

## **HOW TO FIND CLASSMATES**

### **THE NEXT STEP**

\*Whether or not your task is to launch a Classreport.org website or to begin planning a reunion, it's important to know how to find your classmates. With the internet -- and with the rise of numerous websites that offer people locator services -- that task is almost easy. Well, almost... If you don't know where most of your classmates are, the process is going to take time. That's part of the beauty of Classreport.org. It gives you an easy-to-use database that either a class administrator (you) or a classmate can access and update at any time. Once you find a classmate, and once that classmate registers on Classreport.org, you have at least some assurance that your classmate will take care to see that information is kept up-to-date. Then, if you need to compile a quick database of contact information, it's just a couple of clicks away.

\*The difficulty of finding people varies with the age of the folks in the class. Young people are likely to move around a lot, and their initial interest in staying in touch with classmates isn't usually that strong. As people hit middle age, they tend to stay put. And their interest in the good ol' days gets stronger.

\*Another potential problem -- while guys' names usually stay the same, the girls' names don't. Most get married, and some get married multiple times and tack up multiple names. Still, there are ways to track down almost anyone.

\*Your salvation -- email addresses! Email addresses are gold, better than home addresses, better than phone numbers. Email addresses tend to stay the same. And with email addresses, you can create email groups to send email "blasts" to everyone in the class. As you go through the process of finding people, you are more than likely going to have to make some kind of personal contact, either through the mail or by phone (be thankful that long distance is, for the most part, free). Always be aware of how important it is to get an email address when you do make contact.

\*Your second salvation -- Facebook! Many people list their email addresses on Facebook. If you are an astute administrator, it's almost a lock you'll turn to Facebook to help find people, make "friends" of your old classmates and use what information is there to find people and communicate with them. **But always -- get that email address. That's the key to everything.**

### **IMPORTANT: Remember website registration**

\*When you contact someone, the two most important things to say are:

\*Can I get your email address?

\*We need you to go to the class website [if you are starting one] and register!

## **TIP FOR OLDER CLASSES**

\*The best place to start finding people is old lists. If your class has had at least one reunion, see if any kind of directory was provided for that reunion, or others that followed. Found out who had the job of locating classmates at the last reunion and get that information from them. Start cross-checking and calling to see if people still live there. If you find them, log the information and cross them off the list.

## **TIP FOR YOUNGER CLASSES**

\*See if a student directory was published while you were in school. Chances are good that many parents still reside at their old address. Parents are usually pretty good about helping class organizers get in contact with their kids.

## **TOOLS YOU CAN USE**

\***Old student and reunion directories** (already mentioned).

\***Facebook.** Just type in the name. You may have to make a “friend” connection to view contact information. Other similar social and professional networking sites are available.

\***Old yearbooks.** Sometimes the senior index will list complete names (with middle name or initial). These can be very helpful in trying to locate classmates through other sources.

\***School district resources.** We have alumni directories for Pasadena, South Houston, Rayburn and Dobie, covering classes up to 2004. You can get a complete list of graduates from the book. And there is location information in the book on anywhere from 20 to 40 percent of the graduates. Some of this info is out of date, but some of it is still good. Many email addresses are listed. We also have a database of all graduates from those four high schools up to about 2001. The contact information covers more than half the grads, in most instances. But the contact info has not been updated since about 2000. Call the school district at 713-740-0186 for more information.

\***Whitepages.com.** A very useful, free source of information. If someone has a land line, they are listed. The number may not be listed, but many are. And even if there is no listed number, there is usually an address. The information is kept pretty much up to date.

\***On-line public records.** Without too much effort on Google, you can find birth records, Texas marriage and divorce records and Social Security death records. Marriage and divorce records are a good way to locate a female classmate whose name has changed.

\***Obituaries.** If you are drawing a major blank, you might Google the classmate’s name along with the word “obituaries.” Sadly, this is how some classmates are found.

\***Google the name.** You might be surprised how quickly you find some people this way.

\***Other free people-finders:** There are plenty of these around and they offer clues that are sometimes valuable, sometimes not so much. Whitepage.com has one attached to it. But there are many others you can check out just by searching under “people finder.”

\***For-pay people finders:** You may find that it’s worth the expense. Usually, you can pay a long-term use fee, or you can pay a short-term fee if you want to do a bunch of searching in a short period of time, such as 48 hours or a week. The fees aren’t that steep. These sites usually open the door to all kinds of contact information.

\***Word of mouth.** This could be the most useful tool of all. As you locate classmates, they will usually help you with the location of other classmates, especially email addresses.

\***Relatives:** Moms, dads, children, ex-spouses. If you can find them, they may not always be happy to hear from you, but most are willing to help.

## **BASED ON EXPERIENCE**

Here's a potpourri of websites that may be of some assistance. Some are free; some not. Some used to be free; now you have to pay. The word we get is that some classes get a whole lot done without having to pay a dime. But a few dimes do save time.

- [www.peoplesmart.com](http://www.peoplesmart.com) – Now a pay site. Very useful in verifying deaths.
- <http://sortedbyname.com/index.html> – A fantastic website for tracking people via spouses is:
- <http://www.cclerk.hctx.net/applications/websearch/MAL.aspx> -- For those who got married in Harris County.
- <http://www.zabasearch.com/>
- <http://www.findermind.com/free-people-search-engines/>
- [www.peoplefinders.com/](http://www.peoplefinders.com/)
- <http://obits.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/obit.cgi>
- <http://www.usa-people-search.com/>
- <http://anywhoyp.yellowpages.com/whitepages>
- <http://searches.rootsweb.ancestry.com/ssdi.html>
- <http://offender.tdcj.state.tx.us/POSdb2/index.jsp> -- For tracking the current Texas prison population.
- Nexis. Not everyone has access to it, but if you do, you can track addresses back to the 1970s.

Many thanks to Claudia Moore and Bill Trott from the Sam Rayburn Class of 1971 for helping with this resource list.

## **FINALLY...**

Make it a game – like a scavenger hunt! And be determined to prevail. You will hit dead ends and log-jams, and then suddenly, you'll find a bunch of people you never thought you would find. Some people will be rude to you, some will hang up on you and every call you make will require a bit of explaining. Be prepared for happy news, but also for some sad news. Still, the rewards are great. You'll be getting the old gang together again. And dozens, if not hundreds of people, will appreciate your efforts!

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