

HMTC72

The Horace Mann High School's sophomore class entered its doors in 1970 after graduating from various Junior High Schools in the area and a few of them from outside of Little Rock. There was much excitement around being Bearcats and graduates of the prestigious Horace Mann High School following in footsteps of older siblings and family members. It was the day in their young lives that they had waited on! Finally high school where they could be in the band, big time sports programs, cheerleaders, majorettes, drill team, pep squad, the band and choir as well as academic achievement clubs like Honor Society and Beta Club. Some few looked forward to Miss Horace Mann pageant and Homecoming court while some others had their hearts set on more advanced classes such as Trigonometry, chemistry, physics and higher-level foreign languages. At Mann, the youngsters would be able to brush shoulders with real seniors, the elite of the school.

Later in the year, the LRSD provided details on how it proposed to integrate Little Rock schools. Parents organized to ensure their input was heard and considered as plans were being drawn up to resemble similar actions taken around the country, specifically in the south. There was much murmuring about closing the school as a high school. The students and their families just couldn't believe it was possible that their wait to be a part of the prestigious Horace Mann would be interrupted. Throughout that year, the dread grew more frantic as desegregation plans became more pronounced and finally the full plan was announced. The sophomores would be allowed an additional year at Mann as a transition time but the graduating class of 1971 would be the last. Now, juniors, they were frightened and disappointed, some decided to get ahead of the ensuing desegregation plans and spend their last two years of high school at one of the other high schools. Although there was a small percentage of students accelerating

the timeline for reassignment, the impact of the early departures was great on the tender and obsessed young bearcats. Many lived with the hope that some how it was all just a bad dream and would go away.

So, the PTA president and other concerned parents and citizens worked with the LRSD to gain agreement that students in any organization at Horace Mann would be able to join the same or similar organization at their new assigned school. This was good but nothing was better than graduating from Horace Mann High. They spent their last year at Mann with the senior class of 1971, being their set-up staff for the prom and at least watching all their festivities and enjoyment over graduating as Bearcats.

Finally, the year of transition was completed and the class was facing their new school with angst. The thought lingered that their productive lives were stymied due to this unmentionable decision to separate them from all they knew. The foreign schools were different but no one died as a result, as expected. Those who prepared for college, went to college and those who decided to work, got jobs. Their beloved teachers all seemed to land in a decent spot in the system. The Horace Mann Principal, Edwin L. Hawkins was named the Principal of Central High making nearly their entire community feel a little more at ease.

Nine years after graduation, the president of the junior class pulled his classmates together to discuss what to do about a reunion. Most of them felt that most classmates weren't interested since they didn't graduate from Mann so they were welcomed to join the Class of 1971 as a combined reunion. The effort fell short of expectation from the 1972 class of misfits. Led by their 11th grade class president, they bravely planned their first reunion in 1982 and by all accounts it was successful. At that point, they named themselves the **Horace Mann Transitional Class of 1972** to denote that while they were

not a Horace Mann graduates, they were still yet Horace Mann through and through. They realized they were stronger than they thought. They rationalized that the God of their youth must have decided different about them now than he did when they were in the 11th grade. They recognized that He was blessing them then and blessing them at that time and all times. They learned a life lesson that it's not what they think but who they think about that enables them to do more and go further than they may think. It was not long before the baby Bearcats realized that the breakup of their class did not break them but in fact made them stronger. They were determined to give back to their community and support other young minds who may need the lesson that a plan interrupted is not a plan destroyed. So, every reunion was planned with care and now this class is in the throws of celebrating their 50th "Solid Gold" Reunion.

We call ourselves the Mighty-Mighty Bearcats and it took maturing to understand that MIGHTY is not just being able to overcome physical limitations. The strength of the Mighty-Mighty comes from committing and connecting no matter the circumstances. HMT72's strength is based on trust that all things are possible with God.

HMT72 Forever!