

# Education



Kurt Brownell

From left, Mary Ellen (Nolan) Smith and Eileen (Flynn) Hughes, both from the class of 1944, reminisce over photos at the Holy Family High School reunion in Auburn, Aug. 2.

## Holy Family grads reunite

By Kathleen Schwar  
Staff writer

*To you, our alma mater/ Our hearts we raise/ with spirits firmly united/ We sing your praise.*

"Sister JoAnne," as Holy Family High School graduates once knew her, lifted and swung her arms Aug. 2 to lead the reunited graduates in their old school song.

"It was as if you were in the auditorium 40 years ago," said Peggy Savage of the class of 1952. "It sort

of sent shivers down your spine."

Dorothy Keefe (formerly Sister JoAnne) of Delray Beach, Fla., now an associate with the Sisters of Mercy, was one of two former Holy Family teachers who made the 40th Holy Family reunion, the former school's only reunion for all its graduating classes.

Sister Mary Carmella Coene, RSM, of Elmira also returned for the Aug. 1-3 reunion in Auburn.

Holy Family High School graduated more than 900 students during its days of operation, 1930-1957. More than 500 people gath-

ered this year for the long-planned gathering in Auburn that began Friday in the old school auditorium on North Street. No estimates were available, but organizers say the great majority were graduates of Holy Family. Savage, of Auburn, noted that many former classmates at the coed school had married each other.

The first night of the reunion, organizers paid and sent their DJ home early in the evening. Everyone just wanted to talk, Savage said.

"It almost seems like you'd



Freddie Herring, a friend of Holy Family graduates, looks through a yearbook with Bill Delaney, class of 1952, at the reunion.

need more time," said David Hickey of Clyde, of the class of 1953. Even three days wasn't enough time to see everyone, he said.

The second night, at Emerson Park, a videotape with Sister M. Julia Ryan, RSM, the teacher who served the school the longest, played continuously. Her former students laughed with surprise at hearing her acknowledge that yes, she did have a favorite class — 1949 — although she didn't explain why. Sister Ryan lives at the motherhouse in Brighton, where former students interviewed her.

One of those students was Paula Hickey, married to David Hickey.

Recalling words spoken at the reunion, she agreed, "We got a pretty good education, but the important thing was we got an education for life — how to be and how to behave in life."

The former students at the reunion's second day took turns looking over the purple and gold pennants, sweaters and jackets, as well as yearbooks, photos and clippings the reunion committee had collected. One man actually showed up in his high school sweater.

The third day featured a picnic at the park on Deauville Island on Owasco Lake, a glorious finale, according to those who attended.

"We knew Father Davie and those nuns wouldn't let it rain on our parade," Savage said. The late Father William Davie was the school's principal for all but two years of the school's existence; most of the nuns who taught there also have died.

Former student Roberta Copley Bellnier of Moravia, who, along with her husband Paul co-chaired the reunion committee, had mourned in an earlier interview, "The youngest of us is 58.

When we're gone, there will be no mention of it."

So the graduates raised enough money to fund a Holy Family alumni scholarship for students attending Cayuga Community College.

They also collected memorabilia to keep for posterity at the college's Norman F. Bourke Memorial Library. The library, according to director Douglas Michael, has become the historical collection of record for the Cayuga County area.

"This is something we're looking forward to having," he said, adding that formal arrangements are yet to be made.

"Our purpose is to perpetuate Holy Family High School," Bellnier said. Both Bellniers are 1955 graduates of Holy Family, and had performed together in the senior play, "Sweet Anne Page."

The reunion brought in graduates from 23 states, from Florida to California. They included several of the 25 or more who had become women religious and three priests who concelebrated Mass Aug. 2: Fathers Michael Conboy (1951), Albert Delmonte (1952) and William Donnelly (1956).

But for many of the graduates, the highlight was the school song, sung after the Mass and dinner Aug. 2 at the lake. The committee had printed the words in the booklet, but few bothered to pick it up.

"They just stood up and belted it out," Savage said. The school's spirit and comradery had always made it stand out, she said.

"That's the thing that really survived over these years. It really did survive."

*Glory to you, dear high school / Our love for you shall not die / Our hearts are yours, alma mater / Holy Family High.*

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