

Greenwich High School
Wreadin Writin n Wreminiscin
Weekly Wreader
08 August 2004



The Early Years Growing Up in Greenwich



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The recent announcement that the CD project of the GHS Chorus is complete is a real accomplishment considering it's been over 40 years since all were together. It must have been quite a trip back then. I discovered my lack of talent for music at an early age, knowing it would be a waste of my time trying to play an instrument or carry a tune. Rather, I directed my skills towards something I was more adept at like playing baseball, building things, or a little later, and working on cars.

The CD project though did bring back a memory of a good friend of mine between the age of about 9 to 12 or 13. His name was Tommy Phelps and he lived in Brookside Park, right near where I lived. He lived in one of those big old three story houses that today anyone would die for - well hidden, but a stones through from town. I doubt anyone else remembers him. He was a year older and went to Julian Curtiss. If I remember correctly after 4th grade he went to a private school. Thinking back he was quite a remarkable person. His entire family was musically talented. Tommy could pick up an instrument and play it, whether it is a Trumpet, Tuba, Violin, Cello, or Piano. He could play them all well as could the rest of his family - sort of like a Von Trapp family before they were discovered. Incredibly none of the family was in the field of music or performing and I don't believe any of his sisters or brother pursued a career in music. His father worked for an insurance company and spent a lot of time in Montpelier, Vermont. In the summer Tommy and family would travel up to Montpelier in the families 1950 or 51 Ford Woodie (something I'd kill for today).

It wasn't just Tommy's talent for music, he could also do many more things, all self taught. He would make his own pinball machines and one time in the 4th grade he made a movie, wrote the story, did the filming and actually had a showing for the entire school at Julian Curtiss.

For a couple of years, we'd hang around together quite a bit. We would spend hours playing a game that Tommy thought up, called hit the bat. The batter hit the ball to the other person and kept doing so until the other in the field could throw the ball all the way back trying to "hit the bat" If he did so we changed positions. We would also often go to Bruce Park to watch one of the town league softball games.

Tommy's family began to spend less time in Greenwich - they rented the house to Sherry Holland's family for awhile. Occasionally they would return and when Tommy was around he always gave me a call to play wiffle ball, or do something else. As a few more years past we saw each other less and less. The last time we saw each other was probably when he was finishing 12th grade. The very last I heard about him was that he was going to be in the diplomatic corps and going to Kuwait (this would have been the mid 60s or so).

I doubt I will ever run across Tommy again, but I still recall quite vividly what incredible talents he had and how we would spend hours playing ball. (he always did manage to beat me!)

At times I feel sorry for today's kids growing up as they don't have the opportunity to meet others such as Tommy and learn on their own. No, for today's kids it's always a supervised activity and one that all others must do such as soccer, or some other team sport. One has to wonder how many of today's kids don't really like soccer and have some hidden talents that remain buried.

One of Our Own... Strikes it Big Time



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I'm going to write, because I have some news of 'one of our own'. It was in the local paper this week. Do you remember Don Smith? He just won \$100,000 in a scratch-off and there was his picture with a long article about him and his life. He was down to his last few thousand dollars when he won. He has never had a bank account, a credit card or a phone. He had lost his job, 2 months ago and he's semi-retired! He has been gambling for many years and has won before but was surprised and happy with this large amount, and he intends to live life to the fullest now. He will buy his first car.

The Greenwich Time July 29, 2004



Donald "Boo-Boo" **SMITH** is, in his own words, "a Greenwich original."

At 60 years old, the Chickahominy native has never had a telephone -- let alone a cell phone -- or used a credit card. He has not owned a car since the late 1960's. Until recently, he had never opened a bank account.

"I'm living my life the way I want to," Smith said over coffee yesterday at the Plaza Restaurant on Railroad Avenue, where he can be found most mornings. "I don't live for the Joneses."

Instead, Smith said he has spent most of the past 40 years traveling, reading, pursuing an assortment of hobbies, making friends and supporting him with odd jobs. Over the years, he's become a formidable billiards player, he's hitch-hiked across the country, been married and divorced, and spent about a dozen years in California. For nearly 50 years, Smith, a Greenwich High School graduate, has been a regular gambler, wagering on all manner of sporting events and games of skill and chance. "Gambling was a right of passage growing up in Chickahominy in the 1950's," he said.

And it is gambling that accounts for the colorful Greenwich resident's latest windfall: Earlier this month, Smith won \$100,000 playing an instant lottery game at Greenwich Cigar and Stationery.

After decades of playing the lottery nearly every day, Smith said it was about time. "I always knew I'd hit it one day," he said. "The way I look at it, I've been putting my money in the Connecticut bank all these years, and now I'm drawing it out. . . It's a nice return on investment."

Smith nearly didn't buy a lottery ticket that day. After years of gambling, he has superstitions about lucky days, weeks, even months, and Friday, July 16, was not supposed to be lucky. But an employee at the cigar store persuaded him to buy a ticket, Smith scratched it off and saw immediately that he had won.

At that point, Smith said his heart was pounding so fast that he had to rush over to the Bruce Park Grill, another favorite haunt, to settle down with a drink. A few minutes later, he called a friend who is a taxi driver, offered him \$200 to chauffeur him around for the day and the pair took off for New Britain to claim Smith's winnings. They returned in the afternoon and spent the rest of the day celebrating at the Bruce Park Grill.

Paul "Gov" Rachl, a bartender at the Bruce Park Grill who has known Smith for more than 30 years, said patrons were dubious about Smith's good fortune at first. "No one believed him, and then he pulled out his ticket," Rachl said. "And then he started buying drinks. So once Boo-boo was buying drinks, everyone knew he won some money. "It couldn't happen to a nicer guy," Rachl added.

After state and federal taxes, Smith's \$100,000 jackpot came to about \$70,000, but he's not one to curse the government for taking his money. "It's still a lot more than I had when I woke up in the morning," he said. The jackpot was also a windfall for Greenwich Cigar and Stationery, which earns about 1 percent of all lottery winnings, according to A.J. Sheth, the store's owner. Sheth said Smith is the store's fourth \$100,000 winner in the past two years.

Smith, a self-described minimalist, already has plans for his winnings: He's going to get some long-needed dental work, perhaps buy a car, spend about a month in Hawaii and, if the money will stretch that far, spend another month or two traveling through Europe. One thing he does not plan to do is set money aside for saving or investing. "I'm just going to enjoy it," he said. "You never know how long you've got."

Smith said he has no illusions that the money will last forever, but he's confident that another windfall is just around the corner. In fact, Smith said he's been playing the lottery more than ever in the past couple weeks. "I'll probably hit (the jackpot) again," he said. "When you're lucky, you're lucky."

Here Are Some Memories to Share:



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Arthur Gross and the Clambox

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The Gross family of Clambox fame was one dedicated hard working clan, with a collective heart of gold. They were always ready to lend a hand and were generous to a fault. Their restaurant was very popular and touted to be the largest seafood restaurant in New England at the time (the early sixties). Especially on weekend nights, the lines would reach outdoors and into the overflowing parking lots. The food was always fresh, portions generous and offered at a reasonable price. No wonder people drove in from miles around to come and visit. It was a treat.

The Clambox policy of hiring droves of part time high school service staff gave many of us a glimpse of this operation from the inside. A busy night was a sight to behold with dozens of waiters and waitresses sprinting through the kitchen setting up customer orders and carting heaping trays of food into the dining room. Bartenders, busboys or girls and seating hostesses hurried through the place fixing drinks, clearing tables, fetching water and leading customers to and from their tables. It was an exhausting exercise that, at the end of the night, left one drained but satisfied with a job well done.

The esprit de corps among the service staff is something I will always remember. Co-workers in general were supportive of each other and many of them eventually became friends. Every now and again Arthur Gross would lend his motor yacht (stink pot to us ragmen) and shuttle employees back and forth from a traditional clam bake with all the trimmings on Island Beach. The party would go on into the wee hours and

the memories created were unforgettable. And, as was the Gross family style, all at no cost to the employees. A classy bunch and wonderful memories.

Wreadin Writin n Wrasslin

Here's a funny incident when the GHS wrestling team was waiting for the New Rochelle High School wrestling team to arrive and the gym was near full of impatient students. Coach McDevitt was anxious to keep the crowd entertained, he paced up and down the benches while racking his brain trying to come up with something to keep the crowd entertained. He finally had a brilliant idea that turned into a nightmare for Bill Morgan. Bill wrestled around the 151 weight class and I was at 191 with extensive experience as a judoka. Coach McDevitt decided that Bill and I should get up and show the crowd what judo was all about. Bill did not know judo from schmudo.

For those not familiar with the sport you must realize that moves are lightning fast and results can be dramatic and devastating for the perpetrated. Usually when two judokas meet in an exhibition, they trade off favorite holds and throws in their repertoire. They can keep this up for quite some time because they know how to fall and not get hurt. When a judoka meets the uninitiated and there is no "tit for tat" trading of holds and throws, the exercise becomes one sided, as in one gives the other receives.

So it was with Bill and me. After dragging a reluctant Bill off the bench and whispering promises of "this won't hurt a bit", we launched into an exhibition that, I am sure, turned into a nightmare for him. When he hit the mats as the result of one scissor throw after another, initially he got up fairly quickly. But as time dragged on, he got up slower and slower and finally hardly could make it up to his feet. The nightmare finally ended with the arrival of the New Rochelle High School team. When Bill's number came up for him to take to the mat with his opponent, he devoured the guy and beat him to a pulp. Having "prepped" him previously, I'd like to take some credit for his victory.

New Kids on the Block



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Kathy Nielsen, Jim Johnstone, and John Ziac of course, are "old members" of the WW-N-W Newsletter family, but there was a brief hiatus for Kathy during her move to Texas and our change over of eMail providers in May caused Jim and John, to miss several issues of the Newsletter.

Confessions of a Tomboy



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You said you were looking for contributions from our class. Well, here I got a confession for you.

Those who knew me, knew I was a tomboy. I liked to hang out with guys because they were more likely to go along with my adventures, whereas most girls liked make-up, clothes and boyfriends, etc. I was, also, curious. One of the things I was curious about was how did they change the light bulbs in the high ceiling over the high school auditorium. Because I had lots of guy friends, I was able to get one of the fellows in the AV club to show me how to get up into the ceiling.

I had a girlfriend who went on some of my other adventures. (I won't mention her name to protect her), I told her that I was meeting my friend behind the stage after lunch and he was taking me to the loft over the auditorium. She came along and we three climbed the ladder up to a little room and another up to the loft where there were narrow catwalks going to the different clusters of overhead lights. It was dusty and had cobwebs here and there, but it was really neat to look down into the seats from so far up! After our exploration, my girlfriend climbed back down and was about to go out the stage door, when a janitor came in. She hid among the curtains and escaped, but I was on my way down the ladder and got caught! To make matters worse, the guy stuck his head out of the tiny room and said to the janitor, "its okay, the young lady is with me." I can imagine what the man thought!

I scurried back up the ladder and told Mr. AV to say he didn't know who I was. He just found me and was chasing me out. Then I told the janitor, I wouldn't come down until he stepped away from under the ladder. (So modest) Actually, I figured I could get a headstart and run if he was further back, but no such luck, he grabbed me and asked for my GO card. I told him I didn't have it on me, so he marched me off to Mr. Liptak's office where he ensconced me and stood guard to wait for Mr. L to get back from lunch. This would never do because, in my family I was the "good" one who never got in trouble (never got caught) and Mr. Liptak was our neighbor and a friend of my father's! I had to do something, so I squeezed out the window and went up to my locker where I kept a change of clothes and went from a black skirt, white blouse, red sweater and black shoes to a pink skirt, white blouse and white sneakers. I switched to my sunglasses and bold as brass, walked right past that janitor guarding the empty office! I wish I could have seen the look on the face of the janitor when he opened that door to show off his capture. Many years later, I confessed to my parents and we had a good laugh, but I know they wouldn't have laughed back then. Oh, and I'm still a tomboy at 60... So, now I've come clean on that one.

A Picnic in the Making

Over the past week there has been a barrage of eMails, revolving around the planning for our Picnic in October. George Devol has been at the "bridge" and has kept this vessel on course. JoAnn Tripodi Loparco, has gotten estimates for the Picnic palatables and potables, while Ginny Theis and Kathie Temple Azoff have organized the "buns, bagels and brewings for breakfast" from the Guerrieri family Bagel Shop in OG. They also found Dan Guerrieri as shown above in the New Kids. George has come up with a menu to delight even

the most "finicky" gourmand, so we are really off to a great start. We (Kathie) have been in touch with the



Town of Greenwich and it appears that we can obtain beach passes in early September and mail them out to you a few weeks ahead of the picnic...



Please be sure that when you have paid for your reservations, you have included your recent address so that we are sure of your contact information... If



desired please contact Kathie Temple Azoff at kaog@aol.com to verify that we have your information correct and the number of persons that



will be in your party... We will do a separate eMailing next week to remind everyone a second time. George also paid a surprise visit to the point to find a beautiful



day and several site photos, for those who may have forgotten the "woodland glade" known today as the Clambake Area:





Webbster n Button



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Coat of Arms – Adopted 25 April 1940 -



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