

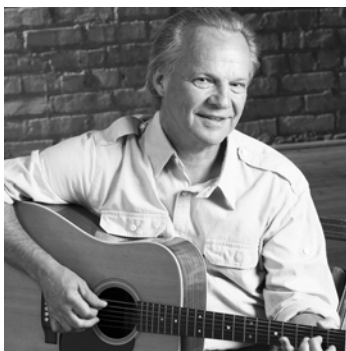


Hard to imagine

When I was in high school, it was impossible to imagine the scene I was part of recently. I attended a meeting of the planning committee for the 50th anniversary of our high school graduation, which our class of 1961 will celebrate in our 49th year since receiving diplomas. We're doing it this year rather than next because of this summer's All-'60s reunion in my hometown of Valley City, N. Dak. And, of course, as we age, we ask ourselves if there will be as many of us around a year from now. Sadly, as best we know, we've already lost twenty from our class of ninety.

So there we were, seven of us gathered 'round a dining room table at our chairperson's house, discussing the menu for the buffet (sounds good!) and how registrations are coming (not so good, yet). The discussion drifted to who had passed away and "of what?" We noted the classmates we had seen recently who were using walkers or who are in wheelchairs and how any one of us could be next. We even discussed the latest innovations in hearing aids, as more than one committee member popped theirs out. "Digital" is all the rage!

That was the scene I couldn't have imagined a half-century ago. We come from a different era. A high school buddy of mine, Jim Lang, now of Bismarck, sent me an essay by an anonymous author, entitled "Why You Should Attend Your High School Reunion." It reminded me that



Bobby Vee 2010

photo courtesy BobbyVee.com

"in our day, cigarette smoking was fashionable, grass was mowed, Coke was a cold drink, pot was something you cooked in, rock music was a grandma's lullaby and aids were the helpers in the principal's office. Time sharing meant togetherness, not computers or condominiums. A 'chip' was a piece of wood, hardware

meant hardware, and software wasn't even a word. Memory was something you lost with age, a CD was a bank account and if you had a 3 1/2 inch floppy, you hoped nobody found out."

There is someone from our era who's still going strong and looks and sounds as good today as he did on February 3, 1959, the night he zoomed onto the national stage. I'm talking about Fargo's own Robert Thomas Velline, known worldwide as Bobby Vee. He and his Shadows Band, consisting of Dick Dunkirk, Bob Korum

and brother Bill Velline, were asked to perform at the Moorhead Armory when the Beechcraft Bonanza aircraft carrying Buddy Holly, Richie Valens, and J.D. Richardson, a.k.a, the "Big Bopper," crashed during its flight from Clear Lake, Iowa, to Fargo's Hector Airport.

Bobby Vee and his current band will be performing on Saturday night, July 10th, at the Eagles Club in Valley City, as part of that community's All-'60s celebration. He still performs in Europe, Australia and throughout the Midwest. Besides being a legendary entertainer, Vee is also a 1961 graduate of Fargo Central High School—he's "one of us" in age and geography. When Bobby visited with me recently, via telephone from his home in Collegeville, Minn., he was as down-to-earth and easy-to-talk-to as ever. The entire 16-minute interview is available at www.Hiliners61.blogspot.com. Scroll down until you see the Bobby Vee posting and a link to an mp3 audio file of the interview.

I asked him why he shortened his name to *Vee*; after all, *Velline* isn't a bad stage name. In fact, it sounds almost "American Bandstand Philadelphia Italian." He explained that the promoter of the armory event strongly suggested it. Bobby Vee also talks about the key role singer/songwriter Carole King played in his career. And, despite his great and longtime success in rock-n-roll, he and his spouse, the former Karen Bergan of Detroit Lakes, will celebrate 47 years of marriage this year. Congratulations to Bobby and Karen! —LG

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