

■ Obituaries/2B

■ Classifieds/4B

More news on wacotrib.com

## Facebook aids stroll down memory lane

4,200 members join social networking group to share photos, reminisce about people and buildings long gone

**By Jessica Chia**

Tribune-Herald staff writer

For some Wacoans, memory lane is now a real place.

The Facebook group "You might be from Waco if you remember ..." invites group members to post, comment and "like" memories and photos of bygone places and people in the community.

More than 4,200 people have joined the open group since it began earlier this month. Similar pages for other cities are cropping up all across social networking sites.

Posts on the Waco wall reminisce about long-gone restaurants, schools, nightclubs and well-known community members like teachers or media personalities.

The page has captured the attention of those familiar with the area. Almost every post receives lots of feed-

■ Facebook to give users option to preapprove photo tags/8A

back from group members sharing their personal memories connected with the post.

For longtime residents, scrolling through the group's page is like thumbing through a scrapbook of their memories.

Mike Louterback, 65, said he enjoys perusing the page for hours each day, reconnecting with old friends and bonding with new ones about shared memories.

"I saw something on the group about my dad's grocery store over in Beverly Hills," he said. "I was surprised at the fond memories people had about the store. All these people had been kids when they went to my dad's store, and some of them are my



Bridget Weber Ford Facebook photo

The 25th Street Theatre.

friends now."

Louterback's reunion with former acquaintances via the group is a common occurrence; many comment threads have brought together former classmates or neighborhood friends.

**See MEMORY, Page 3B**

# MEMORY

From Page 1B

Valerie Citrano, 52, of Waco, noticed a comment on a post about her elementary school — Crestview Elementary — by a woman who said her late grandfather was the custodian there, and was able to contact the woman with stories about her grandfather.

“I’ve been able to share those stories with her, with her mother, and now we’re friends. It’s really touching. That’s the best thing that came out of this,” Citrano said.

The group also functions as a tie to long-forgotten roots for those who once lived in Waco but no longer call it home.

Ellen Grabsky, 53, grew up in Waco, but now lives in Dallas.

“I remember when our parents were talking about the good old days,” she said. “We thought they were so old. Well, now that’s us. I haven’t lived in Waco for many years, but this group, somehow it’s brought out the things I liked best about it, and brought me to this place where I remember it as a great place.”

Loutherback said one man in the group has an office in Iran, but grew up in Waco and has used the group to reconnect with his Texas hometown.

For individuals newer to the community, it serves as a lesson in local history.

“It’s been kind of educational for these younger people. That’s what’s

fun about it, when someone looks at it and says, I did not know that happened here,” Loutherback said.

Above all, the group serves up a large helping of nostalgia.

“It’s kind of amazing because when you’re my age, those are the things that stay in your mind forever,” Grabsky said. “We all want to remember back then. It brings you back to a really peaceful, innocent time.”

## Financial crisis a factor

Dr. Kyle Irwin, Baylor University assistant professor of sociology, who specializes in social psychology, said the financial crisis the country is experiencing is a factor in the success of the nostalgia-driven group.

“When things aren’t going so great, we might be motivated to reminisce about when things were better or at least when things were simpler,” Irwin said.

Irwin said the group also may meet people’s needs for identity and belonging.

“When we face a crisis of any sort — a financial crisis, a job crisis, whatever it might be — we’re motivated to think about really deep questions about our identity,” he said.

“This group breaks through the superficiality of most Facebook relationships because it focuses on identity. A group of people remembering positive things gives us a good picture of who we are and where we’ve been.”

Although Irwin said members may find meaningful interaction in the group, he was uncertain about its future.

## Group meeting

Members of the “You might be from Waco if you remember ...” Facebook page are invited to bring any old relics, photos or just memories to a meet-and-greet from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. Thursday at Poppa Rollo’s Pizza, 703 North Valley Mills Drive.

The meeting will be in the Outback room, a building behind the main restaurant. The cost is \$7 for pizza and water or tea. There will also be a cash bar.

“It seems like members as part of their membership are making memories and reliving memories, so it’s always relevant,” Irwin said.

“It can tap into the things we like about groups, but there are limitations. I’m not sure it will stand the test. For any group to have any sort of vitality, though, this is a great way to do it — by thinking about the good things.”

Devoted group members like Citrano and Loutherback plan to get past those limitations and take their newfound network out of cyberspace and into the real world Thursday with a “Big Waco Bash” at Poppa Rollo’s Pizza, where Citrano has reserved a room for group members to get together and share memories face to face.

“Even if there’s only a few people that show up, it’ll be interesting,” Citrano said.

**jchia@wacotrib.com**  
**757-5734**