

NOVA CLASS OF 66 “WHO ARE WE?”

Many thank yous to all who participated in my survey. My goal was to see where we came from and where we went. To date, we have located fifty percent of our class. Class of '66 was 63 percent male and 37 percent female. Eighty percent of us were born in 1948 and only 5 percent were only children.

The typical Nova 10th grader in 1964 was not born in Florida. Eighty percent had migrated from other parts of the country. Although only 10 percent were First Generation Americans, half of our extended families had migrated to America from “the old country”, whether if be the British Isles, northern Europe, southern Europe or eastern Europe.

Our parents were hard working—half with only a high school education or below. Only 10 percent of our parents held a college degree, but in their search for a better life, they made a college education available to 50 percent of our siblings. They strived to give us what they, themselves, were unable to attain. In carrying on this tradition, 83 percent of OUR children have attended college!

In our class alone, 93 percent of us went on to college, the girls looking for a way to remain independent, the guys trying to stay out of Uncle Sam's “fraternity” party in Southeast Asia. In any event, half of those college kids received a variety of POSTgraduate degrees. An estimated 10 percent became teachers, 10 percent attorneys and 10 percent entered the medical field. Roughly 23 percent of us entered the business world but only 15 percent entered the military. The balance was a variety of careers from pilots to carpenters to treasure hunters!

As children of “the 60's”, we grew up believing we could do anything we put our minds to – both our parents and our “Nova” education fostered this idea. Hence, 70 percent of us went into our life's work for the love of it. And 80 percent of us have spent our life doing what we wanted! What percentage of Stranahan, Lauderdale or McArthur graduates can say that?

With the onset of global unity, our curiosity has taken us to the ends of the earth, literally! Although 10 percent of us have never strayed from our Florida roots, 26 percent have lived overseas. Ninety percent of us have traveled the United States extensively, visiting most states and almost every national park. Eighty percent of us have traveled the globe—amassing miles on every continent except Antarctica!

In our “spare” time, we enjoy almost every outdoor sport from camping, boating, hiking, fishing and big game hunting to biking, golf, racquetball, scuba diving and rock climbing. Our constant need for adrenaline rush takes us from motorcycles to racecars to airplanes and parachutes. Yet, our minds and souls also need replenishment, driving us to more creative endeavors such as gardening, reading, tai-chi, archery, a variety of crafts and even judging equestrian competitions!

Although a few of us consider that they've attained their goals in life, 95 percent are still pursuing the next challenge as it appears around the corner. As Irm so aptly put it, “I continue to be a work in progress until my last breath!” I'd like to share with you Dan Callahan's response to the questing of meeting, exceeding or still pursuing life's goals...

“I would have to select both b and c. I do not see them as mutually exclusive. I have the resources to do what ever I want to do and that has opened up a whole new vista for me in the needs of people around me.

Several years ago a young engineer working for me was in the last stages of an education to be a lawyer and was going to be an exceptional one in his minority community. His wife already had a very successful practice and his income was easily going to be exceptional. Based on her income he had already started to purchase the expensive toys, the new cars, the expensive home, and he had designs for a vacation home. My advice to him was, all those things are well and good and you deserve them. You and your wife have worked hard to develop yourselves to be very successful members of the community. You are going to exceed your life goals by a very wide margin. You will be able to send your children to the best schools. You are going to have all the toys that you have ever dreamed of and will be able to compete successfully with a lot of people that you have only been able to admire from afar in the past.

Out there, with that kind of success, what can you turn to that will drive and impassion you? Because you have to have the passion to continue. Maybe you find that you want to help people less fortunate than you. Not out of pity, not out of “I am better than you,” not because you have more of anything, but simply because your life goals have become a lot bigger than just you. Buy a company, employ less fortunate people. They need you and your excellence. Reread your biography history books again with that kind of theme and try to pick out when Thomas Edison, George Washington, Gandhi, John F. Kennedy, Martin Luther King, or anyone else came to the realization that their life’s purpose needed adjustment.

You have one set of goals around age 20 that carries you through the next thirty or forty years. You need another set if you make it to the top. And that one will involve a lot more people. That is when you really feel like you have accomplished something.”

Thanks, Dan—I couldn’t have said it better!

The Nova graduate epitomized the search for the American dream. We were given the opportunity to excel beyond our wildest dreams and have accomplished more than we could have ever hoped for. I believe that, as we grow older, we may give up some activities, only to discover others more suitable to our age and stature in life, but we will never lose our zest for living and thirst for knowledge. As a class, or as just one person, we have exceeded every hope the Ford Foundation had in funding the “Nova Experiment”. Our school has long been “more traditional” but, the Class of ’66, the first graduates, has left an indelible mark on society and the second half of the 20th century! Our influence will continue on, long past our lifetime, in the principles, morals and enthusiasm for life that we learned from our own parents and have instilled in our children. We have all profited from our “Nova experience”, as has every one we touched throughout the years. Keep striving, keep learning and never forget how special you are!

Compiled and written with pride and love for my fellow classmates and our everlasting Alma Mater, Nova High. Lynn Allieri Bixler July 2006