October 13, 2011

Classmates:

As Pogo used to say, “Friday the Thirteenth falls on Thursday” this month. Following an extremely hot and dry summer here, the pattern in the fall has continued; but the past couple of weeks have been gorgeous…warm days (mid-80 highs) and cool nights. Now the streets and road sides are beginning to fill with falling leaves. I have been able to get back to Wabash, and the campus has been breathtaking.

Sorry to report the death of classmate, Gordon Smith, on March 22, 2010, at age 76. Gordon and I were also classmates at the I.U. School of Law. While a Wabash student, he was a member of Phi Gamma Delta. He was a successful lawyer in Indianapolis for over 50 years, and active in many community affairs, specially the Boy Scouts. Gordon was survived by son, Gordon, and daughter Linda, and ten grandchildren. Memorials can be made to Boy Scouts of America, Crossroads of America Council, 1900 N. Meridian St., Indianapolis, IN, 46202.

Also sorry to report more sad news: the death of Vic Powell at the age of 91. Vic is the last surviving member of the faculty and staff of our mid-50’s days. He was an honorary member of our class and served the College most of his adult life, as a teacher of speech from 1947-1989, and also served as Chair of the department, as well as Dean, Executive Vice President, and Acting President of the College. He retired about 20 years ago. Throughout his life, Vic was very active in his church and in the Crawfordsville and Montgomery County communities. A memorial service is planned for Sunday, 2:00 p.m., October 16, at the College Chapel. He is survived by his wife of 64 years, Marion, and two daughters, Carol Lombardi and Karen McCarthy. Condolences can be sent to Mrs. Powell at 1401 W. Market St., Crawfordsville, 47933, and memorials can be made to the Vic and Marion Powell Scholarship Fund at the College.

Like most of you, I have many memories of Vic…among the fondest are the many times I sat and listened to he and other faculty members, like Jack Charles and
Bob Harvey, sit around a table at the Scarlet Inn, especially on the second floor of South Hall, expounding on about everything imaginable. He had a booming voice that demanded attention, and one of the greatest laughs.

Jim Amidon, the Director of Public Affairs at the College wrote an editorial that appeared in the Crawfordsville daily newspaper with a theme that pointed out how Wabash is really about “relationships”…especially relationships between students and faculty. He pointed out that this is the “core” of our Wabash education, and that the College was about “shaping young men and helping them to become better than they ever imagined they could be”. Mr. Amidon pointed out that the wise student at Wabash “took professors, not courses”…that “the subject matter (of a course) was less important than the teachers who provide the instruction, and who develop in students critical thinking skills and the ability to process complex ideas and communicate them effectively.”

As I grew up following our graduation in 1955, I began to realize how true this observation…men like Crawford Polley, Paul Mielke, Ed Haenisch, Ted Bedrick, Jack Charles, Harry Cotton, Walt Fertig, Bob Mitchum, Ben Rogge, Phil Wilder, Butch Shearer, Bob Harvey and others had a profound influence on me inside and outside classrooms. This is true even though I may not have had some of them in a class. So many who have been present in my life throughout these past 60 years. Vic Powell was one of them, and I am better for having known him. Vic was indeed some Little Giant!

I was able to get back to the College for homecoming…it was a great day. I attended the Luncheon prior to the football game, and was privileged to sit at a table that included the widow of Eliot Williams…a delightful gal. And the undefeated football team of 1951 was recognized. It was sad to know so many have passed on, but those of us who made it had a good time reminiscing and it was good to see Norm Buktenica, Sparky Watts, Herb Bunch, Lew Jones, Don Johnson, and 55’ers: Dick Payne, Don Hiatt, and Vaino. The reunion idea sprung from the fertile mind of Payne, a mind who spends most of its time these days lining up putts on the plethora of golf courses of Myrtle Beach.

The football game was a blow-out victory over Kenyon (49-0). The Little Giants, now ranked in the top 20 Division III standings, sport a record of 5-0 to date, with a couple of tough conference opponents yet to play, along with the annual Bell game, played this year in Greencastle. There are approximately 130 students on the football roster. Amazing for a College the size of Wabash…carrying on the tradition that dates back about 100 years ago: any student who wishes, can go out and is given a number and equipment, and give football a try. Of course the College also has successful programs in Soccer and Lacrosse, as well as a nationally ranked Cross-Country squad.

The Director of Alumni Affairs, Tom Runge, has a piece on the college website entitled the “Grunge Report”…it is easily accessed by logging in to the website (Wabash.edu) and clicking on “Alumni”. A feature of alumni blogs can be accessed by then clicking on “Alumni Voices”. I did so and found the blog, entitled “The Grandpa
Gazette”, authored by classmate George Jones. You might want to read his latest thoughts on the upcoming mid-term elections dated October 22, 2011. George always had a way of expressing his opinions, and it is sure worth reading.

Also you may be interested in the College’s creation entitled “Wabash Wednesday” which features a monthly interactive program for alumni, parents and friends. To watch the videos, click “http://www.wabash.edu/wabwed”. E-mails can be sent to harrisb@wabash.edu, and you Facebook guys can access at http://www.facebook.com/WabashCollegeNews, and you Twitterers: http://twitter.com/#!/WabNews.

A couple months ago I passed along some info re the new Asian Studies program at Wabash. Some of you wrote indicating an interest in this program which was made possible by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. Dr. Kay Widdows, holder of the John H. Schroeder Interdisciplinary Chair in Economics will highlight the next Wabash Wednesday, November 2, and will discuss this new program.

The end of the year is fast-approaching. If you have not remembered the College financially this year, there is still time to do so, and help keep a good thing going strong for the next 60 years.

On behalf of Vaino and Dick, God bless you all.

Vince