Class of ’72 celebrates past, present and future at 50th Reunion

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Fiftieth reunion co-chair Don Sylvester (MBA ’72), center, jokes with Dean Paulo Goes, left, at the 2022 Graduate Reunion Party, which took place in the Goldring/Woldenberg Business Complex’s Marshall Family Commons on Oct. 21, 2022. Standing with Sylvester are other members of the 50th reunion class.

For the members of the A. B. Freeman School of Business MBA Class of 1972, their milestone 50th reunion, provided an opportunity to reconnect with friends, spend time in New Orleans and reminisce about everything that Tulane made possible in their lives.

Dan Clark (MBA ’72), an Ohio resident who is retired after a successful career in the military, described the celebratory mood of the October weekend on campus.

“Whether faculty, staff, students, alumni or family, everyone was smiling and having a great time,” said Clark, who relished the time spent with his classmates. “We had a wonderful time, and we’ve reestablished some great relationships that I think will continue.”

North Carolina resident Don Sylvester (MBA ’72), a retired CFP financial advisor, co-chaired the reunion with accountant Steve Berman (A&S ’70, MBA ’72). Sylvester said that returning to campus for the milestone reunion proved a meaningful time.

“Upon reflection, I feel that the older that we get the more we realize that our lives have been largely about two things: Our life experiences, particularly the experiences at key transitions in our lives, and secondly, about our connections with people,” said Sylvester. “And it seems to me that reunions, particularly the 50th, are a golden opportunity to reconnect with this formative life experience and with some people you shared it with, and that being there in person, at the place of that experience, is definitely the most powerful way to make that connection.”

Homecoming weekend was bookended by events planned for the 50th reunion celebrants, which made it extra special.

The landmark weekend kicked off with a 50th anniversary lunch in the Goldring/Woldenberg Business Complex’s executive dining room and ended with Sunday brunch at the Higgins Hotel in downtown New Orleans and a guided tour at the World War II Museum. In between, reunion celebrants took in homecoming events including Dean Paulo Goes’ state-of-the-school address, a back-to-the-classroom lecture by Peter Ricchiuti, an alumni cocktail party, a tour of campus and tailgating on the Berger Family Lawn before the Tulane-Memphis game.

“We really appreciated all the programs and activities associated with homecoming,” said Clark, mentioning the Presidential Speaker Series conversation between best-selling biographer and Tulane professor Walter Isaacson and Tulane President Michael A. Fitts, which was attended by more than a thousand people. “Walter Isaacson is an icon. Hearing him speak was awesome!”



Paul Ebel (MBA ’72), a resident of South Carolina, said his favorite experience was the talk by the professors where he learned that business education is much more hands on for current students than it was for him.

“When we got our MBA, we went in, sat in a class, heard a professor, wrote exams and graduated,” Ebel said. “It’s a whole new world now. It’s interactive. It's experiential. It’s going out and working with local businesses and so forth, and I just think it’s a wonderful idea. And I think that is so much more effective than us just sitting and listening to somebody talk. Tulane is leading the charge in this kind of interactive education.”

The reunion also gave Ebel a chance to catch up with former classmates and learn about their achievements over the years.

“I’m very proud to be part of that group,” he said.

Ebel worked as an engineer at a nuclear plant after his Tulane graduation and then started a nuclear engineering consulting firm, BE Inc., that he ran for 35 years. The firm at one point employed over 100 employees and had five offices across the U.S. Although he entered the Freeman School with degrees in nuclear engineering, Ebel said his business training enabled him to reach his full potential.

“Tulane toned me up for what I really needed for the rest of my life,” he said.

Steve Berman, who served as president of the 1971-1972 MBA class, also enjoyed hearing his classmates’ success stories.

“It turns out that a lot of our graduates became esteemed people in the business world,” said Berman, who started his own accounting firm in 1977 and today serves as managing director of its successor, Berman and Rusenko. “Sometimes you go back to your alma mater, and you’re somewhat disappointed just because it doesn’t feel the same. In this case, it felt better.”

Spending time at Tulane was a highlight for all the 50th reunion celebrants.



MBA students Connor Comeaux (MBA ’24) and Sarah Davis (MBA ’24), left, talk with 50th reunion class member Chuck Gazarek (MBA ’72) at the Graduate Reunion Party.

“Once I got to the campus, I just really remembered being there, being at school,” said Sylvester. “As soon as I was on campus, I felt invigorated by the high level of positive energy coming from students and alumni and professors.”

Fifty years ago, the business school was housed in Norman Mayer Hall, a relatively modest Romanesque-style building originally built in 1942. That space is a far cry from the expansive Goldring/Woldenberg Business Complex, which Sylvester described as having “so much light and airiness and luxury of space.”

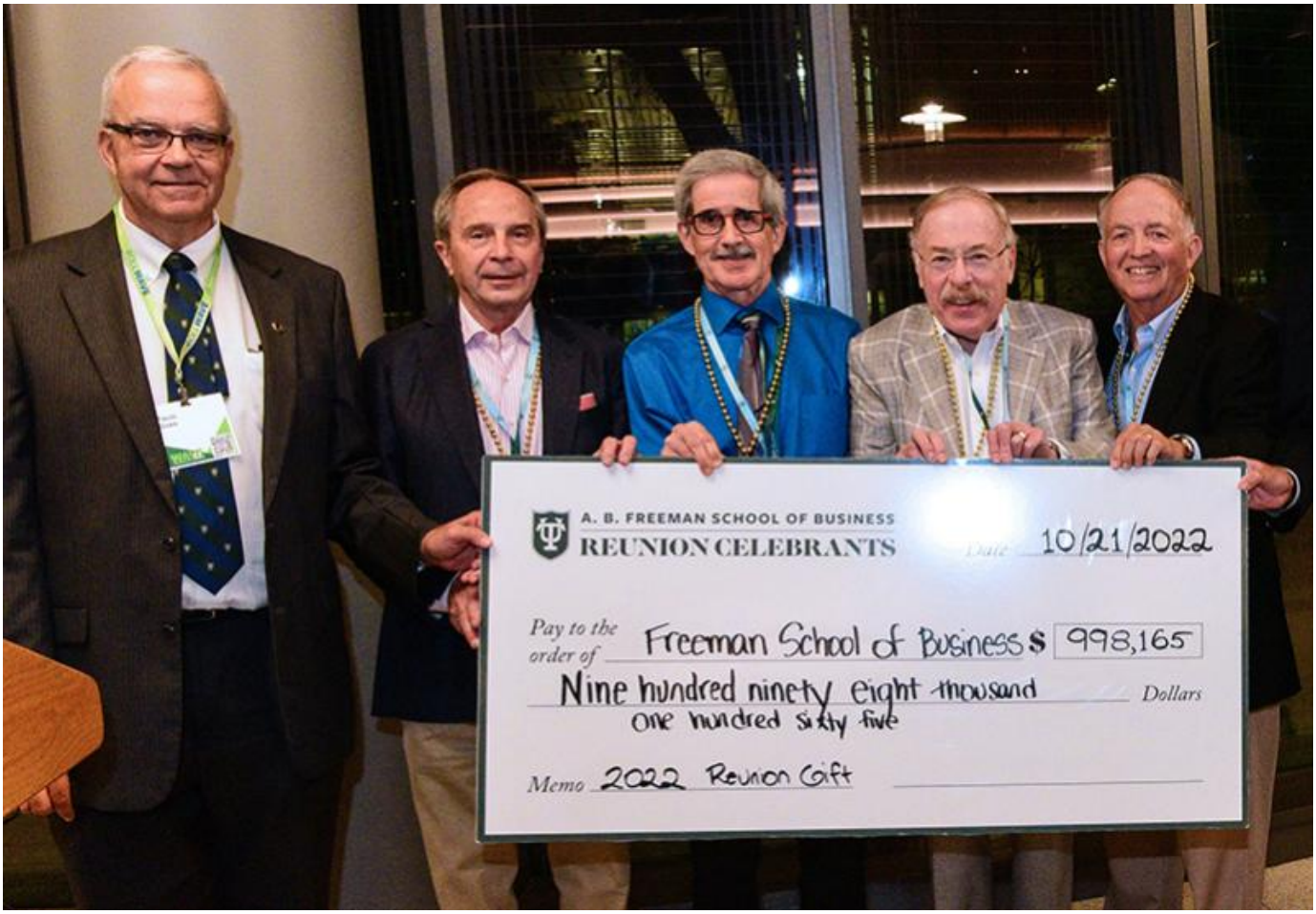
The trip also provided an opportunity to reconnect with the city of New Orleans.

“For me, New Orleans and Tulane are something to relish together,” Sylvester said.

For Berman, visiting New Orleans always means spending time at what was his favorite hangout spot while at Tulane — the Camellia Grill. To help pay for those burgers, Berman used to sell Dixie Beer at New Orleans Saints games in Tulane Stadium.

Like so many of his classmates, Clark also enjoyed attending games in Tulane Stadium, including Super Bowl VI, which took place on Jan. 16, 1972. As a member of the military, he was able to purchase Saints season tickets at a discount.

As a token of their love for Tulane and the Freeman School, the Class of 1972 presented Dean Paulo Goes with a check for $988,165 at the reunion cocktail party, representing the collective gifts of their class and all the milestone anniversary classes. The total of their gifts has since climbed to over $1 million.



Berman feels strongly about his obligation to give back, especially to an institution that has had such a major impact on his life. “It’s important that you pay it back, especially if you had a positive experience like I did.”

And by paying it back, the Class of 1972 is doing its part to help a new generation of students enjoy the same positive experience they enjoyed 50 years ago.

In the end, Clark sums up the feelings of all his 50th reunion classmates.

“I am very proud to call myself a Tulanian.”

-- *Mary Sparacello*