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## Mister Kewpie — keeping tabs on classmates

**Charley Blackmore runs the unofficial Hickman High School Web site and helps keep alumni connected.**

By **ALLYSON LONGUEIRA**

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Charley Blackmore sends more than 2,000 birthday cards each year. He knows the names of 28,376 Hickman High School graduates. He has Kewpie dolls on his desk and a Kewpie flag hanging from his front porch. Hickman's class of 1963 — his class — nicknamed him Mr. Kewpie more than 20 years ago. And he loves reunions.

"It's like a Kewpie family," he said.

Blackmore is the webmaster of [www.kewpie.net](http://www.kewpie.net), the unofficial Web site for Hickman High School classmates.

He started the site in 1995 for his own class. As the honorary class president, he's led the organization of almost every one of his class reunions. Originally, he wanted a way to keep track of his former classmates to help reunion planning, but the site has since grown to be much more.

"It's just evolved to a Web page for the entire high school," he said.

In August 1998, Deborah Kay Burks Smith, Blackmore's fiancée at the time, challenged him to expand the site to get others as excited about reunions as he was. A member of the class of 1969, she said she'd never gone to her reunions. The site, which now includes all the classes from 1928 to 2002, is dedicated to Smith. She died in May 2000.

When he decided to expand the site, Blackmore contacted officials at Hickman to glean whatever information they had. He got files with requests from graduates for notification of reunions.

At the time, he said, the school didn't have any procedure for contacting graduates about reunions.

Blackmore decided to take up that task, and created the Kewpie Classmates Association. He spends at least two hours per day gathering information for the site, which includes adding new registrants to his database and contacting reunion chairpersons for updates.

Hickman High School has its own official Web site, [www.kewpie.us/hhs/kewp.html](http://www.kewpie.us/hhs/kewp.html), which includes graduate and reunion information. The activity office at Hickman also offers assistance to graduates and reunion

 [printer-friendly version](#)



[\[see full size image\]](#) Charley Blackmore designed a Web site for Hickman High School graduates, who send him news about their lives. Blackmore earned the nickname Mr. Kewpie from his classmates in 1963. (ALISA BOOZE TROETSCHEL/Missourian)

### On the Web site

- **Kewpie Directory:**  
Includes the names and bios of Hickman classmates from 1928 to the present
- **Reunion Information:**  
Allows users to view which class reunions are going to be held in 2003 and 2004
- **Obituary Section:** Lists the names of Hickman classmates who have died
- **Kewpie of the Month:**  
Each month a former Hickman student is selected for this honor

coordinators.

Sharon Dothage, secretary to the principal at Hickman, said she sometimes refers people to Blackmore to get contacts for reunion organizers or older graduates who aren't on the school's own site.

"If people are looking for classmates from way back, I refer them to him," she said.

Blackmore likes to include everyone who attended Hickman on his site. For the class of 1963, he added 92 people who at some point went to school with graduates of that class.

"Reunions are not limited to the people who graduate from the high school," he said, adding that those one-time Kewpies still have ties to Columbia and might want to see their old classmates.

The site also includes a feature called Kewpie of the Month. Blackmore chooses former Kewpies who are in the news or whom he thinks users would be interested in.

Former Kewpies of the Month include Wal-Mart founder Sam Walton, Ken Lay of Enron fame, and Nowell's grocery store founder John M. Nowell Jr., known as Jack.

When Blackmore decided to make Jack Nowell the Kewpie of the Month for March, he put together the background information and called John M. Nowell III, his son, to ask permission. Jack Nowell died in 2000.

"It was nice to remember people of that vintage," John Nowell said.

John Nowell surfed the site and discovered an e-mail address for a a junior high classmate. He said he'd been looking for a way to contact her for five years.

"I thought it was kind of an interesting Web site," he said.

Jack Nowell is also listed in the "In Memory Of" section. This part of the site includes Kewpies' obituaries, as well as those of their family members.

It's a lot of work keeping the site up-to-date, but it's something Blackmore enjoys.

"I look at it as volunteer work I can do from the comfort of my home," he said.

Blackmore funds and manages the site himself and does not charge users.

He said he often gets feedback from people who have reconnected because of the Web site.

"That's probably the main compliment I get from people," he said.

Kay Baird, Hickman class of 1960, said the site has really brought her class together. It also helps her keep her connection to Columbia.

"I probably go to it every day because I'm out here in California, and that's my link to home," Baird said.

- Message Board: Allows users to post messages for others who may be visiting the site

- Music for Reunions: Includes the words and music of old and new Hickman school songs

To access the unofficial Web site for Hickman High School classmates, go online and visit [www.kewpie.net](http://www.kewpie.net).

She checks the obituaries on the site daily. She also checks for new class of 1960 registrants to add to the e-mail letter she sends to her classmates. Baird said she's been able to add about 20 people to her list from Blackmore's site.

Blackmore has also helped with Baird's class reunions, including working as a disc jockey.

As a DJ, he's been known as Crazy Charley for more than 25 years. He provides information about this on kewpie.net but doesn't want the site to be commercial.

He also provides reunion coordinators with any local resources they need to make the gathering successful. He'll consult for free whether he gets to be the DJ, he said. Right now, he's working on his own 40th class reunion, scheduled for October.

"People think I'm pretty hard core about reunions," he said with a smile.

### Related links

- <http://www.kewpie.net/> -- The Kewpie Classmate Association: Home of "Mr. Kewpie"
- <http://www.kewpie.us/hhs/kewp.html> -- David H. Hickman High School
- <http://www.kewpie.us/hhs/alumni/> -- Hickman Alumni

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