

**Oceanside High School, Class of 1960 Belated 60-Year Reunion Welcoming Address and Farewell Message to the Class, June 25, 2022****by Howie Levy**

**Ahoy, Sailors!** I am pleased once again to welcome all of you who have come together tonight from near and far for what is most likely one last time — our farewell reunion, so to speak. Thank you all for being here.

This was supposed to be my shortest reunion speech to date. Sorry — it's not! (It is, however, the shortest one I have given in 32 years.) I hope you like it.

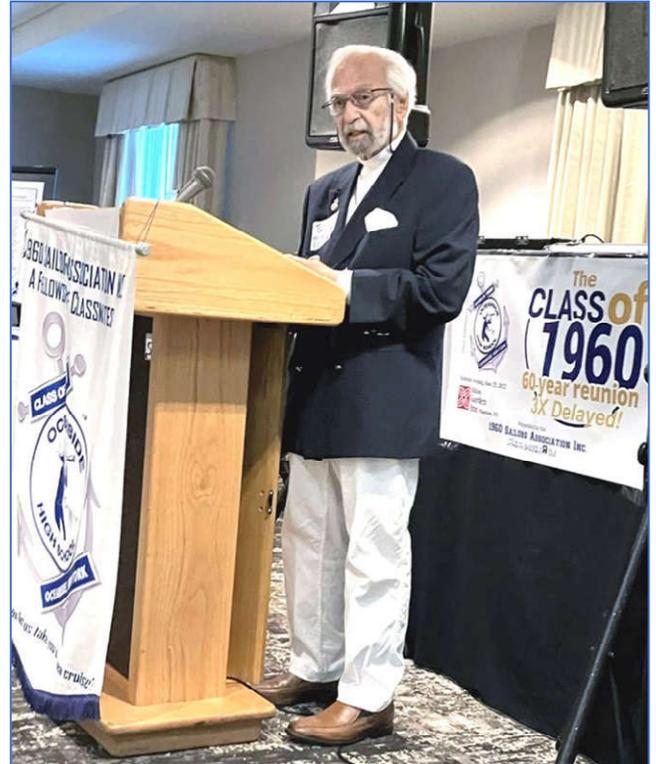
How remarkable it is now, well over 60 years after our graduation day — as we all either approach or have passed our 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays — despite our age and growing health problems, with some traveling great distances, that this many of us can still greet each other warmly and joyously as we gather once again — “where everybody knows your name, and they're always glad you came,” and celebrate our collective 80<sup>th</sup> birthdays together — especially after enduring the horror of two years of intense anxiety, shortages, sacrifice, shutdowns, endless uncertainty and lonely isolation, and for many, tragedy and sorrow. It is equally remarkable that so many of us hold fond memories of that brief time we spent together over six decades ago that are completely disproportionate when compared to those of the other 96% of our lives!

Looking back to 1960, how many of us were so foolishly naïve on our graduation day as to believe — as the kids in *Grease* did on their graduation day — that we would always be together? (Incidentally, tomorrow is the exact 62<sup>nd</sup> anniversary of our graduation day.) After all, we grew up in a time when families typically stayed in or close to the same communities for generations. That was just about all we knew. Little did we realize then how quickly “The Times, They ... [Were] a-Changin'.”

Soon, ours became the first American generation to be so mobile that we quickly spread far and wide, even beyond the great city that was 25 miles to our west, to unfamiliar places all over this country and elsewhere — seeking better opportunities for ourselves. To follow your dreams, dreams of building your families and careers, — dreams that “were your ticket out” — lots of brave Sailors willingly gave up many of the warm and delightful comforts of home — comforts such as great bagels, pizza and Chinese food, Carvel, crumb buns, Jewish delis and of course, Nathan's Famous — and being surrounded by our people — that is, other New Yorkers.

**FUHGGEDABOUDIT!!**

For decades after our graduation, contact with each other was infrequent at best for most of us since all but the most local phone calls were pretty costly at 25 cents a minute — before technological change gave us email, texting and the internet. It's a wonder that so many of us managed nevertheless to keep



in touch back then even if only with relatively few of our closest friends, friends that we had as a result of the extraordinary coincidence that brought us together every day during that brief and joyous time in our young lives long ago. Oh, yes, “Those Were the Days!”

Although we quickly drifted apart in distance after high school, we remained held together in spirit as a class by our many shared memories of the simpler, *Happy Days* of our youth, our love of that “Old Time Rock ‘n’ Roll” (that, of course, “will never die”) — and ultimately, in fact, through advancing technology and by our occasional reunions. We have had seven fabulous reunions to date— this is our eighth — probably a world record! After the first four were beautifully inspired and ably led by our own Nancy Koller Beaulieu, it became my extreme privilege and pleasure to contribute significantly to planning and leading the last four beginning in 2005. I will forever be grateful to our great class for this opportunity.

And speaking of technological advances, in 2000, mainly to help promote our 40-year reunion, I created our nostalgic class website. Our class website is easily the most creative thing I have ever done, and I am proud of it. Over the 22 years plus since then, the site has grown to over 200 pages of our fondest memories. And over those years, among many Sailors from other classes, almost 150 of you have sent me heartwarming and gratifying messages expressing their sincere appreciation for helping them reignite their fading memories of that wonderful time we spent together at OHS. I must offer my heartfelt thanks to all among you who have sent me such messages, and I pledge to maintain the site for as long as I am able. I hope you will all continue to enjoy it for years to come.

Now, before we resume our reminiscing and rigorously *reunionating*, sadly, once again, I must ask for a brief moment of silence to remember one or more of the 132 (that’s 26%) of us who are known to have sailed on since 1960 “somewhere, beyond the sea” — too many to name here.

### **[*Moment of silence*]**

If you have not already done so, take an opportunity when you can to review the list of names of our departed Sailors on the memorial poster on display in this room at my right.

As always, I am both joyful to reunite with all of you once again and disappointed that many chose not — or worse — were unable, to join us. But this time, I am also deeply saddened in this bittersweet moment by the stark realization that I must bid most of you a warm farewell for the last time tonight, much as we did years ago on our graduation day. I hope you will continue to visit with those who live near you. But I must realize that most of you will likely never see each other again. So take lots of photos, and email them to me soon for our website. And I remind you all that you are urged to email me a brief farewell message to the entire class to be published online on our class website for all to see.

I wish that all of you will hold on to your health, your favorite memories of the time of our youth and to your oldest and dearest friends — *i.e.*, those who know and love you the most.

***Let’s rock ‘n’ roll, Sailors!***