

Mind Like a Sieve

My 40th Iowa City West High School class reunion is looming next month, so a few days ago I kicked back in my overstuffed chair with a drink in my hand to reminisce about the three years I spent there. My recollections are so few that I ran out of memories to cherish in less than two minutes.

It gets even worse when I think back farther to elementary school. Last month, Roosevelt Elementary held its 75th anniversary open house so I dropped by to see if I could figure out what has changed since I last graced its halls almost 50 years ago.

As soon as I walked in the door another visitor introduced himself as Skip Jacobson and he claimed I had been in the class ahead of him. My memory isn't what it used to be (and never was), so I took his word for it. We started out on a self-guided tour, which began with him opening a door down the hall and saying, "This was my first-grade room, was it yours as well?" I had no idea.

He knew where there used to be a bathroom and an interior wall before a subsequent remodeling took them out, who all of his teachers were, what room they had been in, who the teachers in the adjoining rooms were each year and in some cases what their husbands did for a living. It was depressing.

He asked me, "Don't you remember any of this stuff?" I looked around and said, "Well, I'm pretty sure I'm in the right school building."

In his old first-grade room we chatted with a long-term teacher who verified that the next school year would be Roosevelt's last because it would cost too much to repair it. I said, "The place looks okay to me."

"Look out the window at those bricks on the outside wall," she said. "When it rains, the water seeps straight through to the inside. And if you sight along the wall, you can see that the whole thing is bowing in." I did and it was.

But back to my memory impairment – it's going to be a problem next month at the reunion. I fear being trapped in a whole roomful of Skip Jacobsons who will be spewing endless details of events of which I have no memory. I expect I'll smile and nod a lot.

I'm on the reunion committee, and I had volunteered to locate a dozen "missing" people but wasn't spending much time at it. One day last month in Lexington, Kentucky I accidentally ran into Rod Richardson, one of the "lost" people on my list.

Rod was a really good swimmer at West who held maybe a dozen school records at one time, although he's quick to point out that West was a brand new school in 1969, so at first he was setting records every time he fell into the pool. I told him he was a hard man to find, at which point he tactfully noted that his mother has continued to live in the same house ever since we were in kindergarten together.

Anyway, our reunion committee has located only a little more than half of our graduates for one reason or another, so I'm recruiting you to help find some of the rest. I you know someone who knows someone who graduated from West High in 1971, have them send him or her to www.westhigh71.com to check in. If you can remember.