



# hilltopper

Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association Newsletter

Volume 1, Issue 1

Happy St. Patrick's Day

March 2009

## All in the Family

Alumni Mother and Son Team up – Rachael Johnston '75 and Ryan LaJoie '04



Left: Rachael (LaFleur) Johnston '75 and son Ryan LaJoie '04 at the office of Johnston and Associates located on Riverside Drive in Thompson, CT.

This month we feature two TMHS graduates who graduated nearly thirty years apart. What connects the two is not only Tourtellotte Memorial High School, but biology; they are mother and son. Rachael (LaFleur) Johnston and her son, Ryan LaJoie also share one other commonality. They are both associates of Johnston and Associates Real Estate of Thompson, Connecticut.

Rachael '75, while at TMHS, was Junior Prom Committee member, yearbook staff member, student council and Senior Class President.

After high school she attended Southern Connecticut State College, the Insurance Institute of

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## Thompson Board of Education Appoints TMHSAA - Tourtellotte Historical Curators



Duties Includes the 1909 Tourtellotte Building and Memorial Room

The Thompson Board of Education, in an unprecedented move, appointed the Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association as historical and cultural curators of the 1909 Tourtellotte Building and Memorial Room. This move allows the TMHSAA to work on behalf of the Tourtellottes who donated the building and room and its art and artifacts to the Town of Thompson one hundred years ago.

"We are excited about the appointment," states one TMHSAA official. "This is a big job and we are glad the Thompson Board of Education has enough faith in us to handle such an important part of Thompson's education history."

The Motion submitted by Joseph Lindley read:

*It was resolved at the Board of Finance meeting held on February 19, 2009 that the Board of Selectmen, with the help of the town attorney, draft an ordinance which allows the Town to place the Tourtellotte Trust in a reserved fund for the specific purpose of perpetuating the work of Dr. and Mrs. Tourtellotte and for the preservation, restoration and care of the 1909 Tourtellotte building, and the Memorial Room and its contents*

*During the February 19, 2009 meeting it was also established that while the responsibility of this fund lies with the Town of Thompson through the Board of Finance, the overall responsibility for the care, maintenance and management of the 1909 building, Memorial Room, and its contents lies with the Board of Education.*

*Motion:*

*Understanding that the BOE has overall responsibility for the care and maintenance of the 1909 building to include maintaining its historical and*

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America and The Real Estate School. After school Rachael spent a number of years in the insurance business working as a Commercial Underwriting Manager at Hanover Insurance Company in Worcester, Massachusetts. In 2000 she obtained her Connecticut and Massachusetts Real Estate licenses and her broker's license shortly thereafter. Rachael opened Johnston and Associates Real Estate in 2003, located at 447 Riverside Drive, Thompson, Connecticut. She currently has a staff of seven to include her older son, Ryan.

In addition to son Ryan, who graduated from TMHS in 2004, Rachael also has a son Jeffery who graduated in 2006. She is married to State Representative Shawn Johnston. In her spare time, she loves spending time with family and friends and her "mental health" time at the end of her dock at Alexander's Lake.

Rachael has served as a Federal Political Coordinator to Congressman Joe Courtney and was appointed to the National Associations of Realtors in Washington, DC. She is an adjunct faculty for real estate at Quinebaug Valley Community College. She is a member of the Putnam Rotary, a member of the United Methodist Church of Putnam Board of Trustees, and a 15-year committee member of the Muscular Dystrophy's Turkey Dip, an annual event that has raised hundreds of thousands of dollars. Rachael is also a founding member of the TMHSAA and currently serves as its treasurer.

Son Ryan Lajoie is a member of the class of 2004. While at Tourtellotte, he played four years of varsity soccer, served on the student council and was a member of the FBLA. After high school he attended Western New England College, located in Springfield Massachusetts, and Eastern Connecticut State University, located in Willimantic, Connecticut. He expects to receive his BA in Industrial/Organizational Psychology with a Minor in Business this May.

Ryan obtained his Connecticut Real Estate Salesperson license in 2006 at 20 years of age, making him one of the youngest realtors in the State of Connecticut. He joined the family business shortly thereafter and he and his mom work side-by-side.

Ryan has been an active member of the Thompson Economic Development Commission and is also a long-time volunteer of the Turkey Dip. He lives with his girlfriend Amanda Roy in Thompson, Connecticut. His parting thoughts; "I continue to enjoy many valuable friendships from high school and look forward to reconnecting with old friends through the TMHS Alumni Association."

Johnston and Associates has become one of the most recognized real estate companies in Northeast Connecticut and Ryan and his Mom Rachael can be found at [www.johnstonrealestate.net](http://www.johnstonrealestate.net).

### **Alumni Association Banquet - ALL CLASSES !**

**JUNE 20, 2009 - 6:30 PM - TICKETS: \$30.00 - \$25.00 FOR SRS.**

## **ALUMNI BANQUET COMMITTEE LOOKING FOR RAFFLE ITEMS - TICKETS NOW ON SALE!**

Amazingly, the Alumni Banquet is only three months away! The committee and other volunteers are hard at work putting together the final details. The committee is looking for raffle items for the banquet. Items we can use are gift baskets, tickets, weekend getaways, certificates, or sports memorabilia.

Tickets can be purchased by contacting Deb Spinelli at 860-923-2350, one of the executive staff members, or by stopping by at Johnston and Associates at 447 Riverside Drive, Thompson, Connecticut or by calling Rachael at 860-923-3377. They are going fast so don't wait!

## **Meeting Schedule Set for Year**

During its March meeting the executive committee of the TMHSAA agreed to plan future monthly meetings for the first Wednesday of each month. The new schedule will allow members to better plan their time and make it more convenient for members to attend.

All members are invited to attend the monthly meetings especially during the association development phase. We seek any and all advice. Currently, the meetings are held in the new high school library.

## **THIS FROM THE JUNE 1967 *hilltopper***

### **Students to go to Athletic Camps**

*On Sunday, May 21, [1967] the Tourtellotte cheerleaders and basketball players held a Whist Party and Penny Social. The profits from this social gathering are going toward a summer sports program. Plans are to send five cheerleaders and six basketball players to respective camps. Specific camps have not yet been selected, but various places are under discussion.*

*It is hoped that these camps will promote a better understanding of new methods of cheering - leading the crowds and being helpful at games - - as cheerleaders work with professional coaches. Players will gain in speed and agility, it is hoped, as they learn under experts.*

*The eyes of our town are constantly focused on sports at Tourtellotte. More support for better teams will be a very worthwhile achievement.*

### **The 1967 *hilltopper* staff included:**

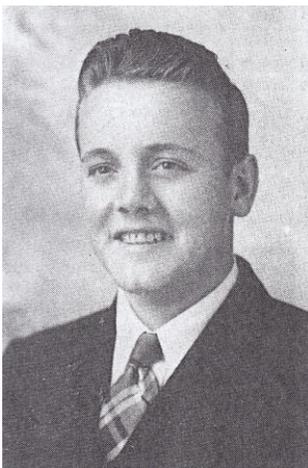
Deborah Olson, Anne Meyers, Dennis Olson, Janet Woodward, Christine Waldron, Marcia Langevin, Pauline Auger, Linda Barylski, Patricia Falke, Joyce Barbour, Jeanne Chauvin, David Cournoyer, Mark Fitzgibbons, John Martland, Greg Simpson, David Rivers, Sara Chandler, Andrea Swanson, Alan Messier and Maureen Mulligan.

## 10 things you may *NOT* know about TMHS

1. According to a 1909 town document, the 1909 Tourtellotte building had, "Eight rooms on the main floor, comprising two class rooms, two recitations rooms, a teacher's room, master's office, main study room and public office. On the second floor are rooms furnished for the sciences and include the chemical, biological, physical and botanical laboratories."
2. Each of the four colonial columns in the front of the 1909 building is made of Indiana limestone and is 24 feet high and three feet in diameter, is made from a solid piece of stone and weighs 13 tons each.
3. Superintendent Jerry Ryscavage, who served the Thompson school system for 23 years, was responsible for consolidating our many district schools into one location in 1960. This was, by all accounts, a considerable and daunting task.
4. Dave Babbitt, President of the TEA, was the Master of Ceremonies at Mr. Ryscavage's testimonial dinner held at Pleasant Valley on May 14, 1969.
5. Prior to 1960, the Town of Thompson still used school districts. Each district had its own school.
6. According to the Nov 1964 Hilltopper, the Honor Roll for the first marking period included seniors Roberta Eddy and Christine Peitruska.
7. In 1964 Latin was still part of the TMHS curriculum.
8. The favorite actors of the class of 1964 were John Wayne and Patty Duke.
9. The favorite musical group of the class of 1964 was the new sensation – The Beatles.
10. In a mocked November 1964 vote, 85% of the TMHS student population voted for Lyndon Baines Johnson. Does anyone remember who Lyndon Baines Johnson's first Vice President was?

### Visit the TMHS Website at:

<http://www.thompson.ctschool.net/TMHS/index.html>



*Phil Masley was not the only Masley who graduated in 1947. His younger brother Paul was also part of the 1947 class. In a unique twist of fate, WWII, which placed Phil's high school career on hold, Phil was able to graduate with his kid brother Paul. Paul, after high school attempted to enter the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, but that's another story. Photo – 1947 yearbook.*

*architectural significance, and the care and management of the Memorial Room and its contents, and understanding that these responsibilities lay outside the typical duties of a Board of Education, I move we appoint the Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association as the curators of the Memorial Room and historical overseers of the 1909 Tourtellotte building.*

*To this end, I further move the executive committee of the Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association appoint a committee, from this point called the Tourtellotte Committee, is comprised of members of the Tourtellotte Memorial Alumni Association. The Tourtellotte Committee to be comprised of not more than five members and have sufficient interest and background to develop a committee charter and to establish a 1909 Tourtellotte building and Memorial Room usage and building modification guidelines. These usage and modification guidelines to perpetrate and be in accordance with the original wishes and desires of Dr. and Mrs. Tourtellotte, and presented to the Thompson Board of Education for final approval no later than July 1, 2009. All normal exterior and interior care and maintenance of the building will remain with the Thompson Public Schools.*

*To support this endeavor I further move we direct the facilities manager to convert the 1909 auditorium into a Board of Education room/conference room, and Alumni Association school historical display room, the final configuration to be developed with the input of the facilities manager and school administration. I also move that the facility director be directed to establish a TMHS Alumni Association office on the second floor of the 1909 building, on the same floor as the Memorial Room for the purposes of archiving and storing historical documents and school artifacts. This to be accomplished before June 20, 2009 – The Centennial Alumni Banquet and school tour.*

*Further, the Thompson Board of Education directs the Tourtellotte Committee with establishing a strategy to repair, inventory, and value the Memorial Room and its contents. Funds necessary for this will be requested from the Board of Finance through the Board of Education and drawn from the Tourtellotte funds.*

*Last, the Tourtellotte Committee is further directed to develop a strategy that allows for the perpetual use of the building and Memorial Room as an educational and historical resource for future generations of Thompson citizens.*

The TMHSAA will discuss the formation of the Tourtellotte Committee and specific responsibilities during our March 18<sup>th</sup> meeting. We are seeking any and all input especially from those with a history or art background. Anyone interested, please contact Joe Lindley at 860-928-5527.

## Photos from the past:

### The First Floor of the 1909 Building

The old school was a big part of our lives. Much work has been done over the years to preserve the Tourtellotte building. This is a recent picture of the main hallway on the first floor. Recognize anything?



(Photo compliments of TMHSAA)

### DR. PHILIP T. MASLEY '47



Phil and his wife Alma. Photo compliments of Betty Willet LeClair

WWII  
Veteran -  
Long-  
Time  
Educator  
at CCSU

The description placed in 1947 TMHS yearbook, according to many, best describes Dr. Philip Masley '47. It reads:

"Phil is a charming companion, and a really good guy, has done well in his studies, taking junior and senior work together this year. His courage, cheerfulness, and industry have won him respect from students and faculty alike. You are bound to win Phil."

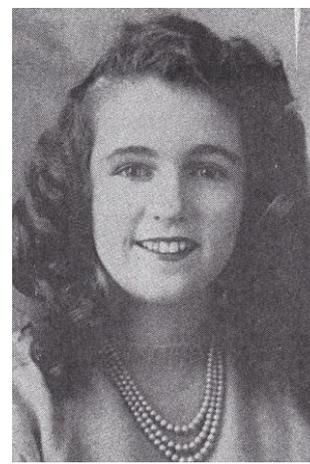
Phil Masley was born in Webster, Massachusetts to Ignatius and Mary (Delim) Masley. He was raised in Thompson and with other members of his family attended TMHS. While at Tourtellotte, Phil was a member of the Glee Club and a member of the TMHS choir during his freshman and sophomore years. He was also President of the Student Council his senior year.

His TMHS activity list is small when compared to some and for a very good reason. Phil was one of the many Tourtellotte students who answered the call of duty when his country needed him. Originally part of the class of 1945, he put his high school education on hold and according to his brother Steven, and wife Alma, Phil joined the Navy during WWII.

He returned to Tourtellotte after serving in the Navy for two and a half years, and completed his junior and senior years in one year. Upon graduating from high school Phil attended the University of Connecticut where he received a Bachelor's degree from the agricultural school. He later went on to earn his Master's and Ph.D. After college, he worked for the State of Connecticut as a researcher before securing a position as a professor of technical education at Central Connecticut State University, where he served many years.

He married his high school sweetheart Alma Hayes '47 on June 9, 1951 and he and Alma went on to have three children; Timothy, Maureen, and Kathryn.

Phil is fondly remembered by many in town as a hard working, loyal person who went above and beyond. He passed away on January 27, 2009. He and Alma were married for 58 years.



Philip Masley- left, Alma Hayes Masley- right. Source: 1947 TMHS Yearbook. Alma and Phil were married on June 9, 1951.

### ALUMNI IN NEED OF DISPLAY CASES FOR 1909 AUDITORIUM

The information, historical documents, artifacts and other TMHS related items have been flowing into the TMHSAA office. With the Board of Education's recent auditorium and alumni office approval (see page 1), we now have a place to store and display these items for future generations of Tourtellotte graduates. We are however, in dire need of glass display cases, similar to those used in a museum, or similar to those used in the cigar shops of yore.

The cases will be used to display many of the older and more historically significant items we have collected. We can make arrangements to have them picked up anywhere in New England.

Anyone wishing to make a donation to this cause or volunteer to construct these cases can call Joe Lindley at 860-928-5527 or Email Joe at joelindley119@hotmail.com

**PHOTOS FROM THE PAST**

We recently received these photos from Lil Lajoie. If you have any photos you would like to share, please send them along to TMHSAA at 785 Riverside Drive, No. Grosvenordale, CT 06255.



*Cheerleaders Class of 1946 and 1947.  
Compliments of Lil Lajoie.*



*Class of 1946. Compliments of Lil Lajoie.*



*Photo compliments of Lil Lajoie. Lil was uncertain what year this was (1946 or 1947).*



*Photo compliments of Lil Lajoie. We are certain many of our alum will recognize these charming young ladies.*

**Sons and Daughters**

The following is a poem written by Jane (Jewell) Ellison on January 25, 1991 during the first Gulf War.

Since that time, dozens of Thompson young men and women have followed the call of duty. Several are now serving in harm's way today. We offer them all our best wishes and prayers for a safe return. Enjoy!

*Dear sons and daughters of Tourtellotte  
Who walked the halls among us.  
We taught you well, we loved you strong  
And now our arms have let you GO.*

*You're one of us, you're all we've got.  
We hope, we pray, we ever trust  
That battle's strife won't keep you long  
And arms can take you back AGAIN.*

*Dear little girl, Dear little boy,  
You're grown and off to war.  
Your pencil is down, your books are away  
and boots and guns are now your gear.*

*You are our pride, you are our joy. We loved you then,  
we love you more.*

*Always in our thought you stay,  
Forever in our hearts you're near.*



*Left: The 1909 auditorium as it appears today. The TMHSAA hopes to have the auditorium ready for the June Alumni Banquet.*

## From Past Hilltoppers

The following is from the November 1964 Hilltopper.

### **New Teachers at TMHS**

Perhaps you have wondered, at one time or another, about the new faces on the staff at Tourtellotte Memorial High School – the schools they attended, where they are from, their pastimes, and if they enjoy teaching at Tourtellotte.

Here are a few statistics about the three additions to the staff which should clarify some of the questions in your mind.

An addition in the History and English Department is Miss Ursula Szydlik, graduated last year with a Bachelor of Arts Degree from Annhurst College, South Woodstock, Connecticut. Here, she majored in English and minored in History. She is now teaching English I and II and World History. Miss Szydlik's hometown is Southbridge, Mass. She graduated from Wells High School in the same town. Her usual pastime is reading. However, at present she is occupied with preparations for her forthcoming marriage on Thanksgiving Day.

When asked to comment on her stay at Tourtellotte up to the present time, she gave this reply: "Very enjoyable. I like the students best of all. I find them some of the nicest people I've ever known."

Miss Evelyn Antos is an addition in the Language Department. Miss Antos is from Webster, Massachusetts where she graduated from Bartlett High School. She also graduated from Annhurst College last year with a Bachelor of Arts Degree. Her college major was Latin. She is now teaching French and Latin.

Miss Antos's pastimes are bowling and reading.

When asked if she had any comments on her stay at Tourtellotte, her reaction was: "Students are most cooperative. The atmosphere is congenial and conducive to better learning."

Our new Home Economics teacher is Mrs. Seney of Woodstock, Conn. She graduated from Abington High School and Farmington State College with a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education. In college her major was Home Economics.

Unlike the other new staff members, Mrs. Seney has had eight years of experience in teaching. She previously taught home economics and physical education at Woodstock Academy.

Her pastimes are walking and outdoor activities. Her comment on her stay at Tourtellotte was: "enjoyable; the kids are great!"

We wish the very best to the new staff members and hope that their stay will continue to be as enjoyable and worthwhile as it has been in the past.

Kathy Donnelly

Another article found in the November 1964 Hilltopper was about one of the school's best golfers – Susan Pompeo. Sue is recognized as one of the best female golfers ever to come from Thompson. The article highlights some of Sue's early accomplishments. It reads:

### **Sue Pompeo Spends Exciting Summer – Wins New England Junior Golf**

It is very seldom that a school can boast of having a New England champion, but Tourtellotte can do just that. Senior Susan Pompeo is New England Amateur gold champion. She won the junior crown in the New England Women's Amateur golf tournament played this past summer in Augusta, Maine. She placed fifth in the over-all standings against the top women golfers in New England.

Sue began golfing five years ago as a member of the Raceway Golf Course in Thompson, Connecticut where she was women's champion for three consecutive years. As a member of Wachusett Country Club, West Boylston, Mass., she was women's club champion there. She has been the only female player on the Tourtellotte golf team for the past three years, and has defeated many male opponents from neighboring schools. Last spring she played in the TMHS intramural golf tournament and was victorious.

Sue is now a member of Pleasant Valley Country Club in Sutton, Mass., and recently won the club championship there by eighteen strokes. This past summer she played in the Lady Carling Open and scored the top amateur position and scored better than many of the country's top professional "proettes." She also participated in the Massachusetts Junior Golf Championship, held at the Country Club in Brookline, Mass., and again brought home another first place trophy. In the Worcester County Association Championship, Sue placed third, only three strokes behind the winner yet nine strokes ahead of the fourth place finisher. As in recent years, she played in the Tri-State match and the Inter-City match as a member of the Massachusetts Girls' team which took first place.

Thus Susan has won much recognition and many trophies and praises. I'm sure that the students of TMHS wish Sue the best of luck in gaining much more success!!

Roberta Eddy



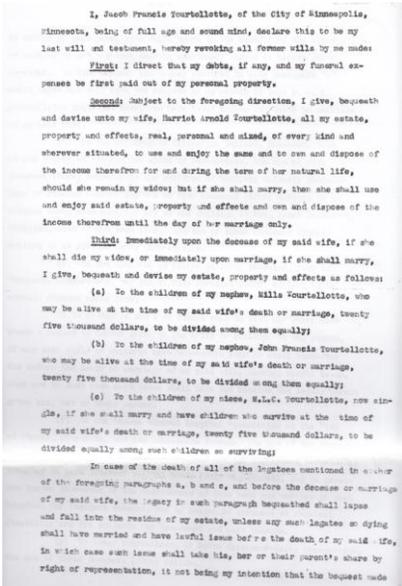
With all the previous **hilltopper** reports about past boys' basketball teams, we should not forget the many female players who have distinguished themselves on and off the court. Left, is one of our more recent female basketball standouts, Megan Berthiaume '07. After an outstanding middle school and high school basketball career, Megan went on to play at UCONN, Avery Point. She is now working on completing her college degree.

## Upcoming Events: MARK YOUR CALANDERS!

- Alumni Banquet – June 20, 2009, Thompson Speedway 6:30-11:00 PM.
- School tour to include Tourtellotte Memorial High School, and Memorial Room - June 20, 2009. Tour starts at 3:00 PM in the new TMHS auditorium.

### Tourtellotte Will

Several very dedicated community members, to include several alumni members, have been working diligently to establish a means to continue the great work of the Tourtellottes. As we all know the Tourtellotte Memorial High School was donated to the Town of Thompson in 1909 with sufficient funds to operate the school for many years. Without this generous gift Thompson would have undoubtedly had considerable challenges in building its own high school.



*Left is one page of the Tourtellotte will established in the early 1900's. Dr. and Harriett Tourtellotte took great pains in establishing a memorial to their two deceased daughters. Dr. Tourtellotte fell ill and never saw the gift he gave to the Town of Thompson in 1909. An empty chair at the 1909 dedication ceremony held his place in history. Photo compliments of the TMHSAA.*

## MEMBERSHIP INFORMATION

Initial membership due at time of application, yearly renewals due January 1<sup>st</sup> 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](mailto:joelindley119@hotmail.com)

### This month in 1909...

- The federal government established the Bureau of Investigation, later called the Federal Bureau of Investigation.
- Franklin D. Roosevelt was born.

### This month in 1959...

- The Barbie doll debut.
- The Marx Brothers made their last TV appearance.
- The top three songs of March, 1959 were Venus, by Frankie Avalon, Charlie Brown, by The Coasters and Alvin's Harmonica, by Alvin and the Chipmunks.

### The Great Consolidator – Superintendent Jerome Ryscavage

Other than possibly the Tourtellottes themselves, few throughout the town's history have had a greater impact on Thompson schools more than Superintendent Jerome Ryscavage. Jerry, as he was called by his friends, served the town for more than two decades during one of education's greatest times of change. When Jerry came to Thompson schools the elementary and middle schools were still housed in district school houses scattered throughout the town.

Jerry, through his vision, guidance and perseverance helped guide the town through the school consolidation efforts, which was opposed by many community members. It took Jerry nearly ten years to realize his dream of a consolidated school. The effort culminated with the opening of what we now know as the Thompson Middle School, formerly called the Thompson Memorial School in honor of those who established the path followed by many of today's educators.

Jerry was also responsible for many other innovative education ideas. A June, 1969 Worcester Telegram article picks up the story. It reads:

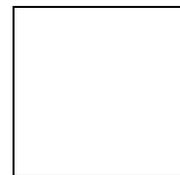
*Perhaps the greatest was the consolidation of six small elementary schools into Thompson Memorial School in 1960. But he has been responsible for many other renovations in the public schools, including introduction of kindergarten, music, cafeteria, art, special education, remedial reading, work study, industrial arts, guidance, and teacher aid programs. Educational television also was introduced under his tenure.*

*"What I'd like to see in the future is a curriculum that's more individualized, either by reducing the pupil-teacher ratio or getting more teacher aids. I'm a strong believer in teacher aids. It's worked out beautifully here."*

*He said that all he wants to do now (he retires either Aug. 7 or 15) is "to travel, relax and otherwise take it easy."*

Look for more on Jerry in future issues of the **hilltopper**.

Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Office  
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED  
PLEASE SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS TO:  
[AlumniAssociation@thompson.ctschool.net](mailto:AlumniAssociation@thompson.ctschool.net)

**WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU - SEND US YOUR STORIES TO [ALUMNIASSOCIATION@THOMPSON.CTSCHOOL.NET](mailto:ALUMNIASSOCIATION@THOMPSON.CTSCHOOL.NET)**