Class of 1987 — Class Agent Letter

From Jim Amidon

June 18, 2007

Men of the Mighty Class of 1987:

Greetings from Crawfordsville, where it’s insufferably hot and feels very much like late July in terms of heat and humidity. Even the lush campus grounds are browning quickly from the lack of rain. But I must confess to my delight in watching the students working for the grounds crew this summer dragging hoses all around campus. That ought to make them work a little harder in bio or poli-sci this fall. It sure worked for me back in 1984 — one summer in an auto parts manufacturing plant was all it took!

Our 20th reunion has come and gone, and the Fourth Annual Big Bash Reunion Weekend is in the books. More alumni returned for reunion weekend than ever before, shattering the previous attendance records. I’m not quite sure how many men from our class came back, partially because some came and left on Friday, others came only for Saturday and left before dinner, and some never signed the official alumni register. If I had to muster a guess, I’d say we had between 28 and 30 guys back.

Three of our classmates gave all-campus talks on Big Bash weekend. You’ll read more below, but a quick note of thanks to Greg Castanias, Brandon Mitchener, and Jo Throckmorton for preparing and presenting fascinating talks, all of which were well-attended. You can listen to podcasts of their presentations by clicking on this link and scrolling down a bit: http://www2.wabash.edu/podcasts/

Please Make a Gift to Wabash:
Before I get into the details of the reunion weekend, I will make one last plea for you to make a gift to the Wabash Annual Fund before the fiscal year ends June 30. Any and all gifts matter, especially at a time when Wabash must compete for talented male students more aggressively than at any time in our 175-year history. Our class is very close to setting our own record for the most donors to the Annual Fund since graduation. If you’re so inclined — and I hope you are — click on this link to make a secure, online gift: https://www.wabash.edu/alumni/egift

Big Bash a Big Success:
From the early morning Friday when I signed the official Alumni Register to the final goodbyes on Sunday, I went through a complete change of heart about reunion weekends. Even as someone who has worked the last 20 years of Wabash reunions, I still imagined that our 20th at Big Bash might be awkward. It wasn’t, and from what I’ve heard from others, everyone who made it back had a good time catching up and seeing the sweeping changes that have taken place at Wabash since our graduation.
**Friday Highlights:**
A handful of us gathered for lunch on Friday to get started. Anthony Hart, in particular, made us laugh recalling tales of WNDY radio news shows. Scott Cougill didn’t look as bad as I thought he might after having traveled 34 hours, door-to-door, to get to Big Bash.

Greg Castanias gave a colloquium talk that afternoon about his experiences — and those of other Wabash alumni — arguing cases in the United States Supreme Court.

Friday night we gathered for the Big Bash Banquet. We were way off to the side of Knowling Fieldhouse, while members of the 50th reunion Class of 1957 were honored with presidential medallions. We mostly just drank wine and got caught up (and tried not to make too much noise during the formal remarks). One of our mates, Brian Paich, drove down from a north suburb in Chicago just to have dinner. Thanks for making the effort, Brian, and good call about wanting to spend Saturday with your family. All of us with young kids fully understand!

**Saturday Highlights:**
A few guys (and gals) from our class turned out for the Big Bash Fun Run. Why? I don’t know. But then again I’ve never quite understood getting up early after a night of too much wine to run great distances. But cheers, at least, to D.J. and Gail Riese, who, among others, participated in the fun walk.

Jo Throckmorton gave a great presentation about his career telling stories in all forms of media — feature films, documentaries, commercials, etc. He showed a handful of clips of his work, which included some really great stuff for Toyota, a documentary on the Malcolm X Institute, and a feature-length film, *Year in the Heartland*, for which he’s seeking funding.

At 11 a.m., we took to the steps of the Chapel for the Alumni Chapel Sing competition. This is a four-year-old tradition at Wabash and one that’s likely to be around a long time. Each class got its turn to sing “Old Wabash” in front of roughly 500 onlookers. In a way, it was a paralyzingly similar feeling to our experience in the fall of 1983… without Sphinx Club guys screaming “watermelon” in our ears. While our numbers weren’t great, we were. Our class was the only group to have the crowd clapping along, and thanks to a nudge from Todd Shellenbarger and Ben Beringer, we opted to sing both verses. Yikes. Still, it was fun, and we finished fourth overall. (Most of us thought we should have been third, but Shellenbarger convinced not to pay off the judges.)

We had lunch in the fieldhouse, had our picture taken, and went on to more colloquium sessions. Click on this link to see our class photo:
http://www.wabash.edu/photo_album/home.cfm?photo_id=2695&photo_album_id=1228

Pete Metzelaars ’82 gave a hilarious colloquium talk about his career in the NFL, both as player and coach. While his message was clear — it was a ball to play ball, get paid, and enjoy the whole thing with his family — he also gave some really funny locker room insights. Needless to say, the Hall of Famers with whom Pete played during his career aren’t what you’d call brain surgeons.
Brandon Mitchener (read about him below) ended the afternoon with a great talk about his work as a journalist and consultant in the European Union. Again, you can hear a podcast of his talk on the Wabash web site. (It wasn’t until we were well into our first cocktail that Brandon discovered he hadn’t said much about his consulting work with APCO Worldwide — which is fascinating stuff.)

We gathered Saturday evening for a reception and dinner in… the basement of Martindale Hall. While a few guys — Anthony Hart and Jo Throckmorton — knew their way around, most of the Class of 1987 said the same thing: “First time I’ve been in here.”

After dinner, we took time to go around the room, re-introduce ourselves and our guests, and give a brief update on our lives since Wabash. With apologies for mistakes and omissions, here are the very rough notes I took between sips (glasses, bottles, etc.) of wine:

Jay Herrmann is a doctor specializing in dermatology in Wheaton, Illinois. He brought his oldest son, Andrew (who is taller), with him to Big Bash. It’s nice to know that Andrew has the good sense and intelligence of his mom — he stayed at the hotel watching movies on Saturday night. Jay says he’s a very fine tennis player; too bad for the Little Giants linebacking corps.

Matt Maloney wasn’t there for the full weekend, but spent most of Saturday with us. Matt has three children and a career in marketing in Indianapolis. He looks exactly the same as he did 20 years ago — good living, Matt.

Todd Shellenbarger is the guy you either do or do NOT want to know in Evansville. There he works in the Federal Prosecutor’s office. Thanks for convincing us to sing both verses of “Old Wabash,” Todd — it was a blast. But we should have bribed the judges.

Ben Beringer offered to put up anyone who wants to come visit him at his home near Wrigley Field in Chicago. Ben is a Chicago attorney who specializes in malpractice cases.

Jim Miner was another of the Phi Delt contingent to join us. He’s in pharmaceutical sales and lives in Westfield, Indiana. He must be drinking the same water as Maloney — he looks the same as he did on graduation day.

Scott Cougill won the award for traveling the farthest with his family — all the way from a city in Thailand that I cannot pronounce or spell. It’s Thailand and it’s a long way away. Good enough. Scott and his wife, Cat, have four children. Scott is the Asia-Pacific Director of Youth for Christ Ministries.

Anthony Hart arrived early and was the last one to leave, and it was Anthony who brought the yearbooks to embarrass those of us who had forgotten how bad our hair was in 1980-whatever. Anthony is a case manager in the behavior health arena for Wellpoint and returns to campus quite often.

Brandon Mitchener came about half the distance of the Cougills — from Brussels, Belgium — but still far enough to shame our classmates who live in Central Indiana and couldn’t make it
over. Brandon has spent his career in journalism covering the European Union, but recently made the shift to consulting in marketing and branding for APCO. Brandon speaks something like five languages, including Italian, the native language of his bride, who stayed in Brussels with their two children.

**Tom Edwards** and his wife **Jennifer** made the trip from Hunstville, Alabama, where Tom works as a field representative for Boston Scientific.

**D.J. Riese** was on hand for the full weekend with his wife, **Gail**. D.J. is a professor and researcher at Purdue University in — I think — medicinal chemistry. Needless to say it’s high-level cancer research science (also needless to say I don’t understand any of it). Gail works as an administrator at Purdue.

**Dave Jackson** lives in Avon, Indiana, where he was formerly a politician on the Town Council. By day David is a part of the information technology group for Alcoa/CSI.

**Gavin and Marcia Roberts** were on hand. Gavin is a pediatric ophthalmologist who has spent most of his career in Fort Wayne, but the Roberts now live in Indianapolis with their kids.

**Bob Wright** is an attorney who practices in Indianapolis. He’s a partner in the firm of Dean-Webster & Wright LLP.

**Ken and Melissa Ogorek** and their family are about to make a big move. After years working in education for the Archdiocese of Pittsburgh, Kenny will move back to Indiana, where he’ll work for the Archbishop of Indianapolis. Three cheers for Kenny in bringing out the Phi Delts!

**David Graham** was another of the Phi Delt contingent on hand Saturday night. He’s a senior sales representative with — I think — Nova Biomedical. In short, he sells really, really expensive, handcrafted surgical steel instruments. We really enjoyed getting to know David’s wife, **Paige**, who was great fun.

**Erik Burris** came down from Mokena, Illinois with his very pregnant wife, **Josephine**. Erik is involved in financial services as a credit manager. He, especially, was bummed out that his former teammate, **Barry Delk**, couldn’t make it.

**Greg Castanias**, his wife **Jane**, and 10-month-old daughter **Alex** attended every event of the weekend. Greg, as many of you know from *Wabash Magazine*, is an attorney with Jones Day in Washington. He gave a colloquium talk about his experiences arguing three cases before the United States Supreme Court, which you can learn about through the Wabash web site.

**Tyce Light** wasn’t at the dinner, but emailed greetings. He’s the marketing director for an Australian winery. Nice gig, huh? And if you’re ever down under, he says you’re welcome.

**Bob Minardo** arrived Saturday in time to help us belt out “Old Wabash” during the Alumni Chapel Sing competition. Bob is involved with commercial real estate lending for Wells Fargo in Indianapolis.
Jo Throckmorton was the third member of our class to give a colloquium talk. He spoke about his career as a commercial, feature, and documentary filmmaker. Like the other talks, you can learn more by visiting the alumni and parents page of the Wabash website. Jo is the president and owner of Blue Ace Media, a multimedia production company in Bloomington, Indiana.

Tim Jeffers and his (also very pregnant) wife Christine live in Indianapolis. Some of you may know that after spending the bulk of the last 20 years in Indiana politics, Tim served as an officer in Iraq. He came back, got married, had a child, and is now expecting twin boys. Oh, and he’s in government relations work for Verizon.

Tom Seroczynski lives in Granger, Indiana, where he’s a broker with AG Edwards Wakovia. He’s also busy teaching his boys hockey, baseball, and football.

While not at dinner Saturday night, Brian Paich drove down from suburban Chicago to spend Friday night with us. There were also mysterious sightings on Saturday of J.T. Whitehead, Ron Recinto, and Berney Stuckey, who got to campus in time to have lunch and appear in our class photo. The Phi Delts came back in force to honor their lost pledge brothers, Brian Bosler and Rob West, with a private ceremony in the new Phi Delt house.

If I left anyone out, I’m terribly sorry. My wife, Chris, and I live close enough to the college to stumble home from the reunion dinner Saturday night. So we did.

The folks on my team here in the public affairs and marketing office did a great job pitching in so I could enjoy the reunion weekend. There are lots of photos, podcasts, and stories on the website. Please take a few minutes to click the link and check everything out. Yes, the photo albums are heavy on the Class of 1987 — I did have my camera with me all weekend and have full access to our website! Big Bash Stories, Photos, and Podcasts at http://www.wabash.edu/alumni/news.cfm?news_ID=4768

In Other Class News:
I heard again from B. Allen Schulz, whom you may remember is a musician and composer in New York. He wrote that he could not attend Big Bash. Then, around the time of our reunion, he spent two weeks in the hospital suffering from pulmonary embolisms. He says he’s gradually getting better, and we extend our best wishes for a full recovery. Here’s the latest news from Allen: “Recently, my wife, Professor Rebecca Bratspies, gave birth to our first child, Naomi Florence Schulz. I'm crazy with love for my daughter. Who knew fatherhood was so wonderful?”

Okay, so five pages and 2,500 words is enough for now. Sufficed to say, Big Bash was Big Fun. I sure hope all of you will make an effort to attend our 25th. Lock it on the calendar now — first weekend in June 2012. No excuses. Phi Delt Bouts Redux. Fiji Island Redux. Delt Toga Redux.

Best wishes for a safe, healthy, and relaxing summer.

Jim