

**OWEGO FREE ACADEMY - CLASS OF 1961**  
**50<sup>TH</sup> CLASS REUNION - SEPTEMBER 16 - 18, 2011**

**Prologue**  
**by**  
**Paul Bartlow**

It doesn't seem like 50 years have passed, but I guess they have. For those of us who remain in Owego (and those of you who come back to visit), the changes are evident. Gone are the Awaji Hotel, Newberry's, Owego Murray, privately owned Drug Stores (Lynn's and Reigel's), our privately owned furniture stores (Stack's and Bern's), our own office supplies store (Walters & Bond), our very own clothing store (Bandler & Styles), and of course our teenage hangouts (the Cloverland and the Cookie Jar). I'm sure I've left some out, but also gone is part of my memory.

However, lest you think Owego has disappeared, it's doing very well. We now have a very nice shopping area with unique specialty shops (Riverrow), our very own Riverwalk, several unique restaurants with any cuisine you could ask for, a new bridge spanning the Susquehanna and providing a great view of the Courthouse, and way more traffic than I can ever remember. In keeping with the times, we also have all the obligatory fast food restaurants, and a Tatoo Parlor (which I've yet to try out). Owego's signature event is the Strawberry Festival, which brings thousands of people to the village each June. A couple of years ago, Owego was actually voted the 'Coolest Small Town in America' in a contest commissioned by a National Travel Magazine.

The Owego School System we attended has also changed. There were about 150 of us who walked across the stage on a warm summer afternoon in June of 1961 (we completed that trip in the new High School on Elm Street). That building later became the District's Middle (or Junior High) School, and is now a ware house for used furniture.

The High School we started in (on Main Street) is now an Office Building used by Tioga County. It is still an impressive building in my mind. We all attended Elementary School in one of three places: Owego Central School (on Main Street), or Talcott Street School (appropriately on Talcott Street) or Apalachin Elementary School. All have since changed. Owego Central is now a very nice apartment complex, Talcott Street is now the School District's Administrative Building and Apalachin Elementary has been upgraded and is still used as an Elementary School. The Owego Elementary School is located on George Street and is a part of a campus which includes the District Middle School and the District High School. The George Street complex also has all the District athletic fields, and is a very impressive complex. If you are attending the reunion, or just in town for a visit, I urge you to take a trip down George Street and take a tour of the campus.

Although the town has changed, it doesn't seem like we have (well ... maybe just a little). We, the OFA Class of 1961, have all gone our separate ways, and I'm sure have accomplished much. If you think about the changes we've seen since that warm day in June 1961, it's been an incredible thing to witness. From our space program to the growth in technology (who would have thought we would have small phones to carry with us wherever we go), and the maturity of the 'information age' (letter writing seems to be a thing of the past), It's been a great time to be alive, and a truly amazing time to live through.

Our Class Reunion Committee (Paul Bartlow, Mary Bean, Tom Coveney, Bryce Jackson, Roy Shrauger, Don Warner and Don Wunder) has worked hard to provide an entertaining reunion weekend for you. We've had a great time along the way. Our meetings are always fun and sometimes even productive (although a lot of the time, we regress into stories – it's a lot like trying to herd cats).

We're looking forward to seeing all of you, and exchanging life stories.

Paul Bartlow