

Class of '66 always has plenty to talk about

Some high school classes do a better job than others of keeping in touch and holding gatherings. Oxford High School's Class of 1966 is one of those.

They've held all the usual reunions, they've got a nice Web site with all kinds of information and pictures, and they keep in touch outside of those avenues. It doesn't hurt, of course, that quite a few of them still call Oxford and Lafayette County home.

This weekend, a number of them are planning a get-together – a birthday party, in fact, for everyone.

Yes, it seems most of the members of the OHS (and University High, as many of them point out since most of their school years were at that campus before the current OHS site opened) Class of 1966 ("We're the class that really clicks. We're the class of '66," they still like to say.) are turning the big 6-0 this year. Another milestone, another chance to get together.

There's always plenty to talk about when folks of that age (and, no, I'm not far behind them) get together. Kids, grandkids, retirement plans, moves – anything and everything. And then there are those conversations about "back when."

New – or old – material

There's a little boost for these folks in that department, however, with the release of Class of '66 member David Freeman's book, "Oxpatch and the Hill – Dixieland Memories." Freeman will be signing copies of his memoir

Saturday afternoon at Off Square Books, and you can bet he'll be signing more and hearing lots about the stories he put in – and left out – at the birthday bash later tomorrow.

I didn't have to go very far to ask some other members of the Class of '66 what they knew about Freeman or his book after I heard that there was another "local author" to check out. Our esteemed Co-Publisher, then-Rita Goolsby and now Rita Vasilyev, and Office Manager, then-Cathy Walker and now Cathy Herren, trudged up and down the halls of good ol' OHS with Freeman.

"Going back in time"

"David's real good about keeping in touch and it's good to have someone who's able to keep all those memories going," Vasilyev said. "I haven't read all the book, but the parts I have are just like going back in time.

"There's something in there that all of us can really relate to, that's a vivid memory for us," Vasilyev continued. "It helps keep us in touch with the way things used to be around here – and that can sometimes be a good thing."

"Reading 'Oxpatch and the Hill' was like thinking about when Oxford



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was a much simpler and easier place to live. It also shows how much things have changed," said Herren, who Freeman credits for helping with research for the book and for helping with his memory gaps from time to time.

"All my life, I've heard my parents and grandparents tell stories and talk about the 'good old days' and I'd wonder why they thought they were so good. After reading David's book, I thought about that again and I now know about 'good old days.'" Herren said. "It's amazing to go to the Web site (www.oxpatch.com) and see people talk about the Square and describe it. You can tell it all depends on when you grew up here. The book is a good starting point (for memories) for a lot of people."

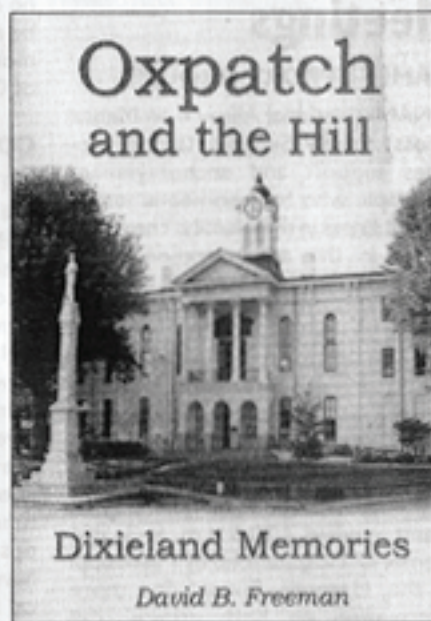
Book selling well

"Oxpatch and the Hill" has been selling well, especially locally, and Freeman credits that in great part to the large number of UHS and OHS graduates who still live here.

"Our class is a good example. I think there may be half or more of our class still there in Oxford or nearby," he said.

Freeman, who lives in Texas, said he still feels like a part of Oxford.

"I get back there once a year or so, and I still have family in Oxford. With e-mail and phone calls regularly with members of the class, I feel like I've still got one foot there in Oxford," he said.



"Our class has really drawn back together over the years," Freeman said. "I think when you get in your 40s and 50s you want to hold onto things and reach out for familiar things. With all of the change and progress in Oxford, I think a lot of us feel like we're losing the smalltown charm and we want to keep that. I think, too, we realize more how valuable friendships are."

Freeman is looking forward to seeing old friends and classmates this weekend.

"It's going to be great," he said. "Just like old times?"

"Who knows?" he said with laugh. "Who knows?"

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