

Kerri Phillips Toloczko

Class of 1975

What are some of your fondest memories as a student of AWHHS?

I often hear people say "I hated high school!" and I marvel about how their experiences were so different from mine. I loved every minute of it. My friends were great, and we had a wonderful time being notable pranksters. These would include "borrowing" the Archbishop just before graduation and hiding lilacs underneath a desk of a teacher who had allergies, and of whom we were not particularly fond. Mr. Loughman and Mr. O'Brien stand out as teachers who not only taught their subject matter, but who also taught us how to be better students – even though at the time we thought they were "so mean." I paid attention when "Sister" drilled grammar, punctuation and spelling into our heads (complaining the entire time) and that has served me very well. Basketball games were a highlight, especially during sophomore year when we sat in the balcony. I loved the musicals we did under the direction of Sr. Corona, even though I backed into a wet backdrop at dress rehearsal for "Oklahoma!" and had to beg Danny's Cleaners to clean it over night.

And I remember graduation; Mr. O'Brien admonishing us not to do the "gorilla gallop" down the auditorium aisle, and that we all were all quite teary-eyed, even though some of the boys are likely to deny it still today.

Do you keep in touch with your classmates?

I keep in touch with a few classmates, and wish it were more. It was part of my New Year's resolution in 2009 to find old friends, and it's been fun to use Facebook to do so. What I've found is that there really are no "former" friends - just people you haven't talked to in a while. The shared experience of AWHHS is still a bond, and sharing old memories is a very worthwhile experience.

What are your impressions of AWHHS today?

Archies seems more vibrant than ever. Its amazing how a medium like the Internet can affect a school or organization and its wonderful to see how many programs and options are available both for students and alumni to either currently be a part of the AWHHS family, or to rediscover it – much like I have.

Career

I often speak at high schools and colleges, where students tell me that they are unsure of what they want to be when they grow up. I tell them, not to worry, that God will always lead you down the right path, but sometimes it takes a while – I didn't figure it out until age 40. For many years, I worked in various marketing jobs and in 1999; I ended up in a free market think tank in Dallas. I loved to study policy and to write, and that lead me out of marketing and into the policy analysis. Currently, I am Senior Vice President of Policy for a conservative think tank in Washington, DC where we study and advise on government policies that promote economic and individual liberty. I also do consulting on the side, and have been active in coalition building and policy development in political campaigns, including Bush/Cheney 2000 and 2004. I love what I do because I believe in it so strongly, and also because am blessed to work with incredible people.

Family

I live in Great Falls, Virginia (25 miles from DC.) Daughter Caitlin (25) just graduated from University of Nevada, Las Vegas with a degree in Hospitality Management and is managing a restaurant in Toronto. Son Connor (17) is a senior at Langley High School, will attend an Air Force ROTC college next year, and is planning a career in intelligence. Husband Mike works for Freddie Mac, I work in my home office, and we both enjoy traveling – or just relaxing in our home, which is deep in the woods of Northern Virginia.