

-Grand Haven High School 1967 Class Reunion-  
A Message of Memory

Given by Rev. Sherry G. Elliott  
Grand Haven Community Center August 12, 2017

Country singer, Kenney Chesney sings a song titled, "One of These Days." The chorus begins like this: *"One of these days we're gonna have to grow up, have real jobs and be adult, someday, just not today."*<sup>1</sup>

Here we are in this lovely venue, gathered together to celebrate fifty years. Somewhere from high school to now, we passed that certain someday and, like it or not, we are in large part ready to retire, retired, getting ready to retire or thinking about it...we've had the real jobs, and we're adults and, hmm, we are mostly grown up.

Looking back on those high school years we didn't realize we were living on the cusp of big changes -- music, fashion, peace, war, sex, independence, diversity, interdependence. These were life changes we moved through while trying to sort out the road map to make sense of our young lives.

Here in Grand Haven, we leaned on family, church, school, friends, sports, and the arts. That is basically all we had. All those things shaped our lives...mostly making us what we are today.

Looking back now makes me smile, sometimes cringe, sometimes frown, and sometimes laugh out loud. You have them to those memories that cross your mind at the most unlikely times. Sometimes it's a flash and sometimes we linger over that memory thankful for the day it was made.

Miss Wilkerson was one of the Advance Speech teachers... One day our class was so testy she stomped out of the room, nearly in tears. Another day we had been given an assignment to tell a life experience. Dave Leitner told the tale of bumper sliding/sledding. While going home from school, Dave and some friends were catching onto some rear bumpers for quick rides. (You know what I am talking about.) When he released the bumper his mitten stuck to it. When he got home he told his mother he had lost the mitten sometime between the morning and coming in. Later that night busy with his homework, he heard a knock at the door. His mother answered it and there was a gentleman holding Dave's mitten. Clearly written inside the cuff of the mitten in his mother's neat handwriting was Dave's name and address.

And then there was Yvonne Crammer. She gave a speech about the Beatles, about how much she loved them. What made this a memorable speech was how this petite, pretty, young woman stood up in front of the class and blushed. I'm sure it started on her toes and went all the way up to the top of her head, creeping up in a smooth flow of pink blush. I had never seen such a blush and I remember it as absolutely charming.

During one of the political campaigns for class president, it was rumored there was a discrepancy in the class treasury funds. One of the most meaningful bits of advice I have received in my life came out of that campaign. Ken Creeson strategically posted a banner outside the cafeteria which read "He who throws mud, loses ground."

Adam Gursoy and his band introduced us to the new sound of rock and roll. We were moving on with rock and roll, t-shirts, blue jeans, restless attitudes. We wished we were older. We wished we were pirates. We wished we were anywhere but here...but, the truth is, *we were mostly young*.<sup>2</sup>

All of it, all those high school years, are wrapped up in football games, proms, corsages, homecomings, first kisses, college applications, after school jobs, borrowing dad's car, falling in love. Was it easy being young? What it hard being young? It was your life. It was my life. It was an early season of our lives. One we would not repeat. We didn't know it then but these were feelings and experiences we would remember for a time but life would keep moving us forward.

Here we are fifty years later. At this celebration, I think there are about 140 people. Using my simple math skills, I multiplied 140 people by 50 years. We have 7,000 years of memories between us. And, we are spending a few amazing hours to catch up and share one another's lives. And, there is this: There are friends we knew fifty years ago, friends we loved who are not here. Some because of distance, health or even the keen sense of rejection felt in high school. Others are not here because they have died. How they died does not matter as much as too soon they were gone.

I would like for us to be silent in our hearts and minds for a little bit. Close your eyes for a moment. Remember when we were young, the friendships we shared – wishing we were older – together... (reading the first names) ...

Sandra, Gary, Pamela, Susan, Raymond, Norma, Kristine, Marilyn, John, Greg, Nancy, David, Steven, Ron, James, Kay, Thomas, Marianne, David, Joy, Russ, Steve, Janice, Shannon, Michael, Roger, Vicki Lynn, Lee, Dorothy, Richard, Linda, Barbara, Terry, Daniel, Craig, Evelyn, Robert, Barbara, Mark, Diane, Paula, Janice, Jalaine, Kathy, Judi, Dan, James

This is the blessing I leave with you. Listen closely, I am speaking of the God you know –

“May the God of your knowing bless you and keep you. May this Spirit shine upon you and give grace to you. May the God of abundance give you grace not to sell yourselves short; give you courage to risk something big for something good; give you memories to claim the world is now too dangerous for anything but truth, and too small for anything but love. May the God who knows you take your mind and think through you, take your lips and speak through them, take your hands and work through them, take your hearts and set them on fire.” Peace.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Songwriters: MURPHY

“Just Not Today” lyrics © CAROL VINCENT & ASSOC LLC

<sup>2</sup> Phrase taken from song “Young” written by Naoise Sheridan, Steve McEwan and Craig Wiseman, as sung by Kenney Chesney.

<sup>3</sup> Adapted from a benediction written by Reverend William Sloane Coffin. He served as Chaplain at Yale, and for years was the Senior Minister at Riverside Church in New York City.