



hilltopper

Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Association Newsletter

Volume 3 , Issue 5

Welcome Back Students!

September 2010

Jane (White) Johnson '61 August 11, 1943 – October 18, 2009



Left: Jane (White) Johnson, Class of 1961. Jane is survived by her husband David Johnson '57, sons Lars '88, and Ragnar '91, sister Sally '72 and brother Justin (Judd) '65. Jane was an active part of our community and school for many years. Photo compliments of the White and Johnson family.

BY: SALLY WHITE '72 (Jane's Sister)

Nearly a year ago, October 18, 2009, Jane passed away at her home in East Thompson. She and her husband David E. Johnson (TMHS 57') had celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary in June. Just 66 years old, she was living a fun, productive retirement after nearly 30 years as an elementary school teacher. Consistent with her character, Jane fought and exceeded expectations levied on her by the rigors of a severe form of brain cancer.

From September 1957 to June of 1961 Jane White earnestly studied and participated in multiple

high school activities, including serving as class president for her freshman, junior and senior years. All of her life, Jane embraced whatever opportunity was granted and whatever task needed to be accomplished. One of her talented abilities was that of a soprano singing voice; she was a member of the TMHS choir and Glee Club all four years. As a first grader I was thrilled to hear her sing a solo from the stage of the "new" gym. She also was a wonderful piano player and made the famed Steinway donated by Mrs. Tourtellotte sing also. As my brother Justin White (class of 65') said, "Jane is a tough act to follow."

Her freshman year was exceedingly busy as a cheerleader, member of the debating club, choir, glee club, and class president. She even attained Perfect Attendance that year! Additionally, she worked as a babysitter many, many hours and began dating her future husband. Ironically, my sister loved to sleep but she did not let that attraction rule her life. Jane was never bored or daunted by life; she lived a vital and active life.

Selected for Girl's State as a junior, she also became a member of the National Honor Society that year. Senior year she was the Yearbook Editor-in-Chief along with other school activities. Her future husband, David, did his practice teaching at TMHS (mathematics) in 61' and Jane was one of his students! That was surely a busy and exciting year.

Jane left the hectic years at TMHS and graduated from UCONN with bachelor and master degrees in sociology and education. Jane and Dave were married in June of 1964. They had two sons, Lars and Ragnar, who have had their own families and truly completed Jane's life with the addition of two grandsons and two granddaughters.

Life and people were fascinating to Jane – she loved to be places where there were lots of people. Surely this is a clue to her being voted Most Popular of her class. Jane's enthusiasm for life continued with many interests and activities. One of her loves was the great outdoors and in particular that of historic stone sites; their discovery, study and preservation as well as serving as the Secretary of the Early Sites Research Society.

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Thompson Community Day October 3, 2010



Memorial Room Visited By NE CT Arts and Cultural Personnel

On September 3, 2010, Ellen Silbermann of the NE Arts and Cultural Assessment team visited the Tourtellotte Memorial Room and Tourtellotte High School. Ellen is currently working with the Connecticut Commission on Culture and Tourism (CCCT) and the Northeast Council of Governments in an effort to find better ways in which to use the cultural treasures located in NE Connecticut, the Memorial Room being one of the most significant.

Like many visitors to the Memorial Room, Ellen was caught off guard when first stepping into the room. Several days after her visit she sent the following letter.

[Dear TMHSAA]

I want to thank you for such a personalized and detailed tour last Friday of the Tourtellotte Museum and Memorial High School! As I said, to date now, this was the most special tour and the most incredible community assets I've seen so far! The outstanding art and artifacts speak for themselves, but your narration of the stories and history made the tour such an outstanding experience!

From the Tourtellotte museum to Roseland Cottage, I toured the two finest historically significant treasures in our region in one day!

What a wonderful letter to the students and citizens [the TMHSAA] wrote from Mrs. Tourtellotte's perspective! I can only imagine that Mr. & Mrs. Tourtellotte would be so honored to have their story told this way! It should give each person from Thompson a great sense of pride that this institution and museum are their's to enjoy for many generations! I could actually feel her emotion and desire to help others while reading the paper!

Thank you for the time you spent showing me the complex and museum. I greatly appreciate what I have seen and will portray to the public the importance of this little known treasure! I found my diamond in the rough!

The report I am completing will have a short description of the museum and my findings, but I hope that with the formation of a Regional Arts Agency in the future, we can provide the museum with the notoriety it truly deserves!

As I mentioned, I would love to have An Ming Truxes and John Cusano from the Commission on Culture and Tourism tour the museum next time they come to NE CT! I will let you know next time they plan to come and see if we can set up a meeting and tour of the museum.

Sincerely,

Ellen Silbermann
NE CT Arts & Cultural Assessment Coordinator
www.nectarts.org - nectculturalsurvey@gmail.com

2011 TMHS Project Graduation Important Dates:

For a number of years volunteers from Thompson have worked diligently on an annual undertaking called Project Graduation. Project Graduation is a national effort that provides a safe alternative for graduating high school seniors during graduation night. The effort according to many has drastically reduced the number of teenage fatalities while providing a night the graduating seniors will never forget.

To fund this project, the volunteers run several fund raisers during the year. Let's help them become successful.

Important dates:



CAN & BOTTLE DRIVE AND BAKE SALES

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 11, OCTOBER 2, NOVEMBER 6 and DECEMBER 4, 2010, at the Thompson Town Hall from 9:00 a.m. to noon

ALL CLASS OF 2011 PARENTS ARE WELCOMED TO PROJECT GRADUATION 2011 MEETING

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 6:30 – 8:30 p.m. at the Thompson Public Library

PASTA DINNER

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 19, 2010, 12:00 to 2:00 p.m. at Valley Springs Sportsman Club, North Grosvenordale, CT. Donations Adults and Take out - \$8.00 Children and seniors - \$5.00. Parent volunteers are needed. Tickets available at the door but we ask that you reserve your seat before September 16. Call or email Denise at: 860-928-5166 or PG.2011@hotmail.com to reserve or purchase tickets.

Mr. Daigle's Newest Creation -Abe Lincoln



Left: Long-time TMHS art teacher Guy Daigle's newest project – Abraham Lincoln. This is the second such project Mr. Daigle has undertaken. His first, Harmony, was dedicated approximately one year ago and now sits in the front foyer of the new TPS Auditorium. Harmony became a once in a life-time learning opportunity for many TMHS art students. The Lincoln project is unique in that, in spite of President Lincoln's fame, there are few, possibly none, full statues of him in New England. Mr. Daigle is currently searching for grants and contributions to help offset the fabrication costs. If you are interested in helping Mr. Daigle contact us at TMHSAA@Charter.net.

Visit the TMHS Website at:

www.thompsonpublicschools.org

5 things you may *NOT* know about TMHS

1. Showers were first installed at TMHS during the 1910/1911 school year.
2. Mrs. Tourtellotte presented the Town of Thompson with two houses in 1915 - one for the janitor and one for the principal.
3. According to the 1926 Thompson Annual Report, on December 4, 1925, the TMHS Boys' basketball team defeated the St. Louis Saints 106 - 8.
4. The 1917/1918 annual school report stated: "Physical essentials for all schools are: Fresh air and proper heating, sanitary toilets and proper lighting and seating."
5. A night school was established during the 1915 school year at TMHS to teach "foreigners" English, American History and Civics. We heard that Jim Sali's dad was among the many night students. (Do you have a story about TMHS night schools?)

JOIN THE TEAM! WE ARE LOOKING FOR

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

CANTY INDUCTION CEREMONY CT High School Coaches Association

NOVEMBER 18, 2010 AT THE AQUA TURF,
SOUTHINGTON, CONNECTICUT

After months of work, long-time TMHS coach and TMHS State Basketball Champion Jim Canty '29, will be formally listed among Connecticut's very best coaches. The Connecticut High School Coaches Association Hall of Fame Committee has announced it will add Tourtellotte Memorial's Jim Canty to their prestigious Hall of Fame list during their 2010 Induction Ceremony to be held at 7:00 p.m. on November 18, 2010 at the Aqua Turf Club located in Southington, Connecticut.

This induction will complete the well-deserved hat trick for Jim Canty as he is already listed in the TMHS Athletic Hall of Fame and the New England Basketball Hall of Fame.

We would love to have as many of Mr. Canty's ex-players and students there as possible! Tickets are on sale for \$45.00 each and can be obtained by contacting Joe Lindley at 860-928-5527 or joelindley119@hotmail.com or Deb Spinelli, TMHS Athletic Director at: 860-923-2350 or dspinelli@thompsonpublicschools.org Rides will be available



THE BUSY CANDY COUNTER

Above: We found this picture among the many Gladys Tucker '52 and Rita Rohr '54 have collected over the past year or so. It is listed as a "candy counter in front of the gym in the basement." Photo compliments of Gladys Tucker '52

Sgt. Ed Charlton '05 Returns from Iraq

The TMHS Alumni Association would like to welcome back Sgt. Edward Charlton (CTARNG), TMHS Class of '05, from a year-long deployment in Iraq.

Ed served with the 250th Engineer Company

as a Combat Medic. To see Ed's full story see our March/April 2010 edition of the Hilltopper.

Tom Witkowski, Nick Rovero, Dan Zorola, Ian Faucher are among the many recent TMHS graduates who have bravely served overseas in hostile areas. If you have a story of a TMHS grad serving overseas send it to TMHSAA@Charter.net.



Left: Jane (White) Johnson June 1961 on her high school graduation day. This picture was taken in the front main foyer of the 1909 Tourtellotte Memorial High School building. Center is Jane's sister Sally '72, and brother Justin '65. The painting you see in the background is now hanging in the Memorial Room. Photo compliments of the White family.

JoAnn (Witkowski) Thorstenson '79

During a recent visit to Facebook we found a picture of one of our members while she served in the United States Army. We felt it would make a great where-are-they-now story. Enjoy!



Left: GI-JoAnn (Witkowski) Thorstenson '79 with her M-16A1 assault rifle while stationed in Pyongtaek, South Korea. Above: JoAnn in a recent photo sporting her all-too-familiar smile.

BY: Staff Writer

We are always amazed at the number of Hiltoppers who served in the military upon leaving Tourtellotte Memorial. Many did their jobs for the flag quietly, never talking much about what they did no matter what the kind of job they held. Over the years we have found alumni filling every military niche from privates to general, infantrymen to pilots – special ops to cooks - many have given their lives – many are still in harms way.

A recent Facebook search found a picture of JoAnn (Witkowski) Thorstenson from the Class of '79 while she served in South Korea (above).

After graduating from TMHS in 1979, JoAnn attended UCONN, Radcliffe Hicks School of Agriculture, Storrs, Connecticut. JoAnn reports that "Even though I really enjoyed school, I was bored and restless. Paul Houghton, TMHS guidance counselor at the time, was also a close family member. Anyone who ever knew Paul, knew that he was a great resource (and a Marine veteran). His daughter, my cousin Deb, was enlisting in the Army reserves and it sounded like fun. My father (TMHS '52 and U.S. Coast Guard veteran) encouraged me to follow my instincts. I initially enlisted in the reserves, did basic and medical training, came back home, and missed it way too much. I reenlisted in the regular Army and the rest is just for good story telling."

JoAnn started her military career as a Combat Medic and Patient Care Specialist. She also trained as an Administrative Specialist. Her duty assignments

included a stint with the 501st M.I. Group, United States Field Station Korea (USAFSK), Pyongtaek, Republic of South Korea.

Other Witkowski/Thorstenson family members who served included brother-in-law Gary, TMHS Class of '73, who recently retired as a Brigadier General, brother Michael TMHS Class of '77, brother Tom TMHS Class of '80, and nephew Tommy TMHS Class of '04, who just recently returned from serving in Iraq.

After her duties to Uncle Sam were complete, JoAnn returned home and married Chuck Thorstenson, TMHS Class of '75. Jo and Chuck have two sons, Tiger, TMHS '06, and Charlie TMHS '10. Jo worked with Tom and Deb (Audette) Vajcovec TMHS 78 for approximately 10 years before taking some time off to be a full-time mom, something she greatly enjoyed. She is currently employed as a Senior Administrator to Leadership at the Wilson Language Training Corporation.

While at TMHS JoAnn played softball, although she confesses this wasn't her strong point. She was also a majorette and school mascot. When we asked her who her favorite teacher was she offered, "Easy! Mrs. Delage. She was the absolute best teacher ever!"

JoAnn's sense of service did not stop when she left the military. Among the many areas in which she has volunteered over the years, JoAnn and husband Chuck dedicated more than a decade of service to the Thompson Little League helping the league through major upgrades, changes and events. Their work was instrumental in making the Thompson Little League a benchmark for many in youth baseball. Their extraordinary service was recently recognized by the league with the prestigious *Thompson Little League Life Member Award*. JoAnn currently serves on the executive staff of the Thompson Historical Society.

Son Charlie is a 2010 TMHS graduate and will be attending Quinebaug Valley Community College this fall. Tiger will be graduating this December with a Bachelor's Degree in Business Management from Salem State College.

JoAnn, Chuck, Tiger, and Charlie reside in Thompson, Connecticut.



Left: JoAnn (Witkowski) Thorstenson '79 sporting the Army's new battle dress uniform (BDU's). JoAnn doesn't look very happy in this photo. It is our consensus that any U.S. Army first sergeant worth his salt walking into this office would respond to this look with "Witkowski! ... Um... Never mind specialist, I'll get it myself."

TMHS ATHLETIC HALL of FAME UPDATE



Above: Plaques awarded to the TMHS Athletic Hall of Famers are now on display at the main entrance of the TMHS Canty Gymnasium. Thanks to the TPS maintenance department and Romeo "Mush" Blaine '73 for their help.

Looking For Special Help Film Converters - Memorial Room Hosts

We are looking for someone to help convert old film to our digital records and preserve them for those who follow. The items include TMHS basketball game films, plays, and concerts.

We are also looking for volunteers to help with manning the Memorial Room during the October 3rd Walktober Fest. Hosts do **not** have to have an intimate knowledge of the room. They simply have to meet and greet guests.

Anyone interested in the above can contact us at TMHSAA@Charter.net.

More from the White and Johnson Family Collection



Left: We pulled this from JoAnn (Witkowski) Thorstenson's Facebook. There are now many more than 239 jobs available to women in the military as they now serve alongside all their male counterparts in almost every military occupation specialty in all branches. The WAC left (circa WWII) is sporting an Army Air Corp patch on her left shoulder.



Top: 1961 Washington Trip - Putnam Train Station – Shown here are Jane Jewell, Louise Naum, Henrietta Groh, Jane White, Margaret Jablonski, and Carol Deberardinis. Center-left: Jane in a more recent photo with her always-present smile. Center-right: Jane with future husband Dave Johnson '57. Bottom: 1961 Graduation in the "New Gymnasium."

CHARLIE SENEY '39 FINDS MISSING WWII VET AND IS ASKING FOR HELP

During a recent cross check of the TMHS digital copy of the World War II Honor Role, and the one located in the front foyer of the TMHS 1909 building, Charlie Seney '39 found an omission. Charlie reports:

I find one name omitted from this list. I checked the memorial tablet in the entrance to TMHS and the name of Normand Dery is not on your list. He was in the U.S. Army in WWII, a graduate of Class 1942 as evidenced in a picture hanging in Danielle's office. [Norman is], the one who won a contest in 1938 or 1939 when he coined the name "HILLTOPPER" for the school newspaper. I don't recall what it was called before that. The edition which carried the story got lost when I gave it to my nephew Merrill to give it to Normand's father [son?] Paul Dery. Perhaps there's a copy floating around among the alumni.

If anyone has a copy of the original Hilltopper please contact us at: TMHSAA@Charter.net. We would love to make it part of our archives. We can scan and return the original to you.

Thanks Charlie for finding this error!



Above: The 1939 TMHS Boys Soccer Team. In the picture you can see Greek Village and the old Riverside baseball field in the background. Photo compliments of Charlie Seney '39.

TMHSAA Forming Scholarship Committee

Over the past several months we have received donations from TMHSAA members and past Project Graduation Committees for the purpose of establishing a scholarship fund. To better handle these funds the TMHSAA is forming a scholarship committee. The group will meet in October to begin the process of establishing committee by-laws and award criteria. Anyone interested in becoming part of the committee can contact Rachael Johnston at johnstonre@sbcglobal.net or at 860-923-3377.

Research Lists TMHS Superintendents and Principals

For many months Gladys Tucker '52, Danielle (Cote) Pederson '00 and Barbara Godzik, long-time Thompson Public School Administrator's Assistant have searched hundreds of records to compile a complete list of all past and present Thompson Public Schools superintendents and principals. This, according to our inquiries, is the first time this information has been collected on one list.

If you have any information that could help us with this project please contact us at: TMHSAA@Charter.net.

Who was the superintendent and high school principal when you were at TMHS???

ADMINISTRATOR'S NAME	DATE OF HIRE	SEPARATION DATE	Service Length
Superintendent's			
Mr. George Hathaway	1909	1913	4 Years
Miss Adeline Steinberg	Sept. 1914	Dec. 1914	4 Months
Mr. Russell H. Bellows	Jan. 1914	Jun. 1914	6 Months
Mr. Fay E. Kutcher	1915	1919	4 Years
Mr. F.E. Harrington	1917	1919	2 years
Mr. Elwell F. Kimball	1920	1927	7 Years
Mr. Clarence Michaels	1928	1929	1 Year
Mr. W.G. Colby	1929	1937	8 Years
Mr. M. Smith	1937	1938	1 Year
Mr. Buckley	1938	1947	9 years
Mr. Ryscavage	1947	1969	22 Years
Dr. Trainor	Jul. 1969	Nov. 1974	5 years
Mr. Minnich - Interim	Nov. 1974	Jul. 1975	1 year
Dr. Matthias	Aug. 1975	Jun. 1979	4 years
Dr. Hardy	Jul. 1979	Jun. 1995	16 years
Dr. Favolise	Jul. 1995	Mar. 2001	6 years
Dr. Hardy - Interim	Mar. 2001	Aug. 2001	5 months
Ms. Hasz - Acting	Sept. 2001	Nov. 2001	2 months
Dr. Siminski	Nov. 2001	Aug. 2005	4 years
Ms. Collette Trailor - Interim	Aug. 2005	Dec. 2005	4 months
Dr. Jolin	Jan. 2006	Present	3 years
High School Principal			
Mr. Elwell F. Kimball	1919	1927	8 Years
Mr. W.G. Colby	1928	1937	9 Years
Mr. Frank M. Buckley	1938	1947	9 years
Mr. Ryscavage	1947	1961	13 Years
Mr. Kelley	1961	Jul. 1965	
Mr. Fatsi	Jul. 1965	Jun. 1989	24 years
Mr. Babbitt	Jul. 1989	Jun. 1997	8 years
Dr. Graner	Jul. 1997	Sept. 1999	2 years
Mr. Gamache	Aug. 1999	Jan. 2000	5 months
Mr. Thompson	Jan. 2000	Jun. 2000	6 months
Mr. Klaiman	Jul. 2000	Jun. 2002	2 years
Mr. Hackenson	Jul. 2002	Jun. 2005	3 years
Mr. Mitchell - Interim	Jul. 2005	Jun. 2006	1 year
Mr. Mitchell	Jul. 2006	Jun. 2009	3 years
Dr. Hebert	Jul. 2009	Present	
High School Vice Prin.			
Mr. Johnson	Jul. 1965	Jun. 1977	12 years
Mr. Babbitt	Jul. 1984	Jun. 1989	5 years
Mr. Bisceglia	Jul. 1989	Jun. 1990	1 year
Mr. Gamache	Jul. 1990	Jun. 1992	2 years
Mr. Gamache	Jul. 1992	Jun. 1995	3 years
Mr. Spurling	Aug. 1999	Dec. 1999	4 months
	Apr. 2000	Jun. 2000	
Mr. Pisaturo	Jul. 2000	Present	
Grade 8/9 Principal			
Dr. Hebert	Jul. 2008	Jun. 2009	1 year

Dr. Michael Jolin, Thompson Superintendent of Schools



Left: Thompson Superintendent of Schools Dr. Michael Jolin. In towns like Thompson the Superintendent of Schools is the appointed leader of all public education. He is hired by and reports to the Board of Education. The Superintendent is the only position that reports directly to the Board of Ed. Dr. Jolin has been a key supporter of the TMHSAA.

In this issue of the Hilltopper we provide a list of all past Thompson Superintendent of Schools and TMHS principals. We hope to fine tune this list over time and make it a part of our permanent electronic records for all those who follow.

Over the years, there have been many who were instrumental in the continuous development of our public schools. Mr. Ryscavage, Dr. Hardy, Ted Fatsi, Dave Babbitt, and David Johnson are among the many names. Following this long legacy of fine educators and administrators is our current superintendent Dr. Michael Jolin.

Dr. Jolin has been involved in education in one form or another for more than 35 years, holding positions such as Assistant Dean of Students at Brown University, Associate Director for Rhode Island Children's Crusade for Higher Education, and Assistant Superintendent of Schools in West Warwick RI. He joined Thompson Public Schools in January of 2006.

His interest in education began when he was a youngster. According to the Providence Journal, Jolin's parents were working class people, his mother a jewelry factory worker and his father an auto parts salesman. Like many hard working Americans of their time they understood the value of a good education and encouraged their son's continuous learning. As a young boy at Bernon Heights School, Woonsocket, RI, Jolin, then a ten-year-old participant in an experimental math group, led his fourth grade class with a lecture that began, "Today I am going to talk to you about using the theory of similar triangles in measuring distance..." This began a life-long passion.

Another major influence in Jolin's life occurred after a particularly "tough [high school] basketball game." He and long-time friend Mike Pickering, while lamenting over their prospects of a life in basketball, realized education was their way out. Pickering went on to earn a Doctorate in Chemistry from Brown University and Jolin a bachelor's degree in Sociology

from Clark University, Worcester, MA, a master's in Urban Studies from Brown University, Providence, RI, and a Ph.D. in Sociology from Brown University.

His work in education includes several research pieces and noteworthy publications that include *Survival an Adaptation – The Changing Role of Public School Superintendent* (2000), *Teachers Participation Rate*, and *Perceptions of The Impact of Strategic Planning in Rhode Island* (2000). He has also been a contributing writer to many publications that include the Providence Journal, and even our own lesser known Thompson Villager.

Jolin has participated in several organizations and task forces that helped to shape his views on public education; they include The Rhode Island Lieutenant Governor's Task Force of Teenage Suicide, The Rhode Island Literacy Council, and The Education Partnership Leadership Advisory Board. His progressive thinking continues to shape our schools

Dr. Jolin was instrumental in the establishment of the current TMHSAA and we would not have been successful without his continued support and encouragement.

He and his wife Dianne live in Rhode Island. They have one son who has recently passed his Rhode Island State bar exam.

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JANE WHITE JOHNSON (Cont.)

Among other activities, besides being a terrific homemaker, were contributing time as a literacy volunteer; learning to play the organ and serving as a church organist; singing in the church choir; hosting Bible studies; creating the curriculum for and organizing the now annual Thompson field trip for second graders; serving on the Board of Directors for the Thompson Historical Society; interviewing several of Thompson's older residents on video and assisting with the editing of their historical books.

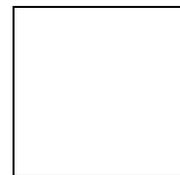
Jane was a talented elementary teacher. Loved by students and fellow teachers, she did not hold back one bit of herself in the art of education, inspiration and encouragement of children.

In 2008 Jane was recognized for contributions in historic education and preservation by the Connecticut Daughter's of the American Revolution, receiving their Essential Piece Award.

Her true delight was in sharing her faith in the Lord. She genuinely desired that others would also know the beauty, joy, assurance of eternal life - the hope of Christ.

Jane White Johnson was known for her smile, enthusiasm and unassuming way of bringing fun, laughter and peace wherever she was. She lived her life well, fully, and carried it out joyfully, bravely and faithfully.

Tourtellotte Memorial High School Alumni Office
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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED
PLEASE SEND US YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS TO:
TMHSAA@charter.net

Visit us at **THOMPSON COMMUNITY DAY** 12:00 – 4:00 p.m. on **October 3, 2010, at Riverside Park, North Grosvenordale, CT.** TMHS Memorial Room open 11:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.