

**'68 Mini-Reunion Planning:
Blue Sky Ideas and Trial Balloons**

By Gerry Bell, Mini-Reunion Chairman

Gentlemen: I think the last decent weekend in New England this summer was our reunion weekend; I have been slowly rotting away and growing moldy here in the humid, rainy, and drizzly jungles of western Maine ever since, trying to persuade myself that better days must be coming ... So I've been spending my time dreaming up some ideas for mini-reunions and trying to organize the ideas that others have floated, and I now have a list of possibilities to put in front of you. (Well, some of them are certainties; others are strong possibilities; and still others may be more wish list or blue sky possibilities.) What I'd like from all of you is an indication of your interest in all of these, plus some idea of whatever sense of urgency or priority you may feel about a given mini idea. (Sooner rather than later? Great kickoff idea for the next five years? Great culminating mini just before our 50th? You get the idea.)

There is one reassuring (I hope!) ground rule: just because you may express interest in a particular mini-reunion does not mean you automatically get stuck with the work! If you want to help organize and run it, that's great; if you want to lend a hand but not get too involved, that's fine too. And if you just think it's a good idea and want to be part of the critical mass, hey, that's all I'm asking for here. If it seems like a good idea and enough guys think it's worth doing, we'll find a way to get it done.

Okay, here goes ... First, the certainties:

Annual '68 ski trip – Scheduled for March 1-8, 2014 in Park City, Utah; and the first full week in March every subsequent year. Larry Griffith is handling reservations for our rental ski houses in Park City; Hap Ridgway is working with him on meals and activity planning.

Annual '68 golf trip – Scheduled for the end of October in Bandon Dunes, Oregon. Same time, same place each year. Maybe the greatest golf venue on the planet. Certainly one of the great class trips. Contact Ed Heald to join up.

Dartmouth '68 Virgin Islands Flotilla II – An instant classic through the yeoman work this past spring of Gerry Hills and Norm Silverman. Next scheduled for May 11- May 20, 2014 (and each May thereafter), setting out from Road Town, Tortola in the British Virgin Islands. A great bareboat charter sailing experience. We particularly need you if you're a qualified bareboat charter captain! Contact Gerry Hills.

Contact Gerry as well if you're interested in a land vacation or mini-reunion on St. John (his home base) in the U.S. Virgins. Gerry has a villa rental business with access to 150 vacation villas – 3,4, and 5 BRs – plus all the scoop on best time of year, best rates, etc.

Dartmouth Homecoming – Columbus Day weekend this year (and generally thereabouts each year in October) in a town called Hanover. Homecoming parade and bonfire, Fri and Sat night dinners, class

meeting, tailgate party, football game and other sports events ... you know the drill, but it never gets old. Contact John Engelman, John Everett , or David Walden.

Note: these are our “anchors” for mini-reunions each year. You can always find current plans and status for these, plus contact info, under “Events” on the class web page. Note particularly Gerry Hills’ recently posted invitation to join Flotilla II.

Second, the strong possibilities ... some planning already started:

’68 turns 68: An idea originated by Jim Lawrie at our reunion. Why wait till we turn 70 to celebrate another birthday? Let’s celebrate ’68 turning 68! Tentative schedule: early fall 2014. Ed Heald, with the help of some of our Broadway-savvy New York area classmates, is looking into celebrating our collective 68th with a theater weekend in New York – probably two plays (a matinee and an evening performance), cocktail party, dinners, etc. One idea floated by John Blair at our reunion was to key on this weekend and have a number of ’68 birthday parties around the country – we might be able to have a “virtual” reunion among all the venues via Skype! Any interest in that?

Regional golf mini-reunions: Bandon Dunes is the big one, at the end of most people’s golf season. What about a couple of regional golf minis in the spring to kick off the season? We would obviously time them not to compete with Bandon, but they could get your game tuned up and off to a nice start. Gene Ryzewicz is exploring the possibility of a golf mini around his home turf of Ft. Myers, FL, maybe coinciding with some Red Sox spring training games. Another thought is Southern Cal or the Southwest (maybe Palm Springs?) Possibly we could have a regional golf mini each spring, alternating east and west coasts? What think you golfers?

East Coast long ski weekend: I know the annual ski trip is a big commitment (although, to my knowledge, no one has ever said, “I’m sorry I came.”) But this could be a long weekend trial run for Easterners to see if the idea is to their liking. I would be glad to pull something together at Sunday River in Maine if there’s interest, but there are other possibilities too: Stratton, Okemo, Killington, Waterville Valley – all reasonably accessible to Northeast cities and airports.

California wine safari: This is my idea (well, okay, full disclosure – it’s really my wife Jackie’s idea!) For our class 60th birthday celebration, we went to Napa Valley on a combination golf/wine-tasting holiday. The idea this time (with so much golf already on the table) is a wine safari, maybe starting in the Central Valley near Lodi (Jackie likes Zinfandels) and working our way up through Napa, as far as Rutherford (Jackie wants to go to Grgich Hills!) You can see that at some point I’m going to make this trip anyway, and it would be nice to have some company. Ed Schneider, our generous dinner host at our 60th birthday party, has volunteered to be our guru/man on the ground for this go-round as well. Question is, when? One obvious possibility is for our 70th birthday in 2016 – but there are other candidates for that observance as well (Scotland, Tuscany, canal barges in France) And people may want to do a wine safari sooner rather than later. What say you guys?

70th Birthday Celebration: Op. cit. (I love that!) It could be California, or one of the other ideas noted above – or it could be your brand-new and creative idea. Someone at the reunion (and I apologize for

not noting whom) mentioned Hawaii as a possibility; another idea is a cruise up the Inland Passage to Glacier Bay, Alaska. Ed Heald has preliminarily raised his hand to help coordinate this celebration, so both of us will be interested in your thoughts. Don't be shy!

Finally ... Blue Sky Trial Balloons:

Or, as they're known to me, Jack Nicholson, and Morgan Freeman, the Bucket List! I'm floating these ideas here to see what overwhelming or underwhelming interest there might be. This is probably our first realistic time to consider these possibilities – we as a class are moving to a supermajority of retirees, and we now have the wonderful gift of time. What will we do with it? Here are some possibilities:

Grand Canyon river rafting – Yeah, it's way high up on my bucket list, and Bill Rich has already beaten me to it! He reports that it is a fantastic and exhilarating experience – the full ride down the Colorado River is 13 days, but they can break it into either a 6-day or 8 day adventure. Bill's knowledge and experience ensures we won't make any wrong turns or choices – look, this is going to happen in my life, with you or without you, but I think it would be a blast to do it with a bunch of '68s! (As long as we don't paint "68" all over the Canyon walls!) Who's interested?

West Virginia river rafting – For those who aren't sure about the leap of faith in rafting the Canyon with no prior experience, Bob Ross suggests rafting the New and Gauley Rivers in West Virginia (easier to get to for East Coast classmates, only a 2-3 day time commitment, commensurate reduction in cost, you find out whether you like it or hate it.) A great suggestion for those who may be on the fence; so we would likely do this a year before a Canyon trip.

The Badlands and the Black Hills – This trip may be a reach, but I think it's irresistible. Jackie and I discovered the magic of the Black Hills some years ago as we detoured around a storm on our drive west to ski. The Badlands are surreal – like the surface of another planet. Deadwood looks like it did 140 years ago, complete with ladies of the evening (mannequins!) in various states of undress in the upstairs windows. Lead, SD has the remains of one of the great gold rush mines. We saw Mt. Rushmore for the first time at night, with those four faces floating in the night sky ... an unsurpassed sight, until the next morning, when we saw the Crazy Horse Monument, which dwarfs Rushmore in scale, in ambition, in audacity ... got your attention? I wonder if anyone wants to go with us on the first Sunday in June some year, to what Korczak Ziolkowski, the designer and sculptor of Crazy Horse, called "volksmarche": the peoples' walk, the only day of the year when people are allowed on the monument. And I do mean "on"; I have a photo of 600 people standing on Crazy Horse's outstretched arm! Not to be missed!!

John Ford's West (or, the West – or Southwest—you've seen in the movies.) You can probably tell by now how enamored I am of the American West – enough to want to see again some places I've already seen once. Canyonlands National Park, Zion National Park, Bryce Canyon National Park, Monument Valley, Lake Powell, and the crowning glory, Canyon de Chelly, ancestral home of the Navajo and the Anasazi – like the Garden of Eden, but also so spooky that Kit Carson was so freaked out he wouldn't set foot in it!

The Great '68 Appalachian Trail Challenge – Some years ago, Dartmouth (I believe it was the DOC) tried to get as many folks as possible to hike on the AT on a given day. I wonder if we might do them one better, particularly in light of our 50th Reunion Project, the Freshman Trip Endowment. What if we dedicated one long weekend each summer to hiking the Appalachian Trail (for money -- pledges and sponsors -- to benefit the Endowment)? We could organize cadres of '68s to reach the nearest trailhead, in Georgia, the Carolinas, Virginia, the mid-Atlantic states, southern New England, northern New England; and each group – or each individual – could knock off 8-10 miles of the AT (or more, if the going was easy) that weekend. With enough commitment, it's conceivable that we as a class could cover the entire 2147-mile route of the AT over the next five years! Extremely cool, and I'll bet we could raise a lot of money in the process. (We could even require a ton of money for the privilege of covering the portion of the AT between Dan & Whit's in Norwich and the Hanover Inn!) Just a thought – but John (Bear) Everett, our class AT guru, and Bill Rich, our 50th Reunion Gift Chairman, would surely like to hear your reaction, as would I!

Okay – as my dear sweet wife likes to say, Gerry, that's enough. We'd like to hear your thoughts – your reaction to these trial balloons, your sense of urgency or priority about them, your own ideas about mini-reunion possibilities. The whole idea behind this is not to set some world record for number of minis; it is to maintain connections among us, re-establish lost or dormant ones, and build momentum for the runup to our 50th reunion – what our president, Peter Fahey, has called “the culmination of our alumni experience.” So please – weigh in with whatever strikes you about this, whether it's good, bad, or indifferent.

One final word: When I say “we” in this magnum opus, it is not the papal or royal “we”. I mean all the people who have already agreed to help with minis, volunteered ideas, or said, “Hey, I like that!” This includes our Deputy Chairmen Ed Heald, John Everett, John Engelman, and David Walden (all experienced reunion bosses, and coaches, mentors, gurus, etc. to the rest of us); guys who are helping already, like Larry Griffith, Hap Ridgway, Gerry Hills, Norm Silverman, Gene Ryzewicz, Ed Schneider, and Bill Rich; and guys who have already come up with some great ideas, like Jim Lawrie, John Blair, and Bob Ross. Thanks to all of them, and – in advance – to you.

And please note – it's not too late to get in on the action. We're still looking for volunteers to host or coordinate regional get-togethers, be they holiday lunches or dinners, summer barbecues, or cocktail parties across the country on Dartmouth Night. Raise your hand!

Thanks for reading. Let's get this party started!

