

Class act

Farmington High students from 1940s share memories

BY TODD WICKS
STAFF WRITER

Members of the Farmington High School Class of 1946 were happy to see each other Saturday.

The area's first group of post-World War II graduates had held a 20th-year reunion, a 30th, a 40th, and even a 45th. But the 50th anniversary was truly special, because they finally got to see the rest of their old classmates.

On Sunday, all Farmington High graduates from the 1940s were invited to the Swedish Club on Ruth for a picnic. Organizers didn't expect the 200 men and women who showed up from California, Arizona, Florida, Oregon, South Carolina, and even Argentina.

Most of them hadn't seen each other in 50 years.

"They didn't recognize each other," said Jean Branzel, the Farmington resident and reunion committee member who organized the Sunday gathering. "They all had nametags, and they really needed them, because they had changed so much in 50 years."

The graduates mingled with the upperclassmen they once admired and the underclassmen they probably laughed at. Branzel said it was overwhelming.

"Only four of the graduating classes had had reunions," she said. "The others, they were shocked when they saw each other. When you see all these other elders, you realize that you look just as old."

Branzel listed classmates whose parents owned car dealerships and bowling alleys, who were the sons and daughters of local butchers or hotel owners that everybody knew. Some of them hadn't been back to their hometown in decades.

"These are the last of the old Farmingtonites," she said. "Then, it was a student popula-

tion between 300 and 400 students. There were three grade schools that all went up to the eighth grade, and then Farmington High. That was the whole school district at the time.

"There's a camaraderie that develops through the high-school years that doesn't repeat itself," said Leah Herron-Pagel, a '46 graduate who came from Missouri for the reunion. "It's a special time."

During an impromptu portion of the Saturday reunion, graduates could stand up and tell a story or reminiscence of student life. They revealed first dates, first kisses, and other memories.

"One of the men stood up and admitted to one of the women that he'd fallen in love with her back in the eighth grade," said Ethel Johnson-Bragalino, of Livonia. "This woman is now married, has 11 children and 22 grandchildren. Our hero who told the story mentioned that his timing was lousy."

Some of the graduates took a tour of the Farmington High of today, and enjoyed modern features like the media center. Others just took a look around the city, comparing it in their minds with the Farmington of their youth.

"They really liked it in the old days, when it was an old town like it used to be," Branzel said. "Everybody knew everybody then. When you'd walk downtown, you knew everybody that owned the stores."

"These people are old Farmington," she said. "The Class of '46 also established a scholarship fund in honor of Lloyd Smith, a music and drama teacher who has been teaching at Farmington High since the 1940s. It will be awarded to students in the band department to help them pursue careers in music."



Fondly reminiscing: Helen (Brown) Barker and Dawn Denton remember many of their Farmington High classmates from the 1940s during a gathering at the Swedish Club on Sunday. Some 200 people showed up for the special reunion from California, South Carolina and even Argentina.



Playing catch-up: Dawn Denton from the Class of 1947 recalls her high school days with Bill Dix of the Class of 1942.



Snappy set-up: Members of the Farmington High Class of 1941 pose for photographer Rick Dinoian.

PHOTOS BY IAN POKRY

Knollenberg proud to oppose President Clinton's policies

BY GREG KOWALSKI
STAFF WRITER

Joe Knollenberg is carrying a message in his campaign to get re-elected to the 11th District House race but it's not about himself.

"I want to right the record for the credit being taken by Bill Clinton," said Knollenberg. "It was a Republican Congress that led those things into being," he said referring to welfare reform, changes in the immigration law, and passing the budget. "These reforms were brought about by a Republican-led Congress," Knollenberg said.

The 11th District includes Farmington and Farmington Hills.

Knollenberg, who is running pre-election radio ads promoting the accomplishments of Congress, will face Democrat Morris Frumin in the Nov. 6 general election. Given the heavily Republican nature of much of the 11th District, which stretches from Highland to Redford and from South Lyon to Bloomfield Township, Knollenberg is likely to win a third term.

He said he is serving the district by opposing Clinton. "I'm tackling everything he is doing," Knollenberg said. And he is working to fulfill the demands of his constituents to cut taxes, spending and unnecessary regulations, he said.

"We did succeed in cutting spending and reducing 300 programs," Knollenberg said.

Government spending has been cut by \$53 billion, Knollenberg said. And the cuts came from discretionary spending, not



Joe Knollenberg

from entitlement programs.

"We looked at every single program," Knollenberg said. "If it was effective, it was funded." But if it wasn't, it either was eliminated or privatized where it would fail or survive on its own merits, he said.

"We cut \$53 billion and I don't think we're going to miss it. But we still have a lot of room to go without effecting efficiency. Government is too big, too meddling," Knollenberg said. "There has to be some common sense on how you spend money."

Knollenberg takes pride in that he has reduced his own office operating expenses, returning \$300,000 to the government.

But there's still more to do, he said. There is still waste to be cut. For example, the Depart-

ment of Housing and Urban Development needs to be streamlined. When it costs \$80,000 to repair a house that ends up being worth \$50,000 something is wrong, he said.

The next Congress also will likely focus on crime issues and drugs. Knollenberg said he also wants to see a resolution to the problem of where to store nuclear waste. A site in Yucca Flats, Nev., is under consideration.

"We want to get that stuff out of your back yard and entombed," Knollenberg said.

Knollenberg said he also would like to see tax reform. "What people want a simpler tax, a fair tax," he said.

Knollenberg, 62, was born in central Illinois and moved to Oakland County in 1967. A resident of Bloomfield Township, he was an executive in the insurance industry before being elected to the Congress.

Long active in the Republican party, he rose from being a precinct delegate to chairman of the 18th District Congressional Committee. And he won the support from Rep. William Broomfield when he retired in 1992.

In Congress, Knollenberg has served on the Small Business Committee; the Banking, Finance and Urban Affairs Committee; the subcommittee on Insurance and Consumer Credit and the subcommittee on Housing and Community Development; the subcommittee of Procurement, Taxation and Tourism; and the subcommittee on Minority Business Development.

RECREATION NEWS

The Ninth Annual Halloween Haunted Walk will be held Friday, Oct. 25, and Saturday, Oct. 26, at Heritage Park from 7:30-9:30 p.m. We are looking for groups, organizations or individuals who would be interested in creating a station on the trail to provide the chilling effects of the spirit of Halloween. If you or your group/organization is interested, contact Cathy O'Rourke-Wendrick at 473-9570.

TROPICAL FISH

Learn the steps to having a successful home aquarium from City Naturalist Jon Dorok. He will discuss tank size, water conditions, varieties of fish, breeding, plants and food on Tuesday, Oct. 22 from 7-9 p.m. at the Heritage Park Day Camp Building. Preregistration fee of \$5 per person or \$15 per family is required.

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(THE WHOLE WORLD'S A STAGE. PLAY A ROLE.)

Each week the Recreation Division of the Farmington Hills Department of Special Services presents a synopsis of upcoming activities in this column. For further information regarding programs, contact the Recreation office at 473-9570. Preregistration is required for most activities. For matters regarding Hills City Council agenda items, call the news line at 473-9532.

HALLOWEEN HAUNTED WALK