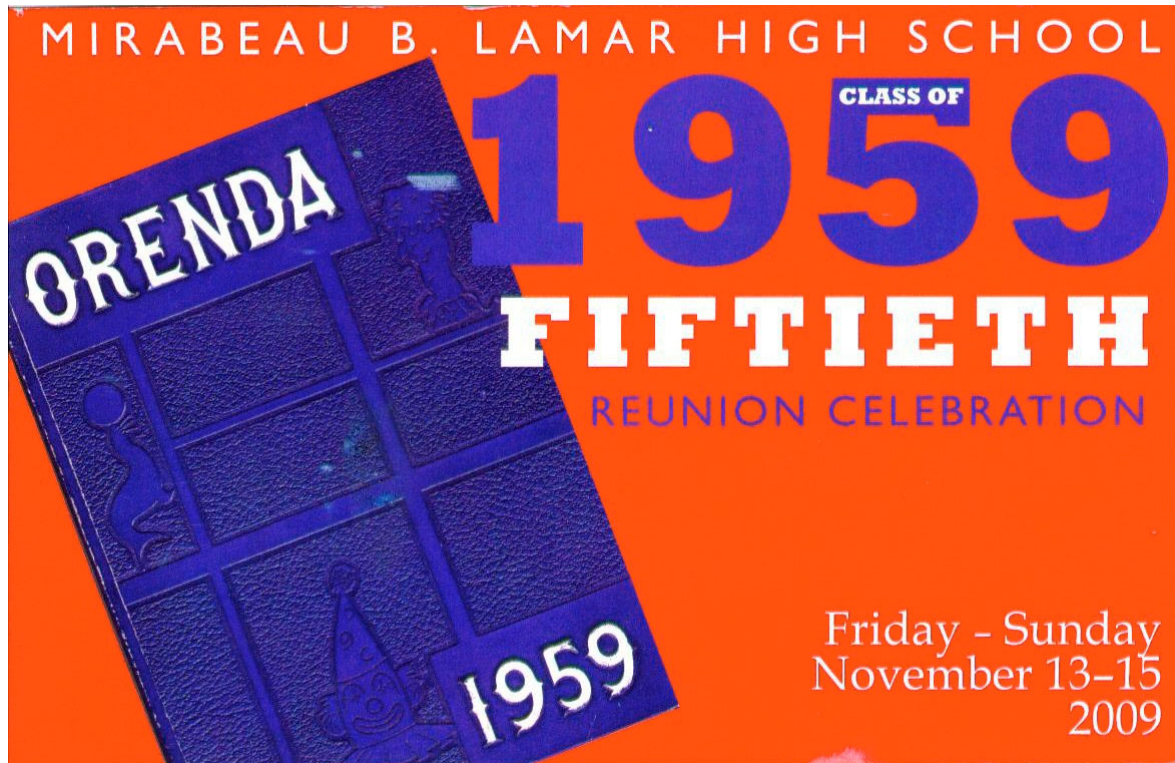


## Lamar Class of 1959 50th Reunion Report

Remember when your parents went off to their 50th High School Reunion? And how old they were, and how you couldn't believe all those old folks would want to get together? Well guess what - **the Lamar Class of 1959** recently held their 50th Reunion and there weren't any old folks there at all!



That might be a matter of perception, however the Class of 1959 had an enthusiastic and talented 50th Reunion Team to alter, or at least manage that perception. It started with **Larry Hitt** organizing a great team to assist him as Chair of the event, and it started with a little known event: **the 50th Reunion Cruise**.



50th Reunion Cruise: Nancy Keathley, Jeremy Wicker, Bonnie Nolan, Mike Blackledge, Larry Hitt in Canada

**Jeremy Wicker** headed up the Reunion Cruise, and chose a great venue: the Holland America Fall Colors Cruise, leaving New York City on 16 September, traveling up the Atlantic Coast, and finishing at Quebec City on 26 September. A far cry (and a long way) from Houston! Very few classmates participated in this event, but those who did were highly

enthusiastic - and warmed up for the main Reunion! A cruise journal, photos, and details on the ports of call are available on-line at [Cruise.Lamar59.org](http://Cruise.Lamar59.org)

And then on to the main event. They say one only is allowed one 50th High School reunion in this life, and this year was ours! We held our 50th reunion in November of 2009 for all members of the Class of 1959 whose lives were touched by our beloved school, faculty, and friends. We teased our classmates with pre-reunion publicity such as: "Ever wonder what happened to your classmates, teachers, Mr. Keding, the Kingston Trio ... This 50th Reunion event promises to be THE party of the half-century to catch up with old friends and of course to create new friendships. We thank you for helping to make this a spirited Big Red success!"

**Preparation:** We encouraged everyone's help in contacting as many people as possible, and established **Wendell Mendell** as the Search Coordinator for missing classmates. **Letitia Kinzbach Keller** took several incomplete databases and combined them into an efficient classmate tracking software program. **Bette Azadian Leonard's** Lunch Bunch, already meeting on a monthly basis, was one more way to help us get the word out. **Lou Parks Gorski** negotiated an attractive rate at the Hilton Garden Inn Hotel near the Galleria, which worked out well as we had classmates attending from Anchorage to Naples (well, Naples, Florida). Events were planned and coordinated by the Team including **Sukey Fenoglio, Bill Conner, Karen Tellepsen, Maria Burke Butler, and Travis Broesche.**

**Web:** Our class has had a modest web presence since our 40th Reunion, and for the 50th, Webmaster **Mike Blackledge** spruced it up and added an easy alias for classmates to locate: [Lamar59.org](http://Lamar59.org). **Jack Drummond** created an on-line Orenda Directory that featured every classmate in our 59 Orenda as well as several that originally had missed that opportunity. We created a contest of "name that classmate" from our panorama class photo taken out front back in November 1958.

The class also made use of a **Facebook page** to serve as an alternative and interactive networking homebase for the reunion with the event schedules, updates, changes, new contacts, old photos, and just plain sharing memories with each other and of course to encourage as many people as possible to attend our grand event. Classmates were encouraged to ask questions, post pictures, share memories, anything concerning their High School days. Information on the Reunion events was also posted at our Reunion web site: [50th.Lamar59.org](http://50th.Lamar59.org). The excitement built as we approached the big weekend in November, and finally it arrived.

**Friday Gathering:** The first event was a little overwhelming - over 200 people packed into **Goode's Armadillo Palace** on Friday the 13th (Nov 2009) for a great Bar/Bar-B-Que meal. The enthusiasm carried the evening. It got louder and better as the night went on and people were able to utilize their super name tags



which were created by **Lee Chatham Seureau** using scans of Orenda photos and VERY LARGE PRINT! If you want to view more photos of the events, they are posted at [Lamar59.org](http://Lamar59.org)





**Campus Tour:** One of the most enjoyed events of the Reunion Weekend was the Saturday where Jones Coney Island catered hotdogs and hamburgers on the lawn of the Lamar campus, and an informative and entertaining tour of our beloved High School itself was orchestrated and conducted by **Fran Callahan** of the Alumni Association. We learned so much of what has happened in these 50 years (yes, it is a long time) since we so innocently ate out lunches under the big trees out front. Since that time has occurred everything from integration to International Baccalaureate status to the establishment of the *Ruth Denny Stage* in the newly refurbished auditorium. Memorable!

**Dinner Dance:** We had perpetuated the joke about River Oaks Blvd being the only street in the world with a country club at both ends, and on Saturday night we visited the other end from our campus. Here occurred the premier event of the reunion, with over 300 attendees. In the foyer of the **River Oaks Country Club**, we posted a 4 foot by 8 foot reproduction of our class photo as provided by the Alumni Assoc., and allowed folks to identify themselves. We also used an on-going slide show featuring photos of classmates in the 50s as well as including pictures from the Friday night gathering and the campus tour earlier that day. The menu at the ROCC was extensive and special. Houston disc jockey **Rockin' Robin** played those great tunes from the 50s (see the **Memory Album** on-line to listen to a few of those selected) as classmates visited, danced, and were treated to a fun program in which Larry Hitt recognized each member of his Reunion Team, and **Lynn Zarr** and **Sherry Strater** took us on a stroll down Memory Lane

as they recounted the highlights (and a few lowlights) of our three years at Mirabeau B.



**Sunday Brunch:** The final event of the Reunion was a relaxing and casual Sunday morning brunch, which occurred from 10 am to noon at the **Brisa Cocina Mexicana** (corner of San Felipe and Sage). This event allowed classmates and guests to sit down and relax at tables and booths, enjoy an extensive Mexican food buffet, and re-live the events of the previous evening in a much more casual

atmosphere.

**Summary:** Counting both January and June graduates, we had 714 members of the Class of 1959, and almost 200 of them were registered for the 50th Reunion, along with their guests and spouses. To allow these friendships to continue to blossom, a **Reunion Directory** of contact information was printed and provided to all classmates - it included a sentimental summary written by **Jon Hugh Fleming**. The Reunion Team learned much from previous 50th Reunion classes at Lamar, and feels they have much to pass on to future teams - you are encouraged to visit our web site. The Reunion itself was surprisingly successful, if one is to determine success based on the reactions of the participants. Typical of the responses the Team received Post-Reunion was this: "My dear friends, thank you all so much for all of the work that you did for all of us. What a wonderful time we all had this weekend. It was perfect. I did a lot of laughing, hugging, and pulling up great memories from such a wonderful time in my life." And isn't that what it is all about?