**Patsy Baker (Wilhelm)**

**We all have a story to tell.**  Mine begins in Junior High School in San Francisco.  Outstanding teachers, great friends of many racial back grounds.  The best years of my early school career.  I loved living in the Inner Richmond in the City.  But my mom and dad had other plans.  They wanted to buy a home in which to raise my sister and I and Daly City was their choice, not mine.  I continued to commute to Roosevelt Junior High for my 8th grade, but when 9th grade came I had to make the choice.  I entered Westmoor High School as a complete unknown. It seemed to me that everyone there, except for Leslie Abraham who was also a new girl, had always lived in Daly City and knew each other from childhood.  They didn’t seem to need more friends and I didn’t feel as though I fit in.  I pined for my friends in the City, but I had to make a go of Westmoor.  I had good teachers for the most part and I did make friends and I had fun, but it wasn’t the same.  Westmoor lacked the diversity I had grown to love in the City.

Sophomore year came and went, Junior year and prom time.  All the long time resident lady Rams went to The Fashion in Westlake shopping center and showed up at the prom in varying pastel colors of the same dress.  Then Senior year arrived.  I began to look around me and see that the Student Body President was always a guy, a good looking, athletic guy.  He was a shoe-in.  I decided to take a stand.  I had banners, and corsages with my name on them, plastic hats and leaflets to pass out.  I sat at a table in the lunch room several days playing John Phillip Souza marches.  I had a campaign manager. I felt a little foolish, but I knew I had to do something out of the ordinary if I was to stand any chance to be Student Body President.  I was running against Skip Smith, Gary Markman and Ron Baker I think.  Voting day came and Skip had the highest number of votes, but not a majority to win.  I had the second highest number and so there was a run off.  Skip won and I was happy for him.  He was such a nice guy. Then I heard from some of the guys that they had stuffed the ballot box just to be sure I didn’t win.  It gave me great satisfaction to know that they were worried and that was my victory.  I was the winner and didn’t have to actually fill the office.  Not too bad, considering I was just an outsider  All in all, I made some good friends and had some great times and have good memories but I left high school the way I started, I didn’t feel as though I fitted in.

I went to San Francisco State and got my teaching credential.  My first assignment was in Montara, then Half Moon Bay, CA.

In 1969 I married Roger Wilhelm a graduate of Galileo High School in San Francisco.  We adopted our first child, a little girl of 4 months, and I quit teaching to stay home with her.  Thought I would give selling at craft fairs a try, but it never turned a profit and took up all my time especially with a little one at home.  We had built a house in Hillsborough, and I mean WE built a house.  Roger and I did almost everything ourselves that two people could do.  After another 4 years I was pregnant with my first son, a spitting image of his father.  A year and a half later our youngest son was born.  He looks more like my side of the family. The lady who tried to get pregnant for 8 years with no success now had 3 children!!

After 10 years in Hillsborough we decided to move to Novato for a more laid back environment and a better place to raise our children.  Lots of Police and Firefighters living in Novato, so we were right at home from day one.  I took a teaching job in the Richmond Unified School District and 2 years there nearly put me in the insane asylum!  We moved to a second home in Novato, very nice, built over a creek and great serenity, but the kids grew up and moved away and the house was too big, so we tried to sell but found ourselves in the housing crash of 2008.  So we rented it out and moved to our last (or so it says) home in Novato.  Mostly on one level, near transportation and should last for as long as we do.  We completely renovated the 100 year old farm house to suit our needs.  The 100 year old barn is going to stay the way it is.  It is the one thing with great character on the property.  I taught in Petaluma, CA for the last 7 years of my career.  Very interesting place.  Dairy and chicken ranches for the last 150 years and a one school district with just 14 teacher and over 400 years of years of seniority.  I retired in 2001, when our daughter got married.

Today, my life is the best it has ever been.  Married for 45 years to the greatest guy.  We love to travel and meet other people.  We have 3 wonderful children.  Now that they are out of the house I can say that.  Each has been very successful in their chosen path.  Our daughter has given us two grandsons who are currently 4 and 7.  They are the joy of our lives.  We have them every Friday night and Saturday because they live close.

When John Shaw called me I wasn’t sure if I was all that interested in a 50 year reunion with people who for the most part I hadn’t seen in 50 years.  Then I realized that I hadn’t made much of an effort to stay in touch either.  I wondered if they would show up to the reunion in the same pastel gowns they wore to their prom from The Fashion in Westlake.  Then I started to recognize that they too must have had insecurities in high school.  Maybe they felt out of place too.  Maybe they felt awkward at times.

But for sure, if they were still alive, they too had met life’s challenges.  Some challenges they may have won, some they may have lost.  They too had things they were proud of and things they’d rather forget. Life has a way of leveling the playing field.  It chips away at the sharp edges and rounds us out.  It makes us stronger and much more interesting.  We each have a story to tell.  Just don’t tell me I haven’t changed, because I have.  I am much wiser, experienced, understanding, generous and approachable than I was 50 years ago.

My heart is sad for those classmates who are no longer with us.  I am sorry they will not be there to tell us their stories.  I hope that every classmate is contacted and that they have the information about the reunion so they can choose to join us or not.  But I hope my story is an encouragement to those who don’t think they are interested in a 50 year reunion.  I’m not the same person and I bet you aren’t either and isn’t it grand?  ***Please join us and see who we are, let us tell you a little about the events that shaped our lives to make us such interesting folks. We all have a story to tell.***

Patsy Baker Wilhelm