



September 2023

Parsons College News

Volume 13 No. 5

September 2023

This is the last issue of the PC News before the October Reunion, so I am posting the weekend schedule here so you can make final plans.

Schedule for the Weekend

Please note: Most events are at the Fairfield Arts and Convention Center, 200 N Main Street, Fairfield, IA 52556.

Friday, October 6, 2023

- Noon-3:00pm Registration Fairfield Arts & Convention Center
Memory book distribution
- 4:00-5:00pm Displays & Book Signing: My Four Years at Parsons College:
The Life and Times of Johnny Blackstock PC'64.
The Piera (PC yearbooks) will be available (no cost but donations are accepted)
- 5:00-6:00pm Social Hour
- 6:00pm Reception
- 7:00pm Ice breakers
- 7:30pm Grand premier of the film "Parsons" Parsons History & Documentary
(to be shown in the Stephen Sondheim Theater of the Performing Arts).
- 9:00pm Questions & Answers

Saturday October 7, 2023

- 9:00am Registration Fairfield Arts and Convention Center
- 10:00am Convocation: Reverend Joseph Phipps, Pastor, Fairfield Presbyterian
- 10:15am Welcome to Fairfield-Connie Boyer, Mayor of Fairfield, IA
- 10:20am Tom Brooks from MIU
- 10:30am Barhydt Organ Recital-Dee Sandquist
- 10:40am Welcome: Nancy Wirtanen, PCAA President
- 10:50am Parsons College Alma Mater (words will be in your packet)
- 11:30am Brunch: Fairfield Arts and Convention Center
- 1:00pm Tour: Carnegie Historical Museum
- 3:30pm Forum: athletics, faculty, alumni, fraternities, sororities,
and clubs.
- 5:00-6:00pm Social hour Fairfield Arts and Convention Center
- 6:00pm Dinner
- 7:30pm Film: "Parsons College" - Fairfield Arts and Convention
Center
- 9:00pm Questions and Answers

Sunday October 8, 2023-Free Time- time for you to meet up with friends,
wander and rediscover Fairfield.



Parsons College
Golden Jubilee Reunion
October 6-8, 2023

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Parsons College Alumni Board

PCAA Board Interview

Each month I interview a PCAA Board member, this month I interviewed Robert Fox!



Q: What years did you attend Parsons?

A: I attended Parsons 65-66 and served on staff 66-72

Q: What were 3 things that you loved about Parsons?

A: 1. The emphasis on the liberal arts.
2. It's commitment to student success before it became an industry buzz word.
3. The Old South Room where a freshman coed taught me to eat pickled herring and smoked oysters, and the finer points of refined dining as Dr. Roberts had intended.

Q: Where did you live while you were at Parsons?

A: I served as a Resident Counselor in Howard Dorm, the Quads, and McArthur.

Q: What is your hometown (where you lived when you came to Parsons)?

A: Indianapolis. However, I had lived on Guam, Mariana Islands, Okinawa, Japan, and the Federal Republic of Germany before that.

Q: What career(s) did you have after graduation?

A: I joined the Dean of Students staff after completing the Summer '66 trimester and co-worked there in several positions until 1972.

I left Parsons for Minneapolis, to become Dean of Students at Metropolitan College (3,500 students). In 1977 I assumed the position Dean of Student Services position at Laney College (10,000 students). I left Laney College in 1980 to become Dean of Students at Fresno City College (16,000 students) and retired in 2009.

After two years of retirement, I was asked to return to the State Center Community College District and served as the Acting Associate Vice Chancellor of Educational & Student Services (35,000 students).

I served as a member of the National Guard in Iowa and California. I retired in 1994 with the rank of Major (O3) while serving as Executive Officer of a Transportation Battalion.

Q: Where do you live now?

A: Sandy, my wife, and I live in Clovis, CA, in the fertile San Joaquin Valley with our five adult children and eight grandchildren, who range in age from three months to 21 years of age.

Q: Why did you decide to join the Board?

A: I have been convinced of the importance of alumni organizations to the success of educational institutions from the beginning of my career in higher education. I believe that a strong alumni organization is of value to college students and staff members, especially those that close/merge.



Continues on page 3

Robert Fox continued from page 2

Q: What other memories or thoughts do you have about Parsons?

A: I was impressed with the intelligence and creativity of Parsons College students while I was a student and a staff member. There is one incident that continues to sustain my appreciation of the quality of my Parsons College experience and the quality of Parsons students and will continue to remind me of my time at Parsons. It occurred during the 1966 Commencement Ceremony, during which Congressman Gerald Ford was the main speaker and honorary doctorate recipient. After the Congressman's speech Dr. Roberts felt compelled to convince the audience that it had heard an "outstanding foreign policy speech." Afterwards the Senior Orator delivered a world-class inspirational and informative address. As I recall, she received a standing ovation. Georgia Houseman's performance that day continues to serve as the quintessential event of my time at Parsons.

Introducing Ken Rice PC'65 the newest alumni Board Member

Born: Moran, Indiana in 1941

Started at Parsons: 1961

Graduated: 1965



What Ken did at Parsons: Ken played four years on the Wildcat Basketball Team; taught life guarding classes; was a member of Theta Sigma Chi Fraternity; and a member of the Letterman's Club.

Lived: in Howard Dorm and off-campus.

How Ken came to Parsons: Ken was about two weeks away from joining the Air Force when Fred Wilt, an FBI agent, saw him playing in a Regional Basketball game. Fred sent Ken a letter that changed his life. He encouraged him to go to college and to visit Parsons College, which Ken did. The rest is history.



Parsons Merger: Ken married Marti Parkins PC'64 60 years ago. More on that in another issue.

What Ken has been doing since Parsons: He and his wife worked on a Navajo Indian Reservation in Arizona for six years; they have been in Arizona for forty eight years. Ken is retired from the insurance business.

Welcome to the Board Ken!

Did you know...



... there is a Parsons Alumni Hall in Fairfield? It is located in the Stephen Sondheim Center for the Performing Arts lobby located within the Fairfield Arts & Convention Center (FA&CC). The spirit lives on with our alumni the Parsons College Wall of Honor is located here and showcases one hundred alumni honored. This is a focal point of Parsons Alumni Hall.

All activities to be held at the Fairfield Arts & Convention Center.

Parsons Mergers

Butch Downey and Betty Blough Downey

The Downey's are from Fairfield; they met when we were twelve years old while riding horseback.



They dated off and on during their school years. Butch (now Chuck) went to Parsons on a full football scholarship. Betty went to University of Iowa her first year, then transferred to Parsons.

Betty was an Alpha Gamma Delta and active in her sorority, and the summer musicals. Butch was a Sigma Phi Epsilon and played football for Parsons.

Butch and Betty married in 1965, and have three daughters, eleven grandchildren and six great grandchildren. They currently live in the Minneapolis area and feel fortunate to have their family living close by.



Richard (Dick) Dawson PC '64 and Gail Innis Dawson PC '65

I was a member of Alpha Chi Rho and Gail was a Delta Zeta. Our romance started with two winks and has lasted a life time!

We were married in Barhydt Chapel on July 3, 1965 with Dr. James Robertson, Dean of the Chapel officiating. We recently celebrated 58 years of marriage and along the way raised three wonderful kids, who have blessed us with seven grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

During the Vietnam War, I was a Naval Officer and just recently was awarded the Bronze Star with Valor, some 53 years later, for service as the Commanding Officer of Patrol Craft Fast (PCF), better known as a "Swift Boat".

After my military service, I spent a career in marketing with the oil industry. Gail taught piano lessons and later became a wedding florist.

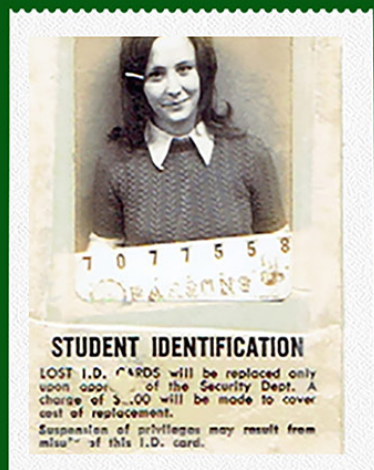
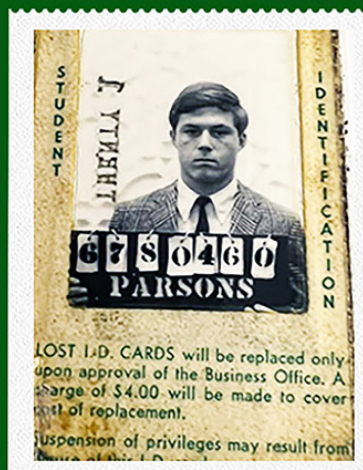
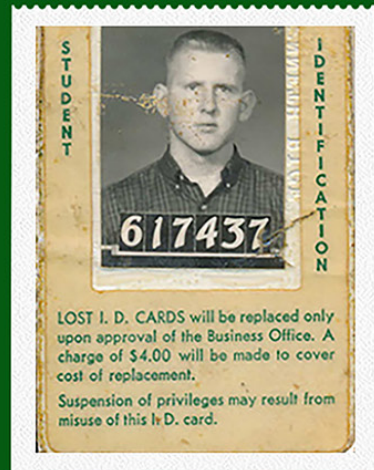
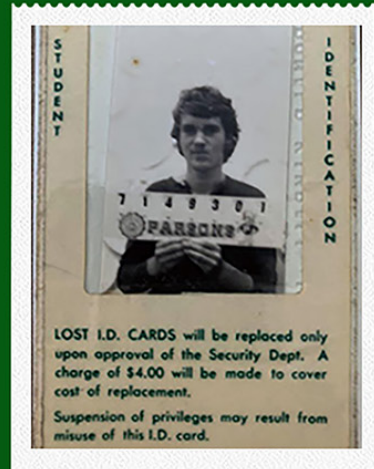
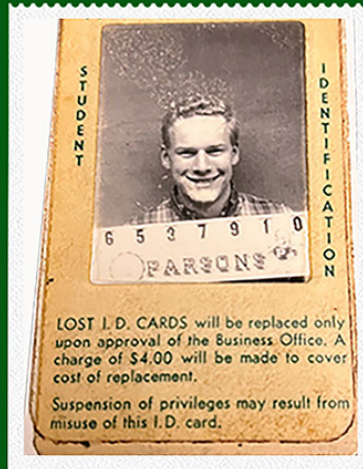
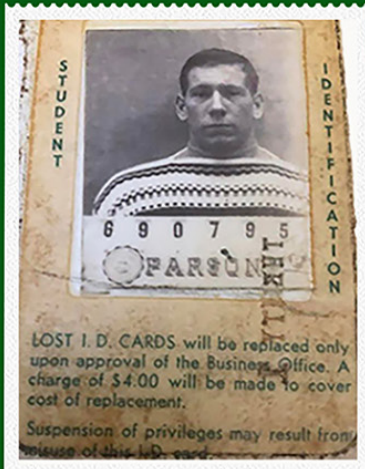


Once the kids were out on their own, we decided it was time for some new adventures. So we sold our house, cars, and most of our worldly possessions and bought a sailboat in the Caribbean. I became an American Sailing Association Instructor and Gail became the Master Chef aboard, and throughout the years, we hosted several hundred students aboard our yacht, teaching them how to sail and sharing sailing as a lifestyle with them.

Truly the Lord has blessed us richly and the years spent at Parsons College hold found memories of how HE led us both to our own "P C Merger."



Do you have your Parsons ID?



Top L to R: Andy Balash PC'71, George Huegerich PC'69, Don Kimball PC'71
 Middle L to R: Judith Partelow PC'68, Carol Pressik PC'68, Ken Rice PC'65
 Bottom: L to R: Pam Roberts Skinner PC'70, Jim Soukup PC'71, Nancy Wirtanen PC'73

There will always be a Parsons College'!!!!

By John Blackstock PC'64

My Four Years at Parsons College' chronicles my 12 trimesters during the college's boom years from September, 1960 to August, 1964.

The book features my stories, recollections, experiences, profiles of some of the interesting people I met at Parsons and Fairfield and more.

Should you elect to read the book, I'm humbled and honored. A valiant effort was made throughout the 207 pages and 130 photos to paint a picture of the times, not only at Parsons and Fairfield, but around the world.

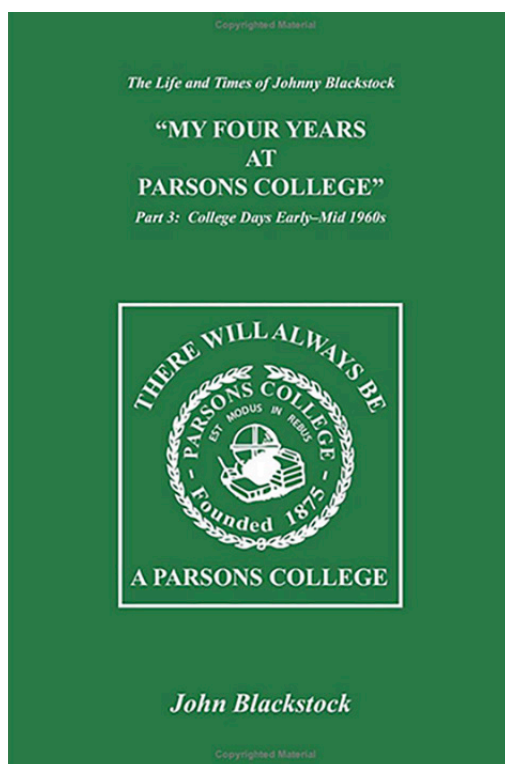
If I was successful at the keyboard, and you attended Parsons, a number of those stories will bring back great memories. If you did not attend Parsons, after reading the book, perhaps you'll wish you had.

We were not a bunch of rich kids looking to buy an education. Dr Roberts' Plan opened the door to marginal students and late bloomers. He offered a top-notch education taught by the best and highest paid educators in the country.

Had he stayed within his financial budgets... had not let his ego run wild ... and kept his mouth shut, it's quite probable Parsons College would be nearing 150 years of existence today.

If you went to Parsons for any length of time, we're betting you were successful and had a prosperous career.

The Parsons student/alumni 'Wall of Honor' recognizes 100 of those success stories. I've often said, 'The Wall', represents a mere sampling of the many successful students who passed through Parsons. You could wallpaper the city of Fairfield with the names and stories of those who went on to do well.



Dave Neff's comment:

"We alumni should be eternally grateful to John for his vision and follow-through on his projects. The experiences, in many cases, 'capture the moment(s)' that so many of us shared as we walked the Parsons campus. As you go through the book, you'll find yourself looking at similar situations. They'll jog your mind and you will relate to many of those memorable situations which affected your life during your days at Parsons. I truly hope you enjoy the book as much as I did!!"

NOTE: 'My Four Years at Parsons College' will be available at the October reunion and a book signing has been scheduled. Copies are also available by contacting John Blackstock at: johnbla42@gmail.com. A portion of the proceeds will be directed to PCAA activities...

PC News Editor's Note: John has been a huge advocate of Parsons, working to make the Wall of Honor a reality, John published the e-news for many, many years and set a very high standard. John is a member of the PCAA Board.

Alumni Write

Charles Fleischer PC'65 shares his fondest memories of Parsons

The People: Getting to know people from all over the United States and learning about their local culture. I became very acquainted with New York City and Long Island, as well as Boston and Detroit. I grew up in Chicago. Sometimes I believe that the Big City crowd overwhelmed the people of Fairfield. I thank them for tolerating us.



The Events: the assassination of Kennedy: I was walking to my 1pm Chemistry class when I heard a comment that the President had been shot. In class, a student asked if he could keep the radio on very low to hear the President's status. About 1:20pm, he announced that the President was dead. Dr. Dimeister dismissed the class.

The Activities:

Homecomings: Homecoming was always much fun. Many groups built beautiful floats on hay wagons and the focus was on the football game.

An extremely rich Summer Theater Program

Swimming in the Des Moines River at Keosauqua State Park. Nice small beach and beautiful water.

Keg parties in the corn fields.

Riding motorcycles all around southern Iowa.

I am so thankful that I attended Parsons College between 1961 and graduation in 1966. It provided me with a fabulous and rock-solid foundation for a wonderful life. My professors gave me the tools to interrelate different disciplines and develop a greater understanding of the world rather than just focusing my view through only one subject area.



Andy Ballash PC'71 sent this photo of the last Parsons football team (1970) these are the seniors who played on that team. The numbers next to their name are their jersey number.

Front Row/Left to Right: Frank Repass (86), Albert Grayson (20), Tom Salisbury (85), Terry LaFore (73), Andy Ballash (60), Alan Shofner (67), Bob Pacetti (71), Sid Bradley (24).

Back Row/Left to Right: Eric Duffield (25), John Lanier (44), Don VanAmoragan (74), Paul Bellito (73), Larry Parker (40), Meredith Campbell, Bill Moore (50), John Curko (80), John Patrick (42), unknown (70).

The last years ...

As we approach the Jubilee Reunion commemorating 50 years since the closing of Parsons College, the PC News would be remiss in not reflecting on those days. Not many of us were there for the last years or days and can only imagine that time. It was hard to find articles about the closing so this is a compilation of information available online.

As I researched the final years, I was saddened by our dear school's demise. And when I saw the photo to the right, I took my breath away, unable to put my feelings into words.

The end was insight: The closing took a couple years to happen, but the loss of accreditation, in hindsight, caused irreparable damage to the school and it was only a matter of time.

Why? In 1966 Parsons had more than 5,000 students. It grew rapidly and it had become one of the largest institutions in Iowa. But Parsons borrowed many millions of dollars to build buildings across fields that had once grown corn.

By 1967, Dr. Roberts had exhausted much of Parsons credit in the financial and educational communities. When Roberts left Parsons in 1967, the college had a \$14 million in debt from building costs and salaries. The college was running on a deficit of almost \$100,000 a month.

The bankruptcy: The college trustees asked for protection from the Federal Court under Chapter 11 of the Bankruptcy Act. However in his order, the Federal bankruptcy Judge, Richard Stageman, admitted even though the affection and esteem in which Iowans held, the college was "irretrievably insolvent," and ordered Parsons to post a \$250,000 cash bond against the demands of its creditors.

Students, professors and administrators at first rallied to raise the money to meet the bond.

The administrators and trustees realized that the publicity of the bankruptcy proceedings, Stageman's chilling judgment, the poor financial condition of the college and the small projected fall enrollment all pointed to one conclusion -- close it now.

Acting president Everett Hadley went before a student convocation on the last day of school and told stunned, sobbing students that the college was closing immediately because of "insurmountable odds."

Students sat around talking on the steps of the administration building several days after the college closed. "I loved Parsons, even if I was from this town," one student said. "We had the top professors from all the top schools. We had the greats here..."

Last thoughts...

... There will Always be a Parsons! Why? Because of those alumni who worked hard to keep our legacy alive! To those who raised money (\$250,000) for Parsons College Alumni Hall located in the Fairfield Arts and Convention Center and who memorialized the best of the best of Parsons. Thank you Dave Neff PC'69, John Blackstock PC'64, John Braidwood PC'68 for that, it was a huge undertaking and you were successful in preserving the memory of Parsons. To Nancy Schwartz Wirtanen PC '73 for starting the alumni association. Thank you to all those who have served on the Alumni Association Board over the years and to all those who did and continue to keep the legacy of Parsons alive.

There will always be a Parsons!



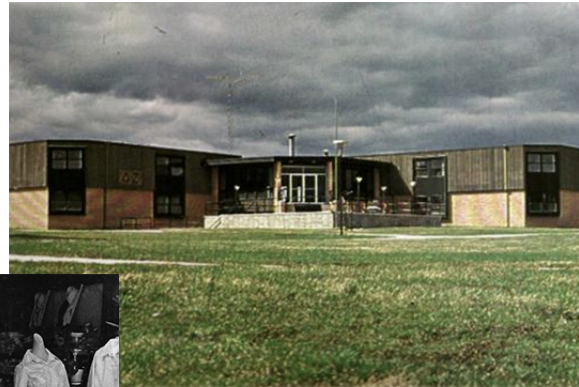
The last day of classes the flag was flown at half-staff

In Memoriam

Rich Harvey PC'63
Richard "Hutch" Hutchinson PC'61-65

July 27, 2023
August 12, 2023

Phi Sigma Epsilon



We need your submissions for future issues of the PC News!

Thank you for submitting articles, photos, and information!! **You** make the news, so keep the information coming. Please email all submissions to [Pam Roberts Skinner PC'70, PC News Editor](mailto:Pam.Roberts.Skinner@parsonscollege.edu).

Purpose of the Parsons Alumni Association

The object of this association shall be to maintain a connection of Friendship among the alumni of Parsons College by providing a network of communication among Parsons College alumni and to foster a spirit of unity among its members.

The objects for which the corporation is formed are: To promote and further the welfare and interest of the members of this Corporation; to stimulate and to broaden thought and to crystallize sentiment; to bring together intellectual life and the points of view of the members; to encourage, promote, and support an Alumni Association designed to coordinate communication and stimulate interest in reunion affairs; in which they may hold meetings.

The board was established in 2007.



Parsons College Alumni Association Board

Nancy Wirtanen PC'74, President
Dave Neff PC'69, Treasurer
John Blackstock PC'64
Bill Burger PC'60
Robert Fox PC'66
Ray Ham PC'73
Larry Litwin PC'66
Ed Longanecker PC'68
George Reed PC'61
Ken Rice PC'65
Pamela Roberts Skinner PC'70, PC News

Publication Info

The Parsons College News is published four times a year. To submit articles please email: [Pamela Roberts Skinner PC'70, Editor](mailto:Pamela.Roberts.Skinner@parsonscollege.edu)

Deadline for the November issue is October 10th



Parsons College News Submission



Parsons College Website