

PHS Class of '66 Graduates Gather Monthly to Reminisce



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As I entered Lamplighters in Palatine on a cold Wednesday afternoon, laughter and chattering immediately greeted me. Turning the corner, I saw a table of 11 friends, with one seat left open. At this spot – the one reserved for me, a 2015 Palatine High School graduate – was a name tag. It featured this group’s slogan, “Forever Friends,” with a Pirate Pete decal and a yearbook from Palatine High School, which these friends had graduated from nearly 60 years earlier.

As I took my seat, I began to flip through pages of memories and became engulfed in stories from this group of Pirates.

This lunch meeting was not just a once-off event, but a monthly gathering for classmates started up more than two years ago between friends Lou Grupe, Randy Pinchot, Bob Kraft, and Ray Syverson. After some time, the group of four realized other members from their graduating class also wanted to share in the memories. Forever Friends now has a regular group of 12 Palatine High School graduates who meet for a meal and a motto of pure fun.



“We keep out politics and medical issues, unless someone has a good referral for a doctor,” Lou Grupe said, laughing. “These meetups always have a positive outlook and we learn something new every time. A few of us even found out we had dated the same classmate”. From architects to toolmakers, the friends come from different backgrounds but have one thing in common: Palatine High School pride. Some have stayed local, living in Palatine for more than 76 years, while others travel 50 minutes one-way or more for these lunches. The group’s freshman class was the last to attend High School District 211’s “Fremd Palatine” campus that was eventually split between Conant and Palatine High School campuses after sophomore year.

“Our football team was undefeated and unscored-upon in conference our senior year”, mentioned Doug Fulford.

He still referees in District 211 now for volleyball, basketball and baseball.



The Forever Friends choose different places throughout the Palatine area for their monthly lunches, referring to many spots as their “old haunts.” “

Every place we go, we have a new story. I used to sell yearbooks during my lunches. This group reminds me of those times,” said Larry Marchel. Many group members had children that attended Palatine High School, and the unofficial group caretaker, Mike Skinner has a granddaughter who will be a Palatine freshman next year.

The legacy of Palatine graduates dates back to 1938 for these classmates, with Bob’s parents being a part of the graduating classes of ’38 and ’41. As I wrapped up my time with my new friends, I was reminded of the school’s mantra:

“Once a Pirate, Always a Pirate.”