



hilltopper

Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association Newsletter

Volume 2 , Issue 6

Happy Graduation Class of 2009!

June 2009

THOMPSON MASONS DONATE THEATER SEATS – BUY YOUR SEAT – HONOR A TMHS ALUM OR FAMILY MEMBER

The Thompson Masons have generously offered 75 circa 1920 theater seats for the 1909 TMHS auditorium. The TMHSAA, working in conjunction with the Thompson Public School's Facilities Director, Bill Birch is reviewing different options to reupholster the old seats and have them installed in the old auditorium.

The original 1909 TMHS auditorium seats were removed approximately 30 years ago to make room for temporary classroom space. Some of the original wood seats still exist in the original 1909 balcony.



Right: One of the 75 seats donated by the Masons. The circa 1920 seats will be reupholstered and reconditioned and installed in the 1909 auditorium. Anyone can purchase a seat. A brass plate listing the benefactor's name will be added to the back of the seat for all to see! If interested contact Eileen at tmhsaa@charter.net

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TOURTELLOTTE TRUST ORDINANCE APPROVED! BOARD OF TRUSTEES FORMED

After more than one year of discussion, an ordinance protecting the Tourtellotte Trust was passed by Thompson citizens 71-1. The Town meeting, held at the Faucher Library on June 10, 2009, was packed with TMHS Alumni who attended the meeting to show their support for the proposed ordinance.

Board of Finance member Joel Hyatt, during the discussion phase of the process, made a motion to remove the Thompson Historical Society president and TMHSAA president as active members of the Board as proposed. Hyatt suggested that both presidents become advisory members, voting only when necessary. The motion only received four votes.

"I personally want to thank all the alumni who offered their support through this very lengthy process," stated Joe Lindley, president of the TMHSAA. "This was a monumental decision that demonstrates the true character of our citizens."

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BANQUET TIME FINALLY HERE! Memorial Room Cleaned

Volunteers cleaned the Memorial Room and artwork this past month in preparation of the school tour scheduled at 3:00 p.m. on June 20, 2009. "We did a light cleaning of the room, art work and the trophies in the front foyer," reported Joe Lindley, president of the Alumni Association. "The art work, for the amount of attention it has received over the years, is in pretty good shape, however several of the 89 frames are in dire need of help. We hope to establish some momentum for a long-over-due maintenance program through the alumni association," reports Lindley.

During their June meeting, the Thompson Board of Education approved the use of \$80,000 from the Tourtellotte Trust set aside by the Board of Finance for the 2010 fiscal year. The money would be used to conduct a structure evaluation of the 1909 building, repair priority items and provide the remaining funds necessary to paint the Memorial Room.

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The TMHSAA will be “selling” the seats for \$100.00 each. The money raised will be used to reupholster the seats with new padding, red and black tear-resistant fabric, and to recondition and repaint the wrought iron sides and arm rests. A reconditioned seat will be available at the June Banquet.

A brass plate listing the benefactor’s name will be added to the back of the reconditioned seat. Anyone interested in buying a seat (or two or three) may contact Eileen Deary at tmhsaa@charter.net. Make checks out to TMHSAA. Help us fill the 1909 auditorium once again with music!

KEN OLSON ‘55

Former Army Officer and Retired FBI AGENT

Kicking down doors and arresting bad guys was not something Ken Olson class of 1955 watched on television - It was something Ken Olson did for a living.

Ken graduated from Tourtellotte Memorial High School in 1955. Upon graduating from high school, he entered the ROTC program at the University of Connecticut and in 1959 graduated from that program as its distinguish graduate with a Bachelor’s degree.

After receiving his U.S. Army commission he attended Officer’s Basic School and Ranger School and was eventually assigned to the 101st Screaming Eagles as a platoon leader. Ken’s duty assignments included time in Germany where he and his fellow Rangers guarded the politically sensitive Berlin Wall. Ken vividly recalled his time as a 24-year-old commander of armed troops looking across a hostile line at one of the largest militaries in the world. “One wrong move and it was World War II,” stated Ken. Many agree it was nerve racking duty for both side of the wall.

In 1963, after his four-year obligation to the U.S. Army was complete, then Captain Olson resigned his commission and looked for the next phase of his life.

Ken’s career with the Federal Bureau of Investigation came out of the blue and began with a phone call from an old army buddy turned FBI agent. His friend asked him if he ever considered joining the FBI. Before long, Ken found himself with 29 other FBI candidates going through the rigors of FBI basic training at Quantico, Virginia.

During his career as an FBI agent, Ken rose to the rank of Special Agent and Leave Supervisor. He was assigned to Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, Los Angeles, California and finally transferred to Buffalo, New York, working out of the FBI’s Rochester office. During a good portion of his FBI career Ken was assigned to the Fugitive Squad. Ken served for a total of 29 years.

MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Initial membership due at time of application, yearly renewals due January 1st of each year

Regular Membership..... \$15.00
Senior Citizens (65 and older)..... \$5.00
Graduating Class..... Free

hilltopper Staff

Editor: Joe Lindley ‘74’

Staff Members: Jim Sali ‘51’ - Gladys Tucker ‘52’ - Jane Ellison ‘61’ - Eileen Deary ‘77’ – Sandy Becker ‘79’ – Rachael Johnston ‘75’ Alex Kirkland ‘08’

Archives: Gladys Tucker ‘52’ and Rita Rohr ‘56

If you would like to contribute short stories to the hilltopper please contact Joe Lindley at joelindley119@hotmail.com

Ken’s family was originally from Swede Village and like many in the area worked the Grosvenordale mills. His mom, Ruth (Leal) and dad Walfrid Olson graduated from Tourtellotte in 1936. Following a familiar pattern for our area they met in school, fell in love and married and raised a family.

While in high school Ken played baseball and basketball, for Mr. Canty, and while he loved playing baseball he openly admits to not being a starter, but based on what we have heard over the past year, just making a Canty team was something in and of itself.

The 100 year birthday of the school is also a benchmark for Ken and his family. Grandson Beau will be among the 50 plus graduates receiving his diploma this year.



Above: Checkpoint Charley circa 1961, about the time Ken was stationed in Germany. Arguably one of the most contentious geographical points during the Cold War. Above shows U.S. tanks facing Soviet tanks. The area was a constant powder keg. Photo compliments of Stefano-p found at www.Flickr.com.

Visit the TMHS Website at:
<http://www.thompson.ctschool.net/TMHS/index.html>

5 things you may *NOT* know about TMHS

1. According to several alum, 1967 was the last year the alumni banquet for all classes was held.
2. One of the current versions of the Tourtellotte Alma Mata was modified by Mary Mead '41. Mary used WWII as her inspiration.
3. The lecture room on the second floor, south side of the 1909 building was constructed at the request of Mrs. Tourtellotte. This was one of the many things she insisted upon to make TMHS a first-rate place of higher learning.
4. There are two roofs over the Memorial Room. The 1909 roof and the 1938 roof.
5. Among the many items in the Memorial Room, there are two small bags of 100 Indian Head pennies each dating to circa 1902. They were presumably birthday gifts, we suspect to Mrs. Tourtellotte when she was a child.

JOIN THE TEAM! WE ARE LOOKING FOR

- Webmaster
- Art and history researchers
- Part time Memorial Room curators
- History and art enthusiasts
- Newsletter writers and editors

MORE PICTURES FROM LILLIAN (LABONTE) LAJOIE '46

We received the following from Lillian Lajoie '46. She does not remember who everyone is. Do you recognize anyone?

We are working hard at making the hundreds of photos we have received over the past eight months available to our members at both the new Alumni office to be established during the summer of 2009 and



WE WANT YOUR OLD PICTURES AND STORIES!

We are looking for pictures and stories from your time at TMHS. They can be about anything Tourtellotte and can include athletics, classmates, plays, special events, etc. Each month we would like to feature pictures from the past. Send them to: AlumniAssociation@thompson.ctschool.net or mail them to **Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Office**, 785 Riverside Drive, North Grosvenordale, CT 06255. We'll scan them and send them back.



Above and opposite: These pictures are compliments of Lillian (LaBonte) Lajoie from the class of 1946. Do you recognize any one?

electronically on our new Web Site that we hope to have up and running this coming year. If you have any old photos that can be added to our ever-expanding collections, send them to us and we'll scan them and return them to you if you so desire.

The new Board of Trustees has 90 days to establish by laws by which the new Board will manage the trust. Here's a copy of the ordinance.

ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE JACOB F. TOURTELLOTTE AND HARRIET ARNOLD TOURTELLOTTE TRUST FUND FOR THE MAINTENANCE AND EXTENSION OF THE FREE MEMORIAL HIGH SCHOOL

BE IT ORDAINED, By the Town Meeting of the Town of Thompson, the Town of Thompson hereby accepts the proceeds of the Jacob F. Tourtellotte Trust as received from his Trustees and establishes a permanent municipal Trust Fund to hold and manage said funds, to be known as the Jacob F. Tourtellotte and Harriet Arnold Tourtellotte Trust Fund for the Maintenance and Extension of the Free Memorial High School.

Said Trust shall exist upon the following terms and conditions:

1. The Board of Trustees shall consist of seven (7) members as follows:

The First Selectman of the Town of Thompson, the Chairperson of the Board of Education of the Town of Thompson, the Chairperson of the Board of Finance of the Town of Thompson, the Superintendent of Schools of the Town of Thompson, the President of the Tourtellotte High School Alumni Association, the President of the Thompson Historical Society and the Finance Director/Treasurer of the Town of Thompson. Within ninety (90) days of the effective date of this Ordinance, the Board of Trustees shall prepare and adopt bylaws for the management of the Trust, which bylaws shall be consistent with the purpose of the Trust as herein stated and as stated in the Will and Codicil of Jacob F. Tourtellotte and in conformance with the provisions of State law. A copy of said bylaws shall be placed on file with the office of the Town Clerk of the Town of Thompson upon adoption.

2. Any of the aforementioned individuals may serve by virtue of their office or may designate another member of their respective Board or Society to serve as the designated agent of said Board or Society.

3. The Trustees shall be responsible for hiring, supervising and discharging as necessary such professional investment advisors as they deem appropriate and in the best interest of the Town of Thompson.

4. On the first Monday of February of each year, the Trustees shall hold a meeting and determine the amount of net Trust income which may be prudently appropriated for the ensuing fiscal year, keeping in mind both the purposes of the Trust and its purpose as a permanent fund. The Trustees shall hold a public hearing either simultaneously with or following the aforementioned meeting to hear testimony from the public as to the appropriate expenditures of Trust funds for the ensuing fiscal year.

5. In no event shall principal of the Trust Fund be appropriated.

6. The Board of Trustees shall recommend both short term and long term expenditure options for the Board of Education.

7. Said expenditures shall be appropriated as requested by the Board of Education giving due consideration to the recommendations of the Trustees; such expenditures shall be approved by the Board of Finance and Town Meeting as part of the Annual Budget of the Town of Thompson. No appropriation may be requested by the Board of Education unless it has been previously recommended by the Board of Trustees.

8. It is the intention that this Trust shall be a permanent fund created to honor the wishes of the original donor Jacob F. Tourtellotte and to expend said fund for the maintenance and extension of the Free Memorial High School.

9. One hundred years from the date of this adoption, the then Trustees of the Trust shall review the efficacy and efficiency of the Trust in terms of carrying out its stated mission and shall make such recommendations to the Board of Selectmen and the Thompson legislative body as seem to them necessary and proper.

(Thompson Board of Selectman's office, June 10, 2009)

So Who's Coming???

Over past few Hilltopper editions we have posted the names of those attending the 2009 Alumni Banquet. While putting together this month's newsletter we realized there are simply too many names to list. According to Eileen Deary, TMHSAA secretary, as of the time of this writing only a few of the 300 tickets remain.

We encourage those who are unable to attend the banquet to still join us for the school tour to begin at 3:00 p.m. on June 20, 2009. The tour will start at the new auditorium and bring visitors through the Early Childhood Learning Center, the Thompson Middle School, the new TMHS facilities and the old 1909 building. Refreshments will be offered at the end of the tour.

Also, we encourage those unable to attend this year's event to look to attend next year's... we've already started planning!

Canty Gymnasium



Above: The interior of the new Canty Gymnasium built around 1980. Over the past few months we have discussed the 1909 gym and CPAC and many have asked about the new gym. The new Canty Gymnasium is one of the finest indoor athletic facilities in our area. Photo compliments of Justine Gendreau

Tourtellotte Committee – ALUMNI ASSOCIATION SEARCHING FOR CANDIDATES

We ran this story last month and felt it requires another spot in this month's Hilltopper.

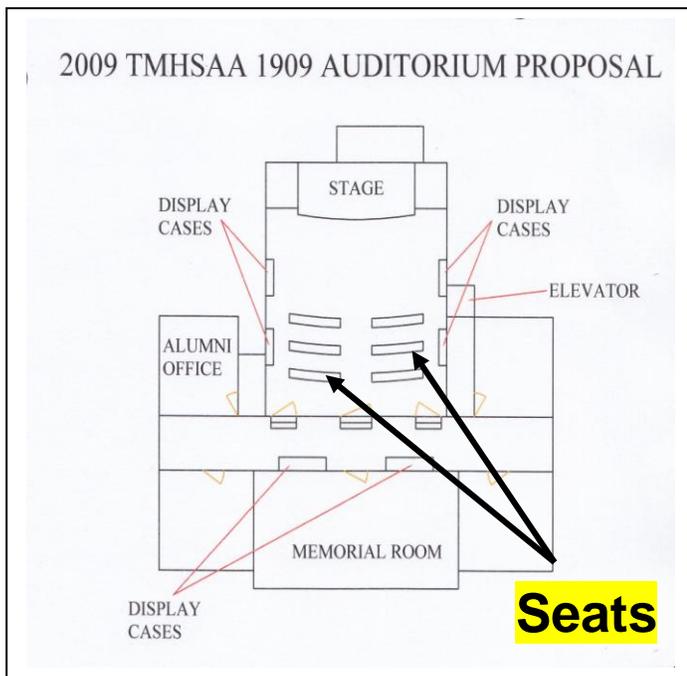
In an unprecedented move the Thompson Board of Education appointed the Tourtellotte Alumni Association as the Cultural and Historic Curators of the 1909 Tourtellotte Building and the Memorial Room and Tourtellotte Collection.

The committee, working in conjunction with Joe Iamartino, the Town Historian and the Alumni Association will be developing strategies to insure not only the care and maintenance of the Memorial Room and 1909 building, but developing a plan for a more active usage strategy of the room and building from a historical, academic perspective. There are many organizations that would be interested in partnering with the Alumni Association to make more people aware of this incredible treasure.

The Executive committee will be recommending members over the next few months. We are seeking candidates who have a special interest and connection to the 1909 Tourtellotte building and might either have a background in art and architectural history or have a special interest in these areas. If you are interested contact the Alumni Association at: TMHSAA@charter.net.

Where are the seats going??

People have asked where the refinished seats are going. Please find the following diagram.



Above: From last month's addition, the above diagram shows where the rebuilt theater seats will be placed.

Free Speech and Challenging Authority was not limited to those students of the 1960's.

BY: Wally Brodeur

All it takes is a mention of some event in the past to trigger a remembrance of some incident that occurred in that distant past. In this instance, it was in Joyce Jewell's "A Look Back" quoted in the Thompson Historical Society Newsletter. She mentions, in reference to the TMHS Class of 1938, that, "students were allowed to eat out-of-doors if they wished." Superintendent Melvin E. Smith had replaced Mr. Colby and as a result some new rules were initiated. (Probably in an effort to curb smoking) A small group of us who were "brown baggers and non-smokers customarily ate our lunches comfortably seated on the carpet of dry pine needles in a shady spot a ways from the southwest corner of the school building.

Mr. Smith issued new rules that specified, "All students during the lunch period must remain within sight of the school building." Our interpretation of the rule was that we had to be able to see the building. However, Jerome Ryscavage (on patrol duty) determined that we were out of sight of the school sentinels in our shady nook and declared that we must report to the superintendent's office for judgment. In numbers there is strength, even though our argument carried no weight with Jerry. So we fell into line, chain gang fashion, with one arm on the right shoulder of the boy in front and marched in step all the way to the superintendent's office. Needless to say, we lost our argument and ended up with a verbal warning to discontinue our dining practice.

About fifty years after graduation, I learned from a former under-classman that our little band of dissidents were held in high esteem for having the audacity to flaunt the high authority by openly demonstrating for our cause. If memory serves me correctly, the dissidents that accompanied me on that fateful day that free speech was upheld were, Henry Surprenant, Herbert Sward, David Cassells, and Stuart Nelson.



Left: the new 2009 TMHS auditorium. The school tour being conducted on June 20, 2009 will begin here and end in the 1909 auditorium. Tour starts at 3:00 p.m.

THOMPSON'S MAYO FAMILY GAVE MUCH KEN MAYO WWII POW

BY: LOUIS ALONGI



Left: Bill Mayo, USA (Left), Ken Mayo, USAAF during WWII. Bernie and Harold Mayo also served during WWII, both serving in the U.S. Navy.

Louis Alongi is the brother-in-law of the Mayo boys. Few families gave to America what the Mayos did. With four brothers who served, one a POW, and two more enlisting during the Korean War,

Here's Lou's story:

Textile mills in New England were located on the banks of large rivers. A large waterwheel was used to turn the gears to power the mill. A textile mill was built in Grosvenordale, Connecticut on the banks of the Quinebaug River. Adelard and Marguerite Mayo decided Grosvenordale was the place to live, work and to raise their growing family of eight boys and two girls.

Donald was their oldest, and then Frank, Bill, Robert, Harold, Ken, Bernie, Claire, John and Mary. Tragically, Robert drowned at the Big Dam when he was six years old. The Mayo kids were growing up in the hard times of the depression in the 1930s. The older boys would have attended Tourtellotte Memorial High School but had to quit school before graduating. They took jobs in the local mills to help support their family. In 1942, Ken was the first Mayo to graduate from high school.

In 1940, WWII was on the horizon and the United States began to build its military by using the Selective Service Act. Bill was the first person drafted in Grosvenordale. After basic training he trained at Ft. Benning, Georgia in General George Patton's Tank Corps.

Bill was in the Army for about nine months before the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Shortly after the attack Bill was granted a short leave to visit his family before being shipped overseas. Bill returned to Ft. Benning, with his girlfriend Sophie and married her in the Ft. Benning chapel in January 1942.

Bill shipped out to North Africa with General Patton's Tank Corps; Sophie went back to Connecticut to wait for him, she would wait for nearly three years before Bill returned in 1945.

Ken enlisted in the U.S. Army Air Force in 1942 and trained as a belly gunner on a B-24, in the 8th Air Force. After gunnery school, Ken was assigned combat duty in England.

After Navy basic training, Bernie, a third son who enlisted, was transferred to a large maintenance depot in Corpus Christi, Texas as an aircraft engine maintenance and repair mechanic. He asked for sea duty and was transferred to an aircraft carrier in San Diego and headed to Pearl Harbor. Bernie then transferred to another aircraft carrier that saw duty in the Guam area. His duty ended in 1946 and he went home to Putnam, CT. Harold a for the son, enlisted in the U.S. Navy and saw duty in India

Bill's tank corps entered Africa through French Morocco. As fate would have it, his brother Harold's ship docked alongside Bill's transport ship. Bill walked across a gang plank and boarded Harold's ship, a customary practice at the time. Bill walked across Harold's ship, not knowing that his brother Harold was onboard.

When Bill finished in Africa, he was transferred with Patton's Tank Corps to England for further training and refitting. During this time, Ken, now with the 446th Bomber Group was also stationed in England. Again fate interceded and Ken and Bill were able to contact each other and finally meet in London. After a warm reunion the brothers agreed to meet at the same place in February of 1944.

Bill wrote to Ken in February, but grew concerned when the letter was returned. As brothers often do, Bill sensed something was wrong. Unable to contact his brother he secured a weekend pass and headed to the same place in London they previously met.



Right: B-24 Liberator. The belly gunner can be seen in this photo with his guns pointing down. Photo compliments of Google Images



Right: The M-4 Tank commonly used by the U.S. Army during WWII. This tank would have been a very familiar sight to Bill Mayo

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When he arrived at the restaurant, much to his disappointment, Bill did not find his brother, but again fate interceded and an airman from Ken's barracks sat down next to him. He looked at Bill, recognized him from a picture Ken kept and said, "You are a Mayo." Bill told him he was looking for his brother. The airmen updated Bill on Ken's status.

Ken flew on a massive bombing run over Germany. He told Bill that Ken's B-24 never returned from the mission. Ken's plane was hit by flack and lost flying speed and altitude. The plane quickly fell behind the rest of the squadron. The pilot attempted to reach Switzerland, a neutral country, but before they could cross into Swiss air space they were badly shot up by German fighters. The pilot gave the order to bail out. The Airman told him 10 parachutes were observed.

Upon hearing this, Bill immediately returned to camp and sent a letter to his mother explaining what happened. Through Bills letter, the Mayo family knew that Ken was shot down and 10 parachutes were counted but they did not know much more. The family had no phone and was not able to contact anyone in the military for further information. Finally on March 17, the War Department sent a telegram by Western Union to Desilets Gas Station in Grosvenordale for Mr. and Mrs. Mayo. The store sent a runner to the Mayo's home informing them that a sealed telegram had arrived. The telegram said that Ken missing in action (MIA) since February 25, 1944

After parachuting to safety, Ken and his fellow airmen were quickly captured by the Germans. The Germans moved the POW's around several times, sometimes using them as human shields on POW ships to prevent Allied bombing runs. Ken's ship was never hit.

During that winter, Ken and his fellow POWs were forced marched for 600 miles, some of the prisoners with no winter clothing or shoes. Two prisoners were handcuffed together and if one fell behind both POWs were shot by the German guards.

The allies invaded Normandy, France on June 6, 1944. Bill landed there on June 7th and saved a tank crewmember from drowning. Their tank, like many that day, sank off the Normandy beach unable to reach the shore.

Just before the end of the war, General Patton's tanks broke through the German lines and rescued Ken's group of POWs. Ken however, was quarantined due to diphtheria. He was sick and lost a lot of weight. After his release, Ken was shipped to a rehab center in France and was finally shipped back to the states and discharged.

In 1947, the Air Force was separated from the Army and became its own branch of military service. Ken reenlisted in the USAF and served a total of 30 years before finally retiring in the 1970's.

When he reenlisted in 1947, he was assigned to a VIP squadron at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, DC. He was a crew chief on the planes used at that time and substitute crew chief on Air Force One. He flew congressional VIP, four presidents and visiting VIPs all over the world. I have 2 photos of the AF Ones he flew on, a small jet that President John liked and another one Bill, Harold and Bernie all returned from WWII safely.

Later, during the Korean conflict, John joined the Army and Mary the USAF in 1951. Six of the nine surviving Mayo siblings served in the military.

Ken is now 85 and living in Sarasota, Florida.

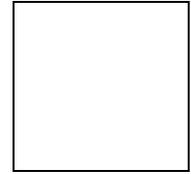


Above: A newspaper article announcing Ken was shot down and missing in action. The picture shows, what many suggested, was an always smiling Ken Mayo. Photo compliments of Lou Alongi.



Left: One of the many U.S. Air Force VIP transports jets assigned to the VIP Squadron based at Andrews Air Force Base near Washington, D.C. Ken also flew as a substitute crew chief on Air Force One. Photo compliments of Lou Alongi.

Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Office
PO Box 437
North Grosvenordale, CT 06255



ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
PLEASE SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS TO:
TMHSAA@charter.net

Alumni Contacts:

- **Rachael (LaFleur) Johnston '75:** 860-923-3377, or Email Rachael at: johnstonre@sbcglobal.net or stop by Rachael's office:

*Johnston and Associates Real Estate
447 Riverside Drive,
Thompson, CT 06277*

- **Eileen (Boutin) Deary '79:** 860-928-2154 or Email Eileen at: tmhsaa@charter.net
- **Deb Spinelli:** 860-923-2350 or Email Deb at: AlumniAssociation@thompson.ctschool.net
- **Joe Lindley '74:** 860-928-5527, 860-428-4154 or Email Joe at: joelindley119@hotmail.com
- **June Duclos '72:** 860-923-9772
- **Jane (Jewell) Ellison '61:** 860-928-7125 or Email Jane at: Jljewell11@wmconnect.com
- **Andy Morrison at WINY RADIO:** Stop by the station or call Andy at 860-928-1350