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## ***"Together Again" - Taft Graduating Class of June 1959***

More than one hundred senior citizens from all over North America gathered for an action-packed, three-day, 50<sup>th</sup> class reunion from **William Howard Taft High School**, which began with a city bus tour early on Friday, September 25 and continued until the farewell breakfast on Sunday, September 27.

Among the many components that made this reunion unique was the dedication by the committee members led by the June, 1959 class president, retired Rear Admiral Larry Marsh. Planning began nearly 3 years ago searching for classmates, many who reside in Chicago's suburbs but many who moved to parts unknown.

Also on Friday evening, a fabulous 50's dinner/dance at **The Hilton Garden Inn Des Plaines, Illinois** was enriched by performers from the renowned **Spirit of Life Chorus** directed by Bartlett's own David Barth. His uplifting arrangements were inspiring to all especially special guest, Taft's beloved James Stamm. "JJ" as he is fondly known, is the former leader of the school's Girls and Mixed choruses, which earned honors consistently for their outstanding performances during the late 50s, through the 80s. Pupils who spent many extracurricular hours in either of the two school choruses were joined the pros on stage.

Saturday, these graduates from a half-century-ago, regrouped at Taft's cafeteria for a lunch catered by **Superdawg**, the famous Chicago 1950's Drive-In still operating, and for years has fed wandering Taft lunchroom escapees. Marsh presented an honorarium in the amount of \$1,872 to Taft principal, Dr. Arthur Tarvardian on behalf of the June 1959 graduating class, followed by cheerleaders and color-guard exhibits and finally a brief tour of the hallowed halls now about two-thirds larger than it was at the 1959 graduation. Saturday evening friends from several grammar schools that fed students to Taft broke into smaller groups to continue reminiscing back to even earlier days. Door prizes were offered during each of the five specific segments mentioned.

Adding to the special touches of this confab was the **"Taft Museum and Library"** recreated by event/design planner, **Mary Kalesz of McKenna and Me Design of Lake Zurich, Illinois**, utilizing historical records and information, clippings, photos and memorabilia. Taft's silver and blue colors awaited its 1959 constituency via dramatic balloon towers inviting these sixty-something's into the dining hall for a group photo, dinner and the evening's entertainment.

One of the best features from this reunion is a one-hour video called **"Taft the Movie" DVD**, depicting the life and times of the class of June '59 with original music from the era. It was created and produced (*with a copy for each classmate*), by our webmaster and classmate Fred Allegretti of Johnsburg, Illinois. The movie was made possible because of the hundreds and hundreds of photos, documents, videos and recordings preserved over the past 50 years by classmates, and sent to our webmaster during the past 2½ years. Once these materials were digitized for the website, a logical extension was to create a movie by organizing the digital content into storyline chapters\*, then unfold the story with simulated movement, graphics, narration, sound effects and appropriate background music. The website contains over 1,000 links connecting to our high school content and memorabilia. (**[www.taftreunion1959.com](http://www.taftreunion1959.com)** - *this website has been called the most elaborate and best high school reunion website in America by website professionals*).

A 160-page, full-color memory book with depictive classmate profiles, statistics, hundreds of photographs, and special historical information in a high-end glossy publication was presented to each attendee. Again, the book was created by our web-guru/movie producer Allegretti with the extensive help of Pat Santell-Lutz and Sue Willers-Bruce, and then published by **Life Touch Yearbooks** with original cover art by **photo/artist Kenji Kerins**.

Fifty years and counting - and still young at heart, was the rally cry as classmates reiterated the theme of **Together Again**. "We believe we created a most unusual event that has far surpassed other high school reunions in design, form and function as it was a real labor-of-love" said Marsh.

***The feelings that were shared during the special weekend will perpetuate in future years when these new and old friends meet again on the first Saturday of October, 2010 at the same hotel.***

### **\* Taft the Movie Chapters:**

1.) Taft Movie Welcome, 2.) Taft the Man, 3.) Taft the School, 4.) Our Times, 5.) Taft Students, 6.) Taft Teachers, 7.) Taft Sports, 8.) Taft Music, 9.) Taft Memorabilia, 10.) Gone But Not Forgotten, Movie Credits