

# Riverview High School alumni celebrate 50 years

ALAN COCHRANE  
TIMES & TRANSCRIPT

Riverview High School has long been known as the home of the Royals, but generations of students probably don't know how close it came to being the home of the "River Rats."

"We had no school colours, we had no school name, so we had to have a brainstorming session where we came up with names and wrote them on a blackboard, and one of the names we had was the River Rats," says Gordon Watson, who was among the first graduating class of Riverview High School back in 1965. But as the giddy high school kids were barking out names, teacher Paul Hawkes suggested that they were in the midst of an historic decision that

would live on through time, and they should come up with something that was a bit more classier than "River Rats." They chose "Royals," a name that has been continued to be used by RHS teams for half a century. Watson says the boys chose the name while a committee of girls chose the school colours of red and white.

They also helped design the school uniforms for the volleyball and basketball teams, and the school motto of *Stamus Pro Veritate, We Stand for Truth.*

In 1965, the first grad class had 37 out of 44 students graduate.

Fifty years after they graduated, students of that first class back in 1965 will celebrate a half-century reunion on



Brian Steeves, Gordon Watson and Terry Macklem show off a vintage Riverview High School sweater and team jacket from 1965.

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the weekend of July 31-Aug. 2. On Friday, July 31, they will have a meet-and-greet at the Five Bridges Bar and Grill in Riverview at 7 p.m. On Saturday, Aug. 1, they will have a banquet and dance at the Dan Bohan Family Centre, featuring Bob Crossman and the band Surf'n' U.S.A., and on Sunday they will have a more casual reunion at a private cottage in Shediac. Watson says they opened up the reunion to alumni from the RHS classes of 1965, '66, '67 and '68. So far, they have about 100 people registered.

The reunion is being organized by an alumni committee of Gordon Watson, Brian Steeves, Terry Macklem, Susan Macdonald-Botten and Sherran Colplitts Bowrick.

Members of the organizing committee have gathered up old yearbooks, newspaper clippings, school jackets and other memorabilia for the weekend

reunion of sharing stories from the old days.

**"Everybody rushed home and watched the news with Walter Cronkite."**

TERRY MACKLEM

Earlier this week, Watson, Steeves and Macklem dropped by the old school for a photo and reminisced about their high school days 50 years ago, when Riverview was made up of three separate villages of Riverview Heights, Gunningsville and Bridgedale. The three

communities were amalgamated in 1973 to form the Town of Riverview.

In those days, Riverview Heights had only one school, the facility at 92 Devere Rd., which is now known as Riverview Middle School. The oldest part of Riverview Middle School dates back to 1949, with other additions in 1952 and later years.

In 1978, the new Riverview High School as it exists today was opened, with the first graduation in 1979.

Prior to 1962, the school had classes for students in Grade 1 to Grade 8. After that, students in Grades 10-12 were based from Riverview across the Petitcodiac River to either Moncton High or Harrison Trimble. With the population growing, the new Riverview Heights High School was founded in 1962 with two Grade 10 classes. Grade 11 and 12 classes were added in 1963 and 1964, with the first graduation ceremony from the new school held in the spring of 1965. Brian Steeves says he

was among the first to go from Grade 1 to Grade 12 in the same school.

They say that Riverview Heights was much different 50 years ago, with the main part of the village extending mainly from Pine Glen Road to Blythwood Avenue. The area experienced a population boom in the late '60s and '70s as property developers transformed farmland and forest into residential subdivisions. Today, Riverview's population is about 19,000.

Steeves says youngsters in Riverview Heights made their own fun, playing a lot of road hockey through the summer and pond hockey in the winter, or exploring the woods nearby. But if they wanted to play organized sports, they had to go to Moncton. The causeway over the Petitcodiac River was constructed in the late 1960s, which also brought construction of the clover-leaf intersection that leads to Findlay Boulevard. Before the causeway, the only link between Moncton and Riverview was

the old two-lane Gunningsville Bridge, which was notoriously narrow.

"We all got our driver's licences, and they used to say you knew you were ready to take your driving test when you could drive across that bridge and not smash the mirrors off," Macklem says.

Watson, Steeves and Macklem say being a high school kid in the early '60s was an interesting time. The school had a dress code where boys weren't allowed to wear jeans and girls couldn't wear pants. Some of the students were scolded for growing their hair long like The Beatles.

Macklem says he vividly remembers the afternoon of Nov. 22, 1963.

"We were in class when the presidential came in and told us that U.S. President John F. Kennedy had been shot. Everybody rushed home and watched the news with Walter Cronkite, in black and white on one of the two TV channels we got at the time," he says.