

London, Ontario

Friday, March 1, 2013

High school reunion has homework?



Not quite, but celebrating 85 years for [London South Collegiate](#) this May 24-26 will include class time, among other [reunion activities](#), for alumni.

Some 20 retired educators will [Return-to-Class](#), with former students already signing up. When asked what change they expect since last leading a class, teachers concur: “new technology”; often for better, sometimes, weapons of class distraction.

When the reunion committee first proposed Return-to-Class, Ian Underhill thought, “nice idea, but I’d rather visit”. This retired English teacher, at South from 1969-92, has a lesson (poem) filed away, though, so why not? The caveat: his return should be in a portable, where he spent 22 years. Next, Ian requested an overhead projector. “By the reaction, I guess they’re in museums” – indicative of the biggest change, technology, since classroom days 15 years ago. “This Smart board, a sort of electronic white board, makes sharing information easier. And I sure don’t miss the old Gestetner machine, turning a crank for copies, fumigated by the lethal smell, handing out sopping papers of purple ink.”

More recently-retired English teacher, Dennis Johns, saw much change in his years (1976-2007). “Teachers spend a lot of time getting kids to put away phones and electronic toys: a losing battle.” The fallout, he fears, is that they’re less able to focus on a topic because of constant social media distraction. If so, personal communication (reading, writing, speaking, listening) diminishes. To counteract, he assures his reunion lesson will be “interactive, fun. All I really need is Shakespearean text or a poem, a blackboard, and interested folks”. Such face-to-face may be welcome relief for those who likewise recall times more low-tech, high-talk.

While “it’s been 10 years since I was in class,” says Dave Elston, Voice / Music teacher from 1982-2003, “students still have to learn to play their instrument, and even technology can’t replace the hands-on required to improve”. Dave’s sure students are still supportive of each other, too, “collaborating to make random sounds and rhythms come together”. He hopes South’s 85th takes alumni back to when life was more carefree; consequences less serious. “Remember the trips, teams, coaches and teachers who made school enjoyable and helped shape you. At my own reunions, classmates and I can fall back into thinking and acting the way we did then.” Not always a bad thing, he quips, “as long as laws aren’t broken”.

Fellow Music teacher, Sam Wendt, is already reliving melodic memories ... in rehearsals. “It’s been fun getting an Alumni Stage Band together with former students and teachers to prep tunes for South’s 85th.” Since retiring in 1999, Sam continues to play saxophone in two community bands and as a sub in others. Given his reunion class may attract those who haven’t touched an instrument since school, he encourages, “there’s always pride in quality efforts producing satisfactory results”.

One educator for this reunion has yet to retire (soon): Teri Levack. After 26 years teaching Art, the last 23 at South, she experiences technology’s upside. “Kids are so able to get images quickly. ‘How do you draw a mountain?’ They see all kinds of possibilities for their compositions: accessing any medium, style, legitimately appropriating other artists.” For teachers, resources expand. “It’s no longer what you have on file for Monet: you can retrieve works online, then project them on Smart boards.” For her reunion lesson, Teri may get students who haven’t held a brush or pencil in years. After reviewing some design principles, they’ll create on artists’ trading cards. Small, like decks of playing cards, they’re not intimidating. Later, just a month after South’s reunion, Teri winds down her teaching career. Eager to commit anew to something valuable, interesting, she paints a positive life landscape, reminding us, “retiring can be ‘to’, not ‘from’ something”.

Seating’s limited, so see [Return-to-Class subjects](#) and sign-up now at [South1928](#) Events or 519.452.2860 #6.

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spokesperson Mike Bloxam (2001), Publicity Chair for 85th
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written by Sandy Ross (1979), of [Word’s Worth](#), Publicity Committee for 85th
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

London, Ontario

Wednesday, December 5, 2012



Who's looking trim for South's 85 year reunion? The school!

As [London South Collegiate](#) turns 85 – its pinnacle is the reunion, May 24-26, 2013 – alumni committees are already months into preparations for a rip-roaring 'Return to the Lions' Pride'.

With curb appeal part of that pride, it was cultivated this fall by alumni volunteers, so that South's outside will more beautifully usher us inside to the reunion's decade shows, back-to-class sessions, and more.

Kicking off a 'shrub cleanse', pruning and pitching was done over two late-autumn days, thanks to our grounds crew led by Knute Dohnberg (class of 1965), and wife Darlene Lashbrook; Connie Weir (1966) and husband, Doug; Pete Telford (teacher 1978-98); Mike Bloxam (2001); Paul Merrifield (1973), for the loan of tools; and Principal, Catherine Davidson. A nod also to [Nicola's Garden Art](#) for her proposal (herself a parent of current South students).

Their effort planted seeds of inspiration, too. So impressed when they later saw the grounds, students of biology teacher, Rhonda Milton, pitched in, planting garnet flowers to showcase raised beds by the auditorium. Seems good deeds, like vines of ivy, spread. And that colourful, trim waist-line for the school itself keeps it fresh and alive at 85 to welcome our 'Return to the Lions' Pride'.

To find out what all the roar's about – visit online at [South1928](#) – and enjoy early bird rates for reunion tickets before January 1, 2013.

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