *Still class clown after all these years*
- *The longest marriage*
- *The most children*
- *The most grandkids*
- *Who traveled the furthest to the reunion*
- *The most degrees, etc*

For those with a good sense of humor, you can do a poll in advance and find out who has been married the most times and create an award category for this (be sure to get permission from the potential recipient so there are no embarrassing surprises). Also “humanitarian awards” (include all those involved in community service personally and professionally).

Hire a karaoke DJ. *Encourage attendees to get up and sing along to the hottest hits from your graduation year.*

Ask attendees to fill out a graduation-year trivia game when they arrive. *Pose 20 questions related to the year that you graduated. Elect someone to score the tests, then award prizes to those with the most knowledge of the era.*

Conduct a group memory game. *The first person stands up and recounts a short anecdote relating to another classmate. That classmate then stands up and recounts another anecdote. Inevitably, everyone will have his/her turn to speak, and the group will be rolling with nostalgia and laughter.*

Place all of the name tags in a fish bowl at the door. *Ask each attendee to reach in and grab a tag, then find the person whose tag he/she is holding.*

Hold a dance contest featuring music from the year of graduation. *This is a good way to include reunion guests who may not be able to participate in nostalgia-related activities.*

- *Be sure to plan games that will make alum’s guests feel at home. Limiting the games to school-related topics will only serve to make half of the attendees feel excluded*

P.S. A good time to get ideas for your next reunion is during your current event. *Ask members of the class what they’d like to do, maybe even do a survey. Then after you get the ideas, sit down with the reunion committee (the people who will actually do all the work) and decide what you should do.*

Invite feedback at the end of the reunion. *Have feedback cards handed out or mailed (postage pre-paid if you can). Feedback should always be taken with a grain of salt, but if you see the majority of people have suggestions on the same issue, it may be worth taking note for the next reunion. And decide who will work on the next reunion committee.*

Don’t forget to thank everyone for coming!

Expect some critics. No matter what you decide to do, there are going to be people who don't like it...and won't have any qualms about telling you how it should have been done. It is not a personal attack. Reunion committee members should all go around humming the Ricky Nelson song "You Can't Please Everyone, So You've Got To Please Yourself." This is supposed to be fun for the committee, too.

After the Event

*We would love to read about your reunion in the Alumni Newsletter, P.S. THE POST SENTINEL. Please consider submitting a short article about your event, perhaps a photo or two (digital preferred, but we can scan an original photo and return it to you). We would be pleased to share the details of your event in our newsletter, and **PLEASE SHARE YOUR REUNION TIPS WITH US!***

Wrap-up Meeting

The longer and more involved the event, the more helpful it is to have a wrap-up session where all can come together and share their thoughts on the success (or lack of) of the event. This is where you discuss "the good, the bad, and the ugly." The good is that which worked and should be considered for future reunions. The bad is that which could be improved. The ugly is that which should be dropped from future consideration. Remember, nobody is born omniscient...we all learn from others' mistakes and failures. Making this information available to the Alumni Association provides a base of information for other (younger) classes. You may want to use an evaluation form to collect hard-copy data to help with the next reunion. The key is to keep the mood positive and upbeat, where the positives are emphasized and the negatives are looked at as challenges that can be overcome at the next reunion. Rest assured that in the vast majority of cases, there will be nothing but positive feedback, with heartfelt thanks and kudos for the organizers. Whatever small glitches occurred along the way will be very easily forgiven and forgotten.

At this meeting you can present a financial report if you have one. You can also decide on what form the follow-up communiqué will take and make tentative plans for the next reunion. It is also an opportune time for recommending volunteer organizers for the next reunion.

Wrap-up Communications

If you still have the energy, and the interest, you may wish to send a wrap-up letter to all the participants after they have returned home. Thank you messages, follow-ups on activities, and photographs from the reunion can all be part of this last correspondence, and the final task of the communications sub-committee. In class groups that have a tradition of a periodic newsletter, the issue following the reunion can fulfill this function. In fact, a newsletter would be a great place to publish reunion photos and a summary of the event.

And, finally, when all the work is complete, you can sit back, give yourself a little pat on the back for a job well done, and enjoy the wonderful memories.

Good Luck and happy planning!

P.S. If this all sounds like too much effort, consider working with a reunion planning specialist. These professionals can help plan your reunion and will often front the money until attendees have sent in RSVPs and paid. There are many valuable websites out there that can help you send invitations

online, help you manage your guest list, allow you to check and see who has reserved and who hasn't, etc. **And if you would like to plan just a small gathering, here are some ideas.**

How to Plan an Affordable Reunion

A lack of Infinite funds doesn't have to be the deal breaker in your class reunion planning efforts. Be creative and have fun – your former classmates will too.

- Ask around town for classmates who may own bars, restaurants, or other potential reunion venues. These people may be more than willing to offer a good deal for their own reunion
- Scour the area for the best deal. Some bars and clubs have large rooms available for a minimal fee
- Consider a casual picnic at a park. Parks offer room to eat, drink, play games, socialize, and lounge very inexpensively
- Reserve blocks of hotel rooms for out-of-town alumni. Ask for special group or event rates and include the hotel information in the reunion invitation
- Think about approaching the school's administrative offices to see if you can use the school's gymnasium or outdoor recreational area. Nostalgia will run rampant when alumni show up to party at their very own alma mater
- Research caterers in the area to get the best price for large functions. Focus on fun, easy finger foods, keg beer, and inexpensive cocktails
- Bring your own stereo or boom box instead of hiring a DJ. Play modern CDs as well as favorites from your school years
- Pitch local businesses to provide door prizes and other awards. Businesses can advertise in reunion event schedules and other reunion handouts in exchange for their donations
- Ask attendees to send a personal history with their RSVPs, detailing their lives since graduation. Print up inexpensive "memory albums" with a then-and-now section on each student

How to Plan an Intimate Reunion

Forget the ballrooms and hotel conference centers when planning an intimate reunion for a small graduating class. This is a wonderful opportunity to create a more cozy and personalized event.

- Research mansions, estates, museums or other venues that offer their spaces for smaller parties
- Consider holding the reunion at a committee member's house or vacation home
- Call restaurants with large, intimate rooms or patios to inquire about reserving a space for the reunion
- Reserve a lakeside cottage for the weekend
- Plan a sit-down dinner for the main event instead of a less intimate buffet-style meal
- Create special gift packs for all attendees. Include school memorabilia, photos from the past, relics from the era, and personalized trinkets
- Bring your own stereo or boom box instead of hiring a DJ. You will have total control over the music and avoid the banquet feel that a DJ often creates

Role of the Alumni Association

The Alumni Association is available throughout the reunion planning process to assist you. Our goal is to work with class reunion committees to ensure a successful reunion.

The Alumni Association serves as advisors and resources to class reunion committees and can help committees effectively incorporate all of the key ingredients for a successful reunion.

The Alumni Association can assist in many aspects of event planning, particularly for events planned at AHS. The Alumni Association can

- Suggest reunion activities, as well as locations, and advice regarding logistical arrangements
- Make reservations for AHS facilities
- Provide suggestions for speakers (AHS Administrators and Faculty)
- Serve as liaisons between on-campus departments and classes
- Post reunion notices in P.S. THE POST SENTINEL

If the class wishes to generate additional revenue for the Austin Public Education Foundation, three options are available:

- Soliciting donations from classmates
- Setting the price for reunion events high enough to generate a profit
- Selling novelty/class insignia items

Sample Class Census

AHS Class of 19__ Reunion Questionnaire
Classmates:

We have entered a new millennium and we are checking in! How do you feel about yourselves, your family, your community, and our world on this historic occasion? Please take a few moments and record your opinions on the occasion of our __ reunion and the dawning of the 21st century. This is an anonymous questionnaire. The results will be presented live at the reunion on _____. Please mail the completed form back in the enclosed envelope by _____. Thank you in advance for your help. We're looking forward to seeing you at the reunion in _____.

Class of 19__ Reunion Committee

Now and the past 5 years

What is your favorite leisure activity now? _____

If you had unlimited time, what would you like to do? _____

What is the "best" place you have visited since graduating? _____

How have you changed along the following physical/emotional/social dimensions in the past 5 years? Circle the number that matches the extent of change in each dimension.

| Change and direction | Large | Slight | No change | Slight | Large | |
|---------------------------|-------|--------|-----------|--------|-------|-----------------------------|
| Physically fit, trim | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Overweight, out of shape |
| Happy, content | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Depressed, in despair |
| Emotionally well-balanced | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Compulsive, addicted |
| At ease with family | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | More domestic, turmoil |
| Socially comfortable | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Self-conscious, introverted |
| Other: _____ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | Other: _____ |

In your opinion, what was the most important political event of the last 50 years?
 For the United States _____
 For the world _____

What should be the agenda for the 21st century? Please rank the following in order of importance (1=highest, 12=lowest) and add your own item(s), with ranking, if not shown.

- Civil rights
- Post-secondary (college+) education
- Species extinction
- Regional warfare
- Pollution cleanup and control
- Intervention in regional conflicts (wars)
- Environmental or open space or habitat conservation
- Other: _____
- Primary & secondary education
- Nuclear disarmament
- Gay and lesbian rights
- Overpopulation & resource consumption
- Space exploration

How has your involvement in the following changed in the last 5 years, and how will it change in the future? Check the box that applies:

| Last 5 years | Increased | No change | Decreased | Future: | Will increase | No change | Will decrease |
|------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------------|-----------|---------------|
| Political Activism | | | | | | | |
| Volunteer/Charity work | | | | | | | |
| Environmental activist | | | | | | | |
| Participatory sports | | | | | | | |

Thank you for answering this questionnaire. Please come to the reunion and see the results.

Austin High School Alumni & Friends Association

Alumni & Friends was created in 1993 under the umbrella of the Austin Public Education Foundation, a tax-exempt foundation, incorporated in the State of Minnesota. Part of our reason for existing is to inform, promote, and create opportunities for charitable gifts to the Austin Public Education Foundation, which benefits students of Austin Public Schools. According to our "Mission Statement," the Alumni & Friends Association is to function to renew ties with Austin High School, Austin Public Schools in general, and the Austin Community.

Our slogan is "preserving the past and planning the future." One of our activities is publishing P.S. THE POST SENTINEL, the Alumni Newsletter, which keeps you updated twice each year on upcoming class reunions, current news of Austin Public School students, news and information on classmates, Austin High School sports (past and present), and much more.

The Alumni & Friends Association has been active with significant projects, such as the Austin High School "Alumni Museum." If you have memorabilia that you think should be in the Museum or if you

know of someone who may have items that he/she would be willing to donate to the Museum, please let us know. We want the Museum to reflect a comprehensive history of Austin Public Schools.

Working with Austin High School journalism students, we gathered information to establish “Framed and Matted Mini-Biographies” of those names associated with the past: Ove Berven, Arthur Christgau, Red Hastings, Richard Knowlton, C. Vittorio Sperati, Ray Wescott, Keith Paulson and Art Hass. It is important that future generations recognize these people and what they accomplished. These mini-biographies are located in the gym lobby near the Floor-On-The-Wall.

Alumni membership revenue sponsored the “Eberhart Celebration,” during homecoming week, in 2000. The Austin High School “Media Center” (formerly the library) was renamed to honor Richard Eberhart, a 1921 graduate and 1966 Pulitzer Prize honoree for poetry. Students at all levels learned about poetry and were involved in a full range of activities in honor of this celebrated Austin High School graduate.

The “Distinguished Alumni Awards,” established in 2002, were designed to recognize positive role models for current students and to honor Austin High School graduates who have contributed to society in an exemplary manner. Former students who are nominated for Distinguished Alumni Awards have achieved outstanding success in business, a profession, the arts, humanitarian efforts, or community service. The Distinguished Alumni Awards are just a part of our effort to bring the past in touch with the future for current students of Austin High School. These awards are an on-going, annual project of the Alumni & Friends Association. Feel free to indicate anyone you think would be a good candidate for this award. A Nomination Form is included on pages 35 and 36 of this handbook.

The Alumni & Friends database of members has helped class reunions find classmates and was a resource in the development of the Austin High School “Alumni Directory.” We also developed this handbook to help class reunion committees organize their special events.

Other Alumni projects include the Floor-On-The-Wall, which has raised thousands of dollars, with thousands yet to be raised, for the Austin Public Education Foundation. The Alumni Association has been a financial resource and maintains a liaison relationship with the AHS Alumni Band. Austin High School promotional items, Austin High School tours for class reunions and other groups, and a video called “Reflections, a History of Austin High School,” are other endeavors of this group.

The AHS Alumni & Friends Association is involved in many projects, promoting Austin High School (past and present) in a positive light.

Membership in the Alumni & Friends Association continues to be a high priority! We invite you and your classmates and friends to consider joining us if you are not already a member. An annual membership of \$15 is a tax-deductible donation. New members as well as renewals are vital to the continuation of this Association. If you would like to become a member, please fill out the form that follows. And please encourage your fellow classmates and friends of Austin High School to support the AHS Alumni & Friends Association, the Austin Public Education Foundation, and current and future students of Austin Public Schools.

AHS Alumni & Friends Association Membership Form

Name _____
Last First Maiden

Address _____
Street City State Zip

Check those that apply: ____ AHS – Class of _____ (or) ____ Friend
Membership assures your receiving the Alumni Newsletter: P.S. The Post Sentinel – two issues yearly.
Fees are Tax Deductible

Yearly Membership Fee: \$15 _____

Make your check payable to:

**AHS Alumni & Friends Association
P.O. Box 878 · Austin, MN 55912
“Preserving the Past and Planning the Future”**

Donations to the endowment funds of the Austin Public Education Foundation are bearing fruit for our students. Alumni donations play a big part in this support. Please send a donation today. Individuals donating \$250 or more and business or organizations donating \$500 or more will be recognized with a plate on **the Floor-on-the-Wall** at AHS.

Name _____ Donation: (See above) _____

Address _____ Hunting Fund: _____

_____ Packer Fund: _____

My plate on the wall should read: TOTAL: _____

_____ Does your employer have a matching funds program? If so, please enclose appropriate forms or information.

(A maximum of 27 characters per line, including spaces, is permitted.)

**Please return this form with your donation to
The Austin Public Education Foundation
P.O. Box 878, Austin, Minnesota 55912**

AHS Alumni & Friends Association Distinguished Alumni Awards

The Austin High School "Distinguished Alumni Awards" program is designed to recognize graduates of AHS for outstanding achievements and contributions to society following graduation and to promote positive role models for current students of AHS. The candidate(s) must have graduated from Austin High School at least ten years prior to induction and must have contributed to society in an exemplary manner. The AHS Alumni & Friends Association recognizes distinguished alumni for their past accomplishments in business, a profession, the arts, humanitarian efforts, or community service.

**Please complete the form below and return it to
AHS Alumni & Friends Association
P.O. Box 878, Austin, MN 55912**

Nomination Form

Name of Nominee _____
(First) (Graduation Name) (Married)

**If deceased, please give date of death _____*

Austin High School Class of _____

Home Address _____

Telephone _____

Occupation and Positions _____

Career Achievements/Awards _____

Civic Achievements/Awards _____

What specifics related to this nominee lead you to endorse him/her as a role model for AHS students?

Letters of recommendation may be included

Nominated by _____

Year of Nomination _____

**If this is a posthumous award, please provide the name, address and telephone number of a suggested family member to contact.*

Name _____

Address _____

Relationship to Nominee _____

AHS Alumni Information Form

Information for the AHS Alumni Newsletter
P.S. THE POST SENTINEL

Your fellow alums want to hear from you! *New job? Moved to a new city? Recently married? Earned a degree? Welcomed a new member to the family? We want to hear your news and share it with your fellow alumni and friends in future issues of P.S. THE POST SENTINEL. Thanks! We look forward to hearing from you!*

Name of AHS Graduate, or friend of AHS: _____

Year of AHS Graduation: _____

City and State of residence: _____

Post High School Education: _____

Spouse: _____

If spouse is also an AHS graduate, include year of graduation and (if wife) maiden name:

Your Occupation: _____ Spouse's Occupation _____

Children (names and ages): _____

Other notes of special interest or favorite memory of AHS _____

Please return to: Rosalie Seltz
C/O AHS Alumni & Friends Association
P.O. Box 878
Austin, MN 55912-0878
(507) 460-1938

The Class Reunion

Every ten years, as summertime nears,
An announcement arrives in the mail.
A reunion is planned; it'll be grand,
Make plans to attend without fail.

I'll never forget, the first time we met,
We tried so hard to impress.
We drove fancy cars, smoked big cigars,
And wore our most elegant dress.

It was quite an affair; the whole class was there,
It was held in a fancy hotel.
We wined and we dined and acted refined,
Everyone thought it was swell.

The men all conversed about who had been first
To achieve great fortune and fame.
Meanwhile their spouses described their fine houses
And how beautiful their children became.

The homecoming queen, who once had been lean,
Now weighed in at one-ninety-six.
The jocks who were there had all lost their hair,
And the cheerleaders could no longer do kicks.

No one had heard about the class nerd,
Who'd guided a spacecraft to the moon,
Or poor little Jane, who's always been plain,
She married a shipping tycoon.

The boy we'd decreed "most apt to succeed"
Was serving ten years in the pen.
While the one voted "least," now was a priest,
Just shows you can be wrong now and then.

They awarded a prize to one of the guys,
Who seemed to have aged the least.
Another was given to the grad that had driven,
The farthest to attend the feast.

They took a class picture, a curious mixture,
Of beehives, crew cuts and wide ties.
Tall, short, or skinny, the style was the mini,
You never saw so many thighs.

At our next get-together, no one cared whether
They impressed their classmates or not.
The mood was informal, a whole lot more normal,
By this time we'd all gone to pot.

It was held out-of-doors, at the lake shores,
We ate hamburgers, cole slaw, and beans.
Then most of us lay, around in the shade,
In our comfortable t-shirts and blue jeans.

By the fortieth year, it was abundantly clear
We were definitely over the hill.
Those who weren't dead had to crawl out of bed
And be home in time for their pill.

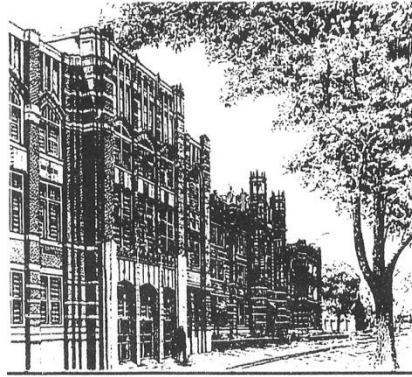
And now I can't wait, as they've set the date,
Our sixtieth is coming, I'm told.
It should be a ball, they've rented a hall,
At the Shady Rest Home for the old.

Repairs have been made on my hearing aid,
My pacemaker's been turned up on high.
My wheelchair is oiled, my teeth have been boiled,
And I've bought a new wig and glass eye.

I'm feeling quite hearty, and I'm ready to party,
I'm gonna dance 'til dawn's early light.
It'll be lots of fun, and I hope at least one
Other person can make it that night



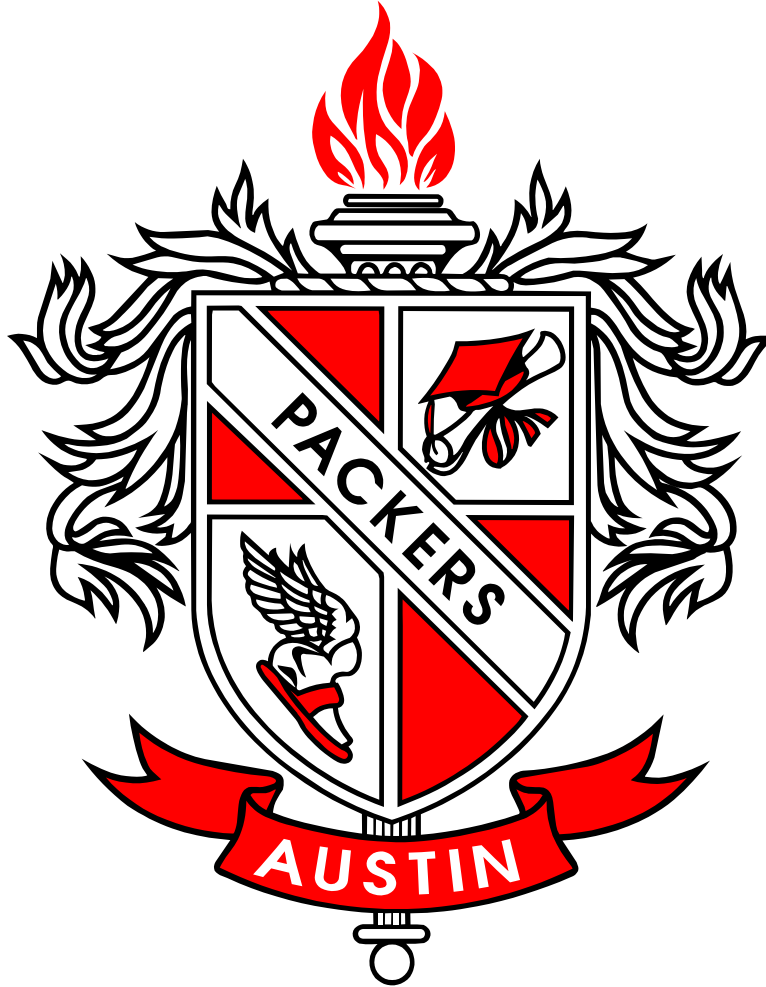
***Austin High School
Alumni & Friends Association
“Preserving the Past and Planning the Future”***



**AHS
Reunion
Handbook**

***Basic Information for
Planning Class Reunions***

By James C. Ruud



AHS Alumni & Friends Association

P.O. Box 878 · Austin, MN 55912-0878 · (507) 433-0433

www.apefoundation-ahsalumni.org