

Reunion Planning

Based on the 50th for the Class of '66

(MMonth = Month Likely to be Chosen for Reunion; DDay = Actual Date Settled On)

Note that this was written after-the-fact, based on our best reconstruction of what we actually did. Thus much of it is kind of approximate.

MMonth – 12 months

Form / Self-organize a committee of about 5-8 people – enough to divide the labor, not so large it's overly difficult to set up meetings.

Brainstorm a list of potential venues – solicit ideas from other classes, the reunions of colleagues, spouses, etc. Consider what's most important – food, music, convenience, cost. The capacity to have a live band and dance floor also come into play. We chose to focus first on food thus chose a restaurant (Pinstripes) with meeting capacity for about 100-120 rather something like a Am. Legion hall where the cost might lower but the food less good. We went as a group to sample the food one evening for dinner. And we decided to go with pre-recorded music pulled together by a couple committee members rather than a live band or DJ.

MMonth -10 months

Collect any materials (especially contact information) from prior reunions, including a listing of graduates.

Get contact info from the Foundation office.

Determine who will be the data keeper. We used an Excel spreadsheet (for compatibility across Windows and Mac machines) and an Access database as well (for convenience in preparing reports).

Visit / sample a small number of venues.

MMonth – 9 months

Consolidate existing contact info. Determine who's missing. We used PeopleFinder.com with a modestly-priced one- or two-month subscription. Two people volunteered to do queries based on approximate age and location then picked out the likely targets.

Set up a generic email (e.g., Gmail) account to use as the source / receiver of reunion related email. Several people should have access to and responsibility for monitoring this account. Send out postcards and/or emails as appropriate to announce 'plans in progress' and solicit contact information from the recipients for other alums they might be in contact with.

You might want to set up a bank account to handle checks received and payments needed. Determine who will handle the account – sign the checks, make the deposits, etc. We used Wings Credit Union since one of the committee members already had a relationship with them. They allowed us to set up a ‘club’ account. No fees but also no checks – we could get one free cashier’s check a day.

Determine whose house will serve as ‘the reunion office’ – name, phone number, and address to be used on outgoing communications.

Set up social media communications. We used a Facebook page. Someone monitored that for questions and updated it every few weeks with a new photo from the yearbook or a Southerner or a home-coming button. The outbound communications at this point only mentioned a price range, not a firm price.

MMonth – 8 months

Decide on a venue and make contractual arrangements, with final numbers and menus, etc. deferred to a couple weeks before the event. This establishes the actual dinner cost per capita and the actual DDay. This also accounts for 90% of the outlay for expenses if you go with your own music.

Find a vendor to prepare name badges with photos from the yearbook if you want them. WE used Lightning Bug LLC (928-369-6348).

MMonth – 6 months

Create a scheme to handle registration. We used a Word doc converted to a PDF form and positioned in a convenient location on the internet. (One of us had his own website and we just lodged it there.) We also solicited information for a ‘memories/reflections’ booklet – same deal. For people for whom we had only postal addressed we had a mailing party to put address label on the envelopes and insert the registration and ‘memories’ forms. For those for whom we had email addresses we sent them links to the forms online. They could download them complete them and send them back email’ or they could print them and fill them in by hand and send them back by postal mail. We used a deadline of about DDay – 2 months. Probably 60% or the registrations came in by then, and they trickled in at maybe 2-5 per week right up to DDay.

MMonth – 5 months

We were using music from our own collections. We decided to have some background music during a social hour, leave time for a short program (about 35 minutes), then several hours of more danceable music. We had our ‘music subcommittee’ (two people) select the music from our high school years with a couple year cushion on each side. We also decided to create copies of the music on CDs for those attending to distribute along with the collected ‘memories.’

MMonth – 4 Months

Send out reminders that the registration deadline is approaching. We used postcard stock and printed these ourselves.

Determine what you will do in terms of decorating the venue. Determine how to reproduce the 'memories' booklet – have it printed / bound at some place like Office Depot or do it yourself. We opted for do it yourself – we had a GBC CombBind device left from the last reunion.

MMonth – 1 Month

The committee met again to ensure that all the bases were covered, check on how close we were to getting the minimum we needed for the restaurant. We had met perhaps 4-5 times already to divide up the labor of tracking people down, making phone calls, selecting the music, typing up the 'memories', keeping the data current.

We suggest talking to the South High Foundation office about getting someone from the Foundation to make a 5-minute presentation on the Foundation's work if you have are having some sort of program anyway.

DDay – 1 Week

We had to confirm with the restaurant our choices for appetizers, entrees, etc. (Pinstripes serves family style – no one got to order a specific meal and thus we did not have to track who ordered what.) We also confirmed their modest decorations, the presence of a microphone, something to hook an iPod up to for the music, a registration table outside the dining area ...

We transferred control of the 'memories' document to someone else for final formatting. We opted to include a few random 1966 facts at the bottom of each page, as well. We printed the necessary number of copies (1 per alum), then did the binding ourselves. We also burned copies of the CD (one per attendee). Another committee member had the idea to create a jewel case cover then take a photo of it. We had Costco develop as many prints as we had need of.

Event Day

The committee arrived about an hour before the announced start time to do a final check and get everything ready. Note that a couple attendees were already there – coming from bit of a distance they did not want to chance being late.