



Taft Alumni Newsletter

Vol. XXI No. 1

Winter 2005

William Howard Taft

Postcard of a Commemorative Lapel Piece
Museum of American Political Life
University of Hartford – Connecticut



This postcard was found with a stack of some cards in a church rummage sale in West Hartford, CT. Via a circuitous route, it is now in our hands to be added to our TAA memorabilia collection. One never knows how or where our "roots" are connected. It is always fun to find these links to our past. Thanks to **Rose Anne (Baetz) Austin** and **Margit Wevang** (both from June 1962) for bringing this "treasure" to roost.

Lost & Not Found!

Several responses were received following the inquiry article from Ted Dahlfors (June 1949) in the last issue (Fall, 2004). What happened to the ceremonial commemorative sword that was used for so many years with the Army ROTC unit at Taft? When the DAR presented the school with a beautiful sword in the 1940s, it became a tradition for each commander to have his name engraved on the sword.

Ted was the commander of the Army ROTC Unit at Taft in 1949. He fondly remembered the years associated with his unit and with that sword, and what it represented.

We were unable to substantiate the current location of this sword, and were told it "probably" went down to CPS Headquarters. Our calls to several departments there came up with no clear idea of what happened to it.

If you know anything about the current status of this sword, we'd appreciate your response. Contact us at Taftalum@cox.net.

The following are responses received from other Taft alumni who remember this sword:

Dear Taft Alum,

In 1954, as a result of testing, I was given the opportunity to be the Junior ROTC Commander at Taft. That would have been 6 years after Ted. I wore the sword and on being graduated I was informed that there was no room on the sword for my name. It did not occur to me to check.

Now your article tells me that the ceremonial sword was engraved 5 years later. Perhaps there are two swords. I recall the names of **Sgt. Dunn** and **Sgt. Raphael Paul Mc Kenna** as being in charge of the ROTC Dept. at that time. This may be a starting point.

Kenneth G. Motzny, Lt. Col. USAF Ret. (1955)

Subject: Sword Whereabouts

Hello –

I saw your article in the Autumn 2004 Taft Alumni newsletter. I am a 1970 Taft Grad and did 4 years in Army ROTC at Taft before spending the next 26 years in the Army. I'm currently the Business Manager and Property Tech for the Senior Army ROTC program at the Univ of Illinois downtown. I can give you the name of the Jr. ROTC property person at Pershing Road and his telephone number. He might know of its

whereabouts. When you talk to him... let him know that I'm still waiting for that Taft Army ROTC shoulder insignia that he promised to find for me...

Allen W. Day (1970)

Master Sergeant, USA (Retired) dayaw@uic.edu or allen.day@us.army.mil

[Allen - We tried the phone number you gave us as well as several derivations of it, as well as looking in CPS website for clues to that department. We came up empty, but will keep trying. J. Bloom, TAA Newsletter Editor]

Taft Alumni Staff:

I was very interested in the article "Lost & Found?"...I was in the Army ROTC program all four years at Taft and was the Battalion Commander in my senior year (1969-70). As commander, I carried the sword described in your article. As I completed my term in June 1970, my parents had my name engraved on the sword. It bore the names of almost all the commanders of the ROTC unit dating back to the late 40s. As I recall, the two commanders in office before me (?) **Helm** (1968) and **Lee Hensel** (1969) did not have their names engraved on the sword. (My parents respectfully kept those spaces open.)

By the late 1960s, the ROTC program had lost popularity. We had fewer than 100 students in 1969. During my term we had (I believe) about 120 students. Female students could only serve as "sponsors", not actually "true" cadets. There were only three sponsors at that time. Perhaps if they had opened the program to both sexes it could have been saved?

M/Sgt. Howard A. Dill was the senior military instructor during the later part of my time at Taft. Before him we had **SFC Bernard Waite**, who left the school to serve in Viet Nam. I believe that M/Sgt Dill retired in June 1970. I do not know who the Army sent to fill his place in 1971. At any rate, the new instructor was not there long. The ROTC unit at Taft was disbanded in June 1971 due to lack of enough student participation. I do not believe there was any ROTC activity at Taft after 1971 until the current Navy ROTC program was introduced...

Allen Schlenkler (1971) took over as commander when I left Taft. To the best of my knowledge, he was the last Army ROTC battalion commander. I don't know if his name was later engraved on the sword.

My mother Ann O'Neill served as Taft's PTA president for some years. I believe she was there until my younger sister graduated in 1980. At that time, I asked her about the sword. She did inquire and was told that all of the ROTC gear was taken by the US Army when the unit was disbanded. There were about 75 M-1 rifles, Springfield 1903 ceremonial rifles and even Browning Automatic rifles!

If the Army took the sword, they also would have Taft's Army ROTC unit banner. This is a full-sized flag, predominately blue with an eagle. The flag was trimmed with gold fringe. [It] was adorned with about twenty streamers (ribbons, approx. 1-1/2 feet long) showing various honors earned by the battalion over all those years. This too would be a fantastic "find" if located! The

CLASS REUNIONS

1955 – June

Date: October 1, 2005

Place: Stevens Ballroom - Rosemont Convention Center, Rosemont, IL

Contact: **Bill and Sue Oberheide**
(847) 823-1955 OR boberheide@aol.com

1956 – January/June

Date: **Volunteers needed to form committee!**

Place: To be determined

Contact: **Judith Nelson**
858 Poplar Lane, Deerfield, IL 60015
(847) 945-5523

1960 - June

Date: September 24, 2005

Place: Durty Nellie's, Palatine, IL

Contact: **Shirley Kalivoda DeWeese**
1425 Caldwell Lane - Hoffman Estates, IL 60194
847-885-8655 or JTDSAD@earthlink.net

commander's sword as well as the unit flag would make a wonderful display at the school, in or around the NJROTC offices.

...Taft was a great springboard to my life. Being ROTC commander gave me a lot of leadership experience early on. I went to Wright College, ...enlisted in the Air National Guard... served in the USAF Security Police... went on to earn a BA in psychology at Northeastern Illinois... I worked...for the Department of Military Affairs as a security officer, "Special Agent" in the railroad police, ...[joined] the police force of Romeoville [and later] Hickory Hills. In 1989 I was recruited into the Illinois Dept. of Professional Regulation. ...During this period I re-entered the Armed Forces Reserve... this time in the US Coast Guard and was briefly activated during Desert Storm 1990-91. [Currently, I work with the Portage, WI] Police Department as the Assistant Chief of Police... After 9/11 I volunteered in the Civil Air Patrol. I currently serve as a captain and deputy squadron commander of the Madison, WI unit. So, I'm still involved in a quasi-military function all these years after Taft ROTC.

I sincerely hope that I've provided some clue as to where the commander's sword and school unit banner may be. It would be sad to think that symbols of the school's decades of Army ROTC lay in some darkened dusty warehouse. These two items should be displayed at the school in remembrance of the thousands (over many years) of students who wore the silver-on-blue shoulder patch of Taft ROTC. Good luck!!

Emmett O'Neill (June 1970)
Portage, WI
KO.Oneill@verizon.net

Letters to the Editor

Hello to all in the association,

I was a late transfer from Senn (senior year only), (1956), but was tied to closely to the class of 1955 (June) thru my long time girlfriend Judy Kratzenberg (Tonz) now of Tucson AZ. I cannot remember names from the class of 1952, (June), but do enjoy looking thru the Newsletter for names from 1955 (June) where I had so many friends thru Judy. You do a wonderful service for us all bringing back memories of Taft. I have always felt I was a member of the Taft alumni rather than Senn. Taft High School was always the class of the North Section and I had the best year of my formative times there, especially working for a year on the Taft Trib and making so many friends.

I continued attending Taft dances and other affairs during Judy Kratzenberg (Tonz) entire tenure, so have always felt a member of the class of 1955 rather than my own.

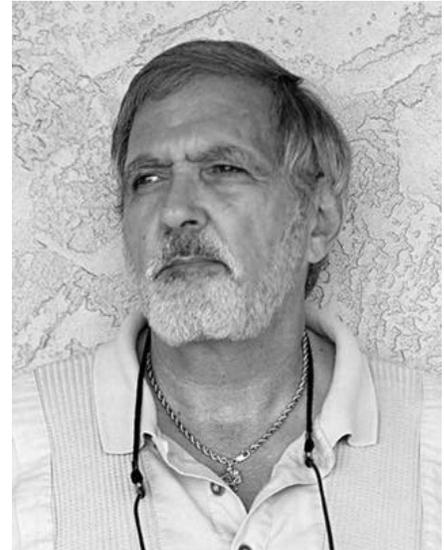
If there is anything I can do from a photo sense for you, or the school, please do not hesitate to call on me. I would be most happy to assist in any way I can. I travel a bit around the US and the world, and perhaps there are photos I can send the

association or Taft High School for their use. Of course there would be no charges. The advent of the press digital cameras and the internet makes it so easy to release photos.

I do plan on contacting some of my friends from the 1955 (June) class to see if they would like a photographer in attendance at their 50th anniversary affairs, and if any who remember me with Judy wouldn't mind, I would enjoy hearing from them by e-mail. That would be so nice.

If you are able to put me on any information release list for the 50th anniversary events of 1955 (June) I would appreciate it.

Beyond the political set, I shoot a lot of celebrities, their award shows, (Billboard, CMA, Oscars etc.), thru my Hollywood Agency, and always have archive photos available if any would be of interest to anyone at Taft. The Trib experience was wonderful and was the force that drove me to my long term press home in DC. I have not reduced my schedule as I feel about 10-15 years younger than I am, and am lucky seem younger. Donny Rumsfeld (Sec. Defense), told us recently he



Roger Williams - White House Photo

became a sex symbol at 69, so that should be a mark for us all to follow.

By the way, the Taft Eagle flies high in the West Wing pressroom here in the White House.

Again, thank you for all your hard work for us all.

Roger Williams (June 1952)

United Press International
Washington DC
radioman@pressroom.com

Taft Alumni Association,

A few weeks ago I met **Al Kianik** at a golf banquet dinner and he informed me he also graduated from Taft a few years after me. He gave me the Taft Newsletter "Summer 2004" and in the Newsletter was a letter to the editor by **Dolores (Wenke) Ebner**, I was in her class of January 1946.

If I had known about the 65th anniversary dinner my wife and I would have been there.

My class graduated in January 1946 but because I enlisted in the Navy Air Force in June 1945 and within 10 days I was on my way to Pensacola Naval Base, so I missed graduating with my class in January. **Mr**

Hoefler, the Principal, promised me my diploma would be mailed to me in January, it never came until June 1946!

Ted Dobrowolski (Jan 1946)

Jerry---

I saw, in the class notes, that **Bill Avery** (Jan 1946) is mentioned. Although he was a couple of years ahead of me in school we played on the Basketball team for 2 years. After college we played golf on Saturdays with the Aces. This was a group founded by primarily Taft graduates who had returned from WWII. My brother **Fred Fassnacht** (Jan. '42) was among them.

Keep up the good work.

Bill Fassnacht (Jan 1948)

Hi Kay/Tom:

I just read alumni newsletter head to toe - interesting as always. I usually don't know anyone (except occasionally in class notes), but still enjoy reading about all the fun memories and friendships that were established. I'm sorry that you did not get my first two checks with letters attached. I wrote about my mother (Eileen Jensen) being the first graduating class of Taft. If I remember right, she was only there for a few years because she was transferred over in sophomore/junior year from elsewhere. She has passed away now and all stories are lost, but **would I ever** love to hear

from anyone who remembers her! You are welcome to give my e-mail to anyone who should ask about her and want to contact me. [Also], I'd love to hear from any 1970 graduates.

Joyce (Wilgus) Sherman (1970)
mmkss@comcast.net

To: Leo Drummer,

On Friday when I picked up the mail I found my Taft Alumni Newsletter. There on page 2 was an article that caught my eye. It was 49 years ago this month when I graduated and began the rest of my life. I didn't realize at the time how much my past experiences in high school had helped shape my values and give me direction until my wife and I started our family. We left Chicago in 1970 but have returned over the years for gatherings with family and friends.

I took my 2 sons past Taft on one visit to show them where I grew up. The school has become much [larger], while Norwood Park and the Field House seem much smaller. Well I guess that's the eye of a youth vs that of 60 plus year old man.

Your letter brought back joyous memories of those special days and the people I shared them with. I just wanted to say thank you.

Bob Engel (January 56)
be@fivestarsalesco.com

Hi there - A couple of us 1979 grads want to go to Homecoming dance this year--I've walked to the school the past couple of years on Thanksgiving Eve and haven't seen any activity there.

Is the dance still on Thanksgiving Eve and still in the lunchroom, as it used to be? If not, any idea if they still do this? I called the school, but there was NO ANSWER! Yikes.

Deborah L. Altman (1979)

Hi there... I just thought I would ask. Do you have any kind of list of those

Dear Kay,

A group of graduates from the Taft class of January 1957 gathered together this past September for a round of golf at the Marengo Golf Course followed by a fun dinner where we reminisced and caught up on what we have all done since we last met. **Diane (Klier) Dierks** organized the outing and everyone had a wonderful time.

Ron Underwood (January 1957)



Pictured from left to Right:

Janet (Kelly) Mc Evoy, Diane (Klier) Dierks, Lloyd Larsen, Ron Enck, Eugene Kelly, Donald Kelly (a later graduate), Leo Drummer and Ron Underwood.

that have died that were members of the class of 1956?

I Just got in touch with 2[classmates] that are not with the Alumni ... get them!

Dick Lutz - hrlarch.@aol.com

Tom Plath - tnplath@aol.com

I know they are interested because of the reunion being planned.

Judy Nelson (1955)

[Official reunion committee members can contact our TAA President Kay Kuciak for help with all aspects of reunion planning. J. Bloom, TAA newsletter editor]

THE MAD SCIENCTEST OF TAFT

During my days at Taft I lived at 6900 Osceola Ave. in Edison Park, riding the CSL bus on Northwest highway for seven cents to school.. Sometimes if I was lucky I would

catch the nickel bus that ran between Des Plaines and Milwaukee Avenue. Like all the guys I was sporting a reversible green gabardine and corduroy half length coat with everyone's name and comments written on the back. I guess that went along with the yellow corduroy pants and white and brown saddle shoes.

I wasn't the best of students, however, my interest in high voltage electrical phenomenon led me to constructing an electrical laboratory set up in my parents attic. I would fascinate my friends by lighting up neon tubes through my body and making long sparks jump out of my fingers. The word got around on what I was doing and soon I had a lot of visitors including many of the teachers from Taft, Mr. C. E. Johnson, Mr. McCalmont, Mr. Vestal, to name a few and finally the

principle, Mr. L. A. Hoeffler. Shortly thereafter my Mother received a call from the Chicago Tribune asking if they could send out a reporter to see what I was up to. A reporter came to my laboratory and took a lot of notes and pictures. About six months later, on May 16, 1943 an article appeared on the front page of the Sunday Tribune, Northwest Section, with a number of pictures and an article.

At the time of the article I was working part time for Sears at six cents for twenty five cents an hour. Within a few days I had several job offers, the most attractive was for Bell and Howell as an electronics technician so I jumped at that offer and worked there on Saturdays and during the summer of 1943.

If you don't already have, George Glaser (1-44), John Kraden (1-44), Jeanette Malon (1-44), George Hamilton (1-44), Jack Walter (6-43), and Herbert Korff (6-57) listed, I can provide you with their whereabouts, etc.

Keep up the good work y'all and don't forget to look for the Moon Bunny.

Hank Nerwin (Jan 1944)
hnerwin@earthlink.net

Thank you very much for reuniting me with my school chum of class 1945, Norma Brawner (Cooksey). We have been in touch, and will continue to do so.

Also, I'm glad to hear that George Zima is still active. George and his sister Millie would always entertain us with their acrobatics. I also remember John Pokorney & Richard Stahl who would entertain us on their drums. They were all great performers.

Since last writing to you, two unexpected things happened to me. I was fortunate to be able to receive a 1945 Class Year Book. All my

friends pictures are in it. Some we started kindergarten together. It was a pleasant surprise to receive it.

Also my class ring from TAFT 1945 showed up in an old family vault. I thought I would never see it again. Last week it showed up. Now I am really a true 1945 Taft High School graduate.

Thank you for my newsletters I'm really enjoying them.

Edith (Mauch) Swanek (Jan 1945)

Jeff and I still live in the Taft neighborhood. We bought a house 29 years ago, right across the expressway from Taft and are still here.

We've watched Taft go through many changes over the years and have never felt more pleased and optimistic about Taft's future as we do today.

Dr. Tavardian has been such a positive influence on the school and the community.

I commend the staff for their dedication to the new programs, changes, and leadership.

I commend the students for their hard work, school spirit, and for representing Taft so well.

I commend the parents for taking the chance and for bringing back the idea of a neighborhood high school again.

To the LSC, your courage to make hard decisions to move Taft forward has been inspiring.

Congratulations to you all and keep up the good work!

Debby (Leftakes) Scrimgeour (1971)

Dear editors:

It is with embarrassment that I belatedly forward a much overdue payment for the Taft Alumni Association newsletter, which you've been kind to keep mailing me

uninterrupted well past my expiration date.

It saddens me to let everyone know more details about the passing of a dear friend to all who knew her. Sally Weed-Vetter-Leese, passed last March while on a trip in her motor-home traveling first to Pebble Beach to visit Diane Dykeman-Howery ('59) and then on to Arizona with her husband Don where she was felled by a stroke. Sally was the lone cheerleader representing our June 1959 graduating class and offered a dimpled smile and untarnished kindness to everyone. Along with her first husband Neil Vetter ('59), they were proud parents of Wendy and Douglas, who both live in the Chicagoland area. Neil preceded Sally in death from lung cancer a few years ago. He was the owner of Peninsula Painting in Door County, Wisconsin. Despite being divorced and remarried, they and their families remained loving and close through all the years.

Bonnie Anderson-Green-Crawford-Benjamin, another best friend from the class of June '59, left our realm a little more than 12 years ago, also succumbing to lung cancer. At the time of her death, she lived in Rancho Santa Margarita, a newly incorporated town in Southern California. Bonnie had three children, Kelly, Tracy, and Rob and worked with her husband in their company called "Signs 4 U" for years before divorcing.

Two other friends from the class of June, 1959 whose dear souls changed their earthly address several years ago, but left us with unforgettable memories, are Denny Cavan (cancer), and Sally Gundel, from her on-going battle with diabetes.

Thank you,

Pat Santell-Lutz (June 1959)
plutz@chicagonorthwest.com

Honors Program Development

Principal Arthur Tarvardian is in process of putting together a new honors curriculum to appeal to future Taft students from the many feeder schools currently in the Taft district. Although there have been several boundary changes in the past few years, he is striving to seek out the students who are currently going to Lane, Whitney Young or other similar schools because of the specialized programs they offer. Overflow students from other Chicago area neighborhood high schools have been dramatically reduced this year because more local students are enrolling at Taft. This year the number of local students went from 600 in the 2000-01 school year to 1,681. He is working to continue that trend.

Dr. Tarvardian is being challenged to provide an attractive program that is not as restrictive as the IB (International Baccalaureate) Diploma Program, but challenging enough for college bound students. With the anticipated enrollment this fall of 2700 students from the (current) 17 feeder schools, he is running out of classroom space. One area of extreme overcrowding already felt this year is in the lunchroom. Students now go to lunch in five separate periods. If enrollment is not adjusted for this fall, he may be forced to run the cafeteria on a staggered schedule. Because of the city-wide mandate of 7 periods per day, it doesn't allow much room for expanding the curriculum, nor does it allow students the opportunity for elective courses. So there is a balancing act that needs to be addressed.

Within the next couple months, CPS headquarters need to decide how the boundaries will be changed. That means giving back some feeder schools to Schurz, Steinmetz or Forman high schools. These changes have to be coordinated with the CPS Education Opportunities initiative, covering all the magnet schools and specialized and academically advanced programs already established. Hopefully, the boundary changes will give Dr. Tarvardian enough time to implement some of his ideas for incoming students for the Fall 2005 school year.

Eagleemail@taftalumni.org

Don't forget this valuable resource for ability to keep in touch with former classmates. If you haven't already done so, please consider adding your name to the growing list of alumni who have already joined. There are two ways to add your name: through our website, www.taftalumni.org or just send an email directly to eagleemail@taftalumni.org.

We especially want you to send us updates if you're already registered, but have changed servers. Let's keep connected!

Taft a 'Rising Star'

A January 2005 newspaper article posted in the local Pioneer Press by the paper's reporter Alan Schmidt highlighted northwest Chicago public high school PSAT scores [Prairie State Achievement Examination] that all junior year students are required to take. You remember those days of sweating palms and lumps in the throat when walking into the testing rooms? Vivid memories!

A chart was included with a comparison of Taft to other local schools as well as to the national ACT test scores. What is interesting in this evaluation is Taft's glaring sub-standard score in comparison to Prosser Career, Northside College Prep, Lane Tech, Von Steuben and Whitney Young High Schools. Granted some of these schools are strictly college prep schools and have high admittance standards. In Taft's defense, the scores reflected ALL students, including those with language barriers and disabled students. Comparing Taft's overall composite of 33.6 percent, the state's overall score was 56.4. Quite a shock to see it so far below the statewide test norms! In years past, it was not uncommon for college counselors around the state to comment on the high scholastic reputation that Taft had. That is no longer the fact.

On the bright side, these scores are above the city average in percentage of students meeting or exceeding state standards on this test.

Taft has been improving each year, and has been recognized by the Chicago Public School for the second year in a row as a "Rising Star". Principal Art Tarvardian's dedication towards excellence in teaching and student achievement is undaunted. He requires teachers to continue training for improved teaching techniques. He requires struggling students to attend additional classes tailored to address their weaknesses. Each year there is improvement and it is reflected in these scores.

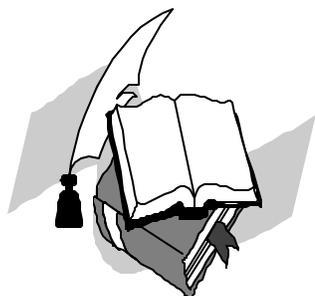
This year standards in grade have been tightened in a continuing effort for students to continue to work harder and raise their own standards for excellence. Previously, the cutoff score for a "D" was 60 out of 100. This year the cutoff is a score of 70, meaning a student must score between 75-84 for a "C" grade.

We are pleased to see progress, and know as it continues, the student pride will grow as well. We are very glad to have the dedicated staff at Taft and are confident they will strive to continue efforts to bring the testing scores up to equal or exceeding state averages.

Why Bryn Mawr?

Carol (Dehlinger) Doyle, class of June 1951, wants to know if anyone knows the history of the street name Bryn Mawr? Is there anyone who can respond to this?

CLASS NOTES



1940s

DONALD GIFFORD (JANUARY 1941) graduated from U of I BS 1949, lives in Ballwin, MO, has 3 children, 8 grandchildren and is retired.

MARIE (HAUCK) RUEHL (JANUARY 1941) MARRIED WILLIAM (JUNE 1941) they live in Elgin, have 2 children, 4 grandchildren and are retired.

BETTY (SORENSEN) WELKER (JUNE 1941) lives in Mt. Prospect, IL, has 2 children, 2 grandchildren and is retired.

RUTH (QUIRAM) TOMALAS-RIGG (JUNE 1941) lives in Camarillo, CA, has 2 children, 5 grandchildren, 5 great grandchildren and is retired.

TED DOBROWOLSKI (JANUARY 1946) lives in Hinsdale, IL, has 5 children, 5 grandchildren and is a retired tool & die maker.

HARRY HERBERT (JUNE 1945) graduated from Northwestern BS 1951, lives in Morton Grove, IL, has 3 children, 8 grandchildren and is retired.

DOROTHY (WORKMAN) BROUDER (JANUARY 1946) lives in Minocqua, WI, has 3 children, 9 grandchildren and is retired.

ROBERT FUES (JANUARY 1946) graduated from Bradley BS 1952, lives in Chicago and is retired.

LORRAINE (REIFF) STUCK (JANUARY 1946) graduated from Wheaton College BS 1950, lives in Elk Grove, IL, has 4 children, 11 grandchildren, 1 great grandchild and is retired.

FLORENCE (DAHLQUIST) WHITE (JUNE 1946) lives in Aurora, CO, has 5 children, 2 grandchildren and is retired.

CLYDE DIVEN (JANUARY 1947) lives in Hoffman Estates, IL, has 2 children and is retired.

EDWIN KALM (JANUARY 1947) lives in Plant City, FL, has 1 child and is retired.

PHYLLIS (WAGEMAN) LISACK (JUNE 1947) lives in Chicago, has 1 child, 3 grandchildren, 2 great grandchildren and is retired.

JOY (DOCKWEILER) DANIELS (JANUARY 1948) graduated from Wheaton College BS 1954, West Suburban School of Nursing 1953, lives in Chicago, has 6 children, 13 grandchildren, plays with violin with the city wide symphony.

BILL FASSNACHT (JANUARY 1948) graduated from U of I BS 1952, lives in Hilton Head, SC, has 2 children, 4 grandchildren and is retired.

DAVID MESKAN (JANUARY 1948) graduated from MO School of Mines BS 1952, lives in Park Ridge, IL, has 3 children, 2 grandchildren and is an engineer.

DOROTHY WEIDMAN (JANUARY 1948) graduated from U of AZ BA 1952, lives in Chicago and is a part time legal secretary.

CAROL (VASEN) WOLF (JANUARY 1948) graduated from North Park AA 1950, APSU BA 1976, lives in Federal Way, WA, has 2 children, 3 grandchildren and is retired.

FRANK OCKERBY (JUNE 1948) MARRIED BARBARA (NELSON) (JUNE 1946) they live in Natick, MA, have 3 children, 3 grandchildren and are retired.

RAYMOND ROWLEY (JUNE 1948) lives in Park Ridge, IL, has 4 children, 5 grandchildren and is retired.

DONALD PELLEGRINI (JANUARY 1949) lives in Rolling Meadows, IL, has 3 children, 4 grandchildren and is retired.

RICHARD THOMPSON (JUNE 1949) graduated from Northwestern BS 1957, MBA 1967, lives in Arlington Hts, IL, has 4 boys and 11 grandchildren and is semi retired.

JESSIE (DOUGLAS) USDROWSKI (JUNE 1949)

lives in Elk Grove, IL, has 2 children, 1 grandchild and is retired.

1950s

ROBERT GALITZ (JANUARY 1950) lives in Memphis, TN, has 2 children, 2 grandchildren and is retired.

ROBERT HOECKELBERG (JANUARY 1950) MARRIED DOLORES (FELL) (JUNE 1949), they live in Green Valley, AZ and Fox Lake, IL, have 3 children and are retired.

HARRY JOHNSON (JANUARY 1950) graduated from Northern BS 1954, Northwestern MS 1958, DDS 1960, lives in Prospect Hts, IL, has 3 children, 5 grandchildren and is a retired Dentist.

KENNETH MEYER (JANUARY 1950) MARRIED CAROL (EBNER) (JUNE 1950), he graduated from Trinity BS 1954, MADiv 1956, PhD 1978, they live in Gurnee, IL, have 3 children, 8 grandchildren and he is a Chancellor at Trinity U.

PATRICIA (RYAN) MICHAELSKI (JUNE 1950, lives in Chicago, has 6 children, 10 grandchildren and was inducted into the Alumni Hall of Fame in 2004.

R. PETE GLASS (JANUARY 1951) lives in Huntertown, IN, has 2 children, 4 grandchildren and is retired.

GORDON DAHLQUIST (JANUARY 1952) MARRIED CLAIRE (JOHNSON) (JANUARY 1954) they live in Titusville, FL, have 3 children, 5 grandchildren and are retired.

FRANKLIN HAMANN (JANUARY 1953) MARRIED ARLENE (POEHLER) (JUNE 1954) they live in Grayslake, IL, have 3 children, 7 grandchildren and are retired.

LOIS (PLECHATY) ROLF (JANUARY 1953) graduated from Wright AA, Chicago Teachers College BE, lives in Niles, IL, has 3 children, 3 grandchildren and is semi retired.

OLIVIA (SIMECA) FIEDLER (JUNE 1953) graduated from Oakton Community College HMM 1981, lives in Park Ridge, IL, has 1 child and is an English tutor.

RICHARD LINDQUIST (JUNE 1954) lives in Mora, MN, has 1 child, 2 grandchildren and is retired.

GARY JOHANSEN (JANUARY 1955) MARRIED NANCY (RUHLING) (JANUARY 1956) they live in New Lenox, IL, have 2 children, 4 grandchildren and are retired.

DONALD MELLEMA (JANUARY 1955) graduated from Beloit BA 1959, lives in Park Ridge, IL, has 2 children, 5 grandchildren, is retired and an Alumni Hall of Famer.

ROLAND BRENDEL (JUNE 1955) lives in Ft Royal, VA, has 5 children,, 14 grandchildren, 2 great grandchildren and is retired.

GLORIA (WIBERG) DOMBROWSKI (JUNE 1955) lives in Peoria, AZ, has 3 children, 4 grandchildren and is retired.

ANITA (GAERTNER) LEWIS (JUNE 1955) graduated from Alverno College BSN, Webster U MA, lives in Northbrook, IL, has 3 children, 4 grandchildren and is a nurse specialist.

GAIL (SARANIECKI) O'MALLEY (JUNE 1955) graduated from De Paul BA 1959, lives in Chicago, has 6 children, 11 grandchildren and is a businesswoman.

KEN SCHNETZLER (JUNE 1955) MARRIED Irene (Besenhofer) (JUNE 1955) , they live in Elk Grove, IL, have 3 children, 1 grandchild and are retired.

JEAN (YOUNG) SLIWA (JUNE 1955) lives in Chicago and is VP of Salmon Unlimited.

RICHARD DENCER (JUNE 1956) graduated from IIT BS Civil Engineering, MS Public Administration, lives in Burlington, IL, has 2 children and is retired.

VICTORIA (KALINOWSKI) KLASSEN (JUNE 1956)

CLASS NOTES

graduated from Northern BS 1960, Andover-Newton Theological M Div 1974, lives in Orlando, FL, has 2 children, 2 grandchildren and is a professor and college administrator.

EDWARD PETERSEN (JUNE 1956) graduated from U of MD BS & BA 1979, Central MIU MS & MBA 1985, lives in State College, PA, has 3 children, 7 grandchildren and is an intelligence analyst.

STUART CRIPPEN (JANUARY 1958) lives in Denver, CO, has 3 children, 4 grandchildren and owns Bent Lawns, wants to know if he is the only one still working from his class.

BRENDA (BILLHARDT) SCHMAHL (JANUARY 1958) graduated from ELCA AA Ministry 1985, lives in San Jose, CA, has 2 children, 2 grandchildren and is an administrator.

JUDITH (LEVIN) EASTWOOD (JUNE 1958) lives in Northbrook, IL and is a parish administrator.

RICHARD LUTZ (JUNE 1958) graduated from Northwestern BS 1963, lives in Barrington, IL, has 5 children, 1 grandchild and is in sales.

MARTIN PETERSEN (JANUARY 1959) lives in Thiensville, WI, has 2 children and is a senior sales engineer.

JOHN SCHMIDT (JUNE 1958) graduated from Nat'l College of Education, Bed 1962, Med 1965, lives in Chicago and is retired.

JEFF CARSON (JUNE 1959) lives in Phoenix, AZ, has 2 children, 1 grandchild and is retired.

1960s

JUDY (OLSEN) GAMMON (JANUARY 1960) lives in Tampa, FL, has 5 children, 2 grandchildren and is a receptionist/secretary.

MICHAEL KELLY (JANUARY 1960) MARRIED SHERYL (BUERGER) (JANUARY 1963), he graduated from North Park BS 1964, Northern MS 1968, they live in Algonquin, IL, have 3 children, 2 grandchildren and are retired.

MARY ANN (GULINO) ROJAS (JUNE 1960) lives in Hanover Park, IL, has 3 children, 5 grandchildren and is a medical assistant.

MARIANN (SCHLAGETER) STRASHEIM (JUNE 1960) lives in Duncan, OK, has 1 child, 2 grandsons and is retired.

TERRY DREISEWERD (JANUARY 1961) graduated from OR State BS 1965, lives in Oceanside, CA, has 3 children, 4 grandchildren and owns an equipment distribution company.

VIOLET (GEORGOPULOS) BILISSIS (JUNE 1962) graduated from U of I BA 1966, lives in Park Ridge, IL, has 1 child and is retired.

MARILYN (ORZYP) GEHR (JUNE 1962) lives in Longwood, FL, has 3 children, 2 grandchildren and owns a drapery installation service.

SANDRA (TREFNY) MICHAELS (JUNE 1962) lives in Gurnee, IL, has 4 children, 1 grandchild and is a bookkeeper.

KATHIE (SCHROEDER) WHITEHURST (JUNE 1962) lives in Fairfield Glade, TN, has 1 child, 2 grandchildren and is retired.

LORAIN (BRUEMMER) KRUEGER (JUNE 1963) graduated from Augustana RN, lives in Jacksonville, IL, has 2 children and is retired.

GARY OLSEN (JUNE 1963) graduated from U of I BS 1969, MS 1976, lives in Champaign, IL, has 3 children, 3 grandchildren and is an architect.

LOUISE (KNUTH) STEWART (JANUARY 1964) lives in South Elgin, IL, has 4 children, 10 grandchildren and works in human resources.

LYNN (ARNDT) ANDRUS (JUNE 1964) lives in Davidson, NC, has 3 children, 1 grandchild and is a K-5 art teacher.

CASSANDRA (POLAN) GULBRANSEN (JUNE 1964) graduated from Western State BS, JD 1987, lives in Carlsbad, CA, has 3 children, 3 grandchildren and is an RN-JD risk manager.

JANICE (SMOLA) PROCANIN (JUNE 1964) lives in Glendale, AZ, has 1 child and is retired.

JOHN E. ANDERSON (JANUARY 1965) graduated from Northwestern BS 1969, MS 1971, PhD 1974, lives in El Sobrante, CA, has 2 children and is a geotechnical engineer practice director..

JUDY LA MARCHE (JANUARY 1965) graduated from U of WI BS 1968, MS 1970, Utah State PhD 1984, U of AL MBA 1998, lives in Sandestin, FL, has 2 children and is co-chairman of board.

W. RANDAL BAUDIN (MALECHA) (JUNE 1965) graduated from U of I BS 1969, De Paul MBA 1970, JD 1975, lives in Crystal Lake, IL, has 3 children, 3 grandchildren and is an attorney.

LINDA (RENNERT) DREFFIN (JUNE 1965) lives in Woodstock, IL and is retired.

ANTOINETTE (SESSA) DE SALVO (JUNE 1965) lives in Lakewood, IL, has 2 children, 3 grandchildren and is an office manager.

RAYMOND WEILER (JUNE 1965) graduated from U of I 1972, Nat'l Lewis U Med 1977, lives in Chicago and is a special education specialist at Lane and an artist and designer.

MARCIA DAHL (JUNE 1966) lives in Eau Claire, WI and is retired.

RICK BREESE (JANUARY 1967) MARRIED SUE (BERG) (1968), he graduated Wright AA 1969, Southern IL BS 1971, they live in Palatine, IL, have 2 children, 1 grandchild, Rick is a national accounts manager and Sue is a small business owner.

DEAN GRITSONIS (JANUARY 1967) graduated from Northern 1971, lives in Carol Stream, IL, has 3 children and is a retail manager for Burlington Coat Factory.

BRUCE ALESI (JUNE 1967) graduated from Northeastern BA, lives in Arlington Hts, IL, has 2 children, 1 grandchild and is an account sales manager.

SUSAN (OENNING) HALIHAN (JUNE 1967) graduated from Harper AA Nursing 1981, lives in West Dundee, IL, has 2 children, 6 grandchildren and is an ER nurse.

NEIL HOLMEN (JUNE 1967) MARRIED SHERRY (MC BEE) (JUNE 1967) they live in Geneva, IL, have 5 children and 3 grandchildren.

MARSHA (TOMAL) MATHEWS (JUNE 1967) graduated from Nat'l U BA Psychology, MA Counseling, lives in Wildomar, CA, has 1 child, has a private practice and teaches at Palomar College.

LINDA (ZOLDOWSKI) MENKE (JUNE 1967) lives in Bristol, TN, has 1 child and is disabled.

SUSAN DE LANCE (JUNE 1968) lives in Crystal Lake, IL, has 2 sons, 3 grandchildren and is an office manager.

SUSAN (GALOVITCH) JANUS (JUNE 1968) graduated from U of I BS-CPA, De Paul MBA, lives in Chicago, has 3 children and is a CPA.

ANN (HENDRICKSEN) WARD (JUNE 1968) graduated from U of MO BS 1978, Kent State BSN 1995, and lives in Kent, OH, has 2 children and is an RN.

BRUCE ZAK (JUNE 1968) graduated from MA Inst. Of Tech. BS 1973, U of Dallas MBA 1982, lives in Carrollton, TX, has 1 child and is a technical advisor.

BEVERLY DE FOUW (1969) lives in Skokie, IL and is in accounting.

KATHERINE (REEG) KARCH (1969) graduated from Western IL BA 1995, Bethel U MA Div 2004, lives in Arlington Hts, IL, has 2 children, 3 grandchildren and is Pastor of Edison Park Community Church.

1970s

LINDA (ROGERS) LEWANDOWSKI (1970) graduated from Wright AA 1976, Elmhurst College BA ed 1986, lives in Winfield, IL, has 2 children and is retired.

CONSTANCE (SOWA) NEWTON (1970) lives in Des Plaines, IL, has 1 child and is an importer for premium needs.

IDA (BORRELLI) ABEL (1971) lives in Cambria, WI and has 3 children, 1 grandchild.

CLASS NOTES

JERRY RUSSO (1971)
MARRIED DIANE (RAIMAN) (1972), they live in Schaumburg, IL, have 3 children, 2 grandchildren, Jerry is a finance manager, Diane is a secretary/administrative assistant.

LINDA (ALEX) CONNORS (1972) lives in Henderson, NV, has 1 child and is a bartender at Grandlux Café.

LINDA (RINK) GOFF (1972) graduated from Northeastern BA 1976, MA 1991, lives in Harwood Hts, IL, has 3 children and is a teacher in Chicago.

PEGGY KIRK (1972) graduated from Western IL BS Nat'l Lewis MS, lives in Lombard, IL, has 2 children (twins) and is a human service administrator.

MIKE ZIMNEY (1972) graduated from U of I BSME, De Paul MBA and lives in Park Ridge, IL.

PATRICIA (TABISZ) GOODWIN (1973) lives in Des Plaines, IL and is a clinical assistant.

BARBARA (SULLIVAN) KOPOLOVIC (1973) graduated from U of I BS 1977, BSN 1980, MD 1989, lives in Oakbrook, IL, has 2 children and is a Physician/Radiologist.

PAM (BOREK) MC DONALD (1973) graduated from U of I BS El Ed 1977, U of St Thomas MA gifted ed 1988, lives in Lakeville, MN, has 4 children and is a gifted specialist.

LOWELL YODER (1973) graduated from U of I BS 1979, JD 1982, lives in Wheaton, IL, has 2 children and is an international tax and corporate lawyer.

MARGE (TAFF) CLEMENTS (1974) lives in Charlotte, NC, has 2 children and is a mortgage loan processor.

WALTER KISKA (1974) lives in Chicago, has 4 children, 1 grandchild and is a UPS over the road driver.

BOB UHLAR (1974) graduated from Drake BA 1978, Northwestern MS 1981, and lives in Hollywood, FL.

MARK HAMMERSMITH (1975) MARRIED DEBRA (TERSCH) (1976) they live in Palatine, IL, have 2 children and own "The Chicago Force" Jr Hockey Team.

BARBARA (BOREK) LITTLE (1976) graduated from U of I BS 1980, lives in Hawthorn Woods, IL, has 4 children and is in sales.

ALBERT MARLE (1976) lives in Salida, CO, has 4 children and is a building contractor.

KATHLEEN (GOLEMB) WANTA (1977) graduated from U of I BA 1981, IL Benedictine MBA 1988, lives in Burr Ridge, IL, has 3 children and is co-owner of Distinctive Therapy Services.

KEVIN GRANIERO (1979) graduated from De Vry BSEE 1981, lives in Madison, WI, has 1 child and is an electrician.

1980s

JOHN ANDERSON (1980)
MARRIED KATHY (PRICE) (1981), they live in Chicago, have

2 children and John is in surgical sales.

CYNTHIA (KARFIAS) RIGSBY (1982) graduated from Duke AB 1986, MD 1990, lives in Chicago, has 2 children and is an MD, Pediatric Radiologist.

PAUL RAIMAN (1983) graduated from De Paul BM 1987, MM 1988, home base is Chicago, he is professional musician /musical director of Broadway musicals.

KRISTINE (SLEEMAN) KERNAN (1984) lives in Des Plaines, IL and is a Nanny.

KAREN (KOB) ANDRESHAK (1985) graduated from U of I BS Chemical Engineering 1989, lives in Anaheim, CA, has 2 children and is a systems engineer.

1990s

WILLIAM GOFF (1993), lives in Harwood Hts, IL and is a US postal clerk

In Our Memories

Mary (Alphie) Kupczyk, class of 1940 died October 20, 2004.

Jeanne (Linden) Kehe, class of June 1941 passed away on November 14, 2004 from a stroke.

Paul D. McPheeters, Jr., class of June 1943 passed away on January 27, 2004.

Dolores (Warner) Wallace, class of 1944 died June 29, 2004 from cancer.

Norbert (Norb) Paulish, class of June 1943 passed away January 11, 2005

Betty (Petersen) Schmidiger, class of June 1945 and former student editor of the Taft Tribune, passed away from cancer on July 29, 2004.

Lauretta (Piccolo) Romani, class of June 1946 died December 11, 2004.

Shirley F. (Meyers) Koch, class of June 1947 passed away December 16, 2003

Ronald Anderson, class of June 1948 passed away on November 27, 2004.

Dolores (Brandt) Aul, class of 1948 died March 17, 2004 of ovarian cancer.

Robert Jones, class of 1948, died on January 15, 2005 of cancer.

Norman Lizak, class of June 1950 died October 2, 2004.

Ernst Sauerman, class of June 1950 passed away September 7, 2003.

Herbert Janzen, class of January 1958 died on January 5, 2005

Sharon (Sarcia) Freeze, class of June 1960 passed away on October 21, 2000 from pancreatic cancer.

John (Skip) Clark passed away on December 30th, 2004. While he did not graduate with the class of 71, he did subsequently earn a GED while serving a 4 year term in the Marine Corp.

Michael Maccione, class of 1973 passed away June 2, 2004 from cancer.

Jerrey Zeppiero, class of 1975 died on January 10, 2004.

Book of Honor

We have a very good start on our accumulating the names of Taft alumni who deserve special recognition, though different from the Hall of Fame alumni.

These are Taft students or teachers who we wish to remember and will add their names in our Book of Honor as they are accumulated. The names are in one of three categories:

- Past faculty, administration and staff members who made Taft a special place to learn.
- Deceased graduates who meet the same criteria as Hall of Fame nominees.
- Servicemen and service women who attended Taft and died in service to their country.

Although we issue invitations for nominations once every five years, alumni are welcome to send in nominations for future Hall of Fame or Book of Honor additions **at any time**. They should be specifically labeled as "Hall of Fame" or "Book of Honor," however as many alumni regularly share memories of individuals for the newsletter.

President's Message

A copy of the Summer Issue of our Newsletter was sent to **Jonathan Sweeney**, class of 1987; he no longer lives at home but his Mother read the Newsletter and thus sent in memberships for her 3 children. There is Jonathan, 1987 who lives in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic with the International Schools, **Kieran Sweeney**, class of 1982 who lives in Zurich, Switzerland and **Bryan Sweeney**, class of 1985 who lives in Bangkok, Thailand in a tree house and is a specialist with the CDC.

Our thanks to Mrs. Sweeney and may all her children be safe.

Kay Kuciak, TAA President

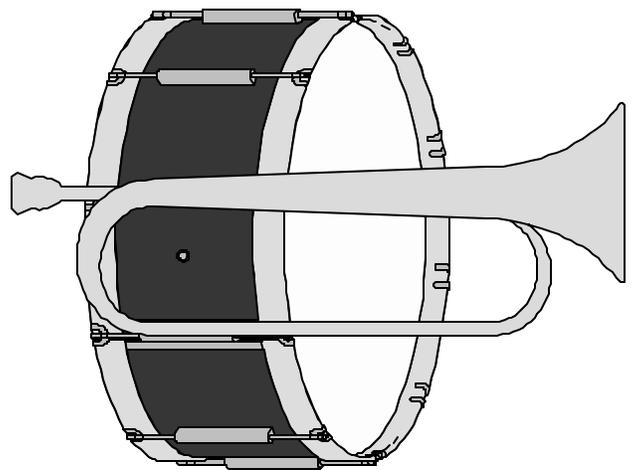
The Norwood Park Fife, Drum and Bugle Corps

I noted, with some interest, the article regarding the drum and bugle corps published in the most recent issue of the Taft Alumni Newsletter for "Summer 2004". Unless I am mistaken, that was the same Norwood Park Drum, Fife and Bugle Corp. I belonged to during the years from 1938 to 1942, under the capable direction of Willie Widemeier. "Uncle Willie", as we affectionately called him, was a hard taskmaster, but loveable, none the less.

Many an evening was spent with the notes of the Corp's practicing spread along the various streets emanating from Norwood Park Field House (our practice headquarters) and echoing joyously throughout the neighborhood, as we practiced our various march formations and music, such as the stirring march "Heads Up".

Although circumstances have prevented me from visiting the memorabilia site of the aforementioned article, I can recall the pride we felt in our uniforms of crisp, white shirts, dark blue skirts/slacks with matching red-lined, dark blue capes with one corner thrown back over the shoulder, and dark blue overseas' caps sporting red piping. I was particularly pleased when I was chosen to be Lead Fifer for the Corps, and Mom --- an able lady with needle --- finished sewing my uniform in time for our march in the parade that opened up Devon Avenue. Politicians abounded, each with their own superfluous rhetoric. Heady stuff for an eleven year old kid in those days.

Arlene "Lee" (Sawusch) Faehnrich (June '46)



Memories of Edison Elementary

as recalled by **Robert B. Johnson**
(Edison January 1961, Taft January 1964)
E-mail: Rbengrguy@aol.com

In 1853 the Chicago and Northwestern Train line (now the Union Pacific) ended at the Canfield Station (later to be become the Edison Park stop). In 1854 the train line was extended to Park Ridge.

The community of Edison Park developed in and around the Chicago and Northwestern railroad tracks in the late 1800's. In 1890 the community received the first electric street lamps. I believe the community was one of the first to receive electrification, henceforth the name Edison. Similarly the Norwood Park community sprang up around the NW railroad tracks. In 1910 the Edison Park community was incorporated into Chicago. With the growth of these communities grade schools opened, including Ebinger for Edison Park and Norwood Park Elementary for said community. The Ebinger grade school open in 1926. The school was named in honor of Christian Ebinger, Sr. one of the first settlers to the Edison park area

There was no high school in the general area. William Howard Taft High School [opened] its doors in September of 1939. The area in around the site of Edison school lay largely undeveloped until the 1940's. In fact there was a working farm on what was to become the site of Resurrection Girls High School. This farm was one of the last farms within the Chicago city limits.

The area west of Harlem to Canfield and South of Devon to roughly to Higgins began to see development in the 1940's. Part of this development was a result of an airplane factory at Orchard Place airfield (later to become O'Hare International Airport). With the end of World War II the community saw explosive growth as new housing was needed to house the returning GI's. New homes were constructed in and area around the future site of Edison Elementary School.

There was a small 4-room school building at 6221 North Oriole. When this school opened is unknown. Because of the significant growth in the community the Chicago Public School system commissioned a new building for the growing neighborhood. Construction started in 1948.

Thomas Alva Edison Elementary opened its doors to the thriving new community around 1950. The principal may have been Dr. Fields. Even as the new school at 6220 N. Olcott opened its doors there was overcrowding. 1952 was the first beginnings of the "Baby Boom" generation. New construction in the community continued adding additional families and taxing the facility. A new principal, Dr. Ann V. Gale arrived at the school in September 1952.

By 1954 the school could no longer accommodate the growing student population. I recall split shift classes in 1955 due to shortage of classroom space. Some students attended school from 8:00 a.m. to noon, while the second shift went from noon to 4:00 P.M.

The small 4-room school on Oriole at the west end of the school property remained and was referred to as the annex. The students affectionately called it the "LITTLE SCHOOL". It was reserved for 1st and 2nd grades whereupon they entered the "BIG SCHOOL" for 3rd grade and beyond. To exacerbate the crowding problem, the Edison Park Children's Home sent their students to Edison. Until the late 1950's the school was located on unincorporated property on the west side of Canfield Avenue. Eventually the land became part of Park Ridge. Today the children's home is gone. Recently the property on which the home was located was sold and the home demolished. Luxury homes have been constructed on the land.

In those years almost all students walked to school. There was no busing and 2 car families were a luxury. Few if any students were driven to school. Some of the students North of Higgins Avenue had a very long distance to walk (one mile). The Edison branch was located near Ardmore and Ottawa Avenues. This school was used for lower grades whose younger students would find the long walk to the main building (or annex) excessive. In lieu of walking great distances some students were allowed to ride their bike to school. Somehow we all managed to make it to school rain or shine, snow and cold. The term "snow day" was not in our lexicon. In all my years attending public school ('52-'65) I recall only one January day in '65 that school was cancelled because foul weather.

Construction of a new addition to Edison was needed to accommodate the growing student population. Construction started on an addition in 1954. In 1956 the south addition consisting of 4 new classrooms, library and kindergarten room opened. The outside configuration of the building has remained virtually unchanged ever since.

During the 1950's and 60's students attended classes from 9:00 A.M. TO 3:15 PM. There was a one-hour lunch break from noon to 1:00 PM. There was no food service in the school. Almost all students within reasonable walking distance went home for lunch. Those students who lived far away or had working parents were allowed to bring their lunches. One classroom was reserved as a lunchroom. How many of you recall milk service at school? Schools

contracted with milk vendors to provide milk to students. Remember those small glass bottles? Milk was delivered in the morning for students to drink during morning recess or at lunch.

October 4, 1957 was a significant day in the annals of technology (and US education). For it was on that day the Soviet Union launched the 'Sputnik' satellite. Shortly thereafter I noted a change in our curriculum. We began to receive more science instruction in the school. The upper grades would gather in the library to watch the latest rocket-satellite launch on the one black & white television.

I do not remember an 'official' dress code, but there were items of clothing that were deemed inappropriate. Boys did not wear blue jeans or exposed tee shirt with any kind of writing. All boys wore shirts. Girls either wore dresses or blouses with skirts. In the late 50's it was a craze for girls to have their white blouses embroidered with their initials. Pants were not allowed to be worn by girls. Rebellion by the students was unheard of. These were the conservative Eisenhower years. Teachers also appeared to observe a dress code too. Many of the women (there were few men) wore high-heeled shoes. Once again the female teachers did not wear pants.

Classroom violence was non-existent. There may have been a few insignificant squabbles but I don't remember any. No one thought of bringing a gun to school, but knives were another story. The knives were not used for threats or fighting, but in games in the school play yard. Boys may have brought their knives with cub/boy scout insignia's on the handle. It was all so innocent. Does anyone remember the game Mumbly Peg, played with pocketknives? How times have changed!

December 1, 1958 was another sad day in the history of Chicago and Chicago education. That day saw 92 children and 3 nuns die in the tragic Our Lady of Angels School fire. Soon afterward I seem to recall special emphasis on fire drills at the school. A new fire alarm pull box was installed in front of the school. In addition to the fire drills we always had periodic air-raid drills. The 50's was the onset of the 'Cold-War' and the cloud of nuclear annihilation hung over our heads. I believe there was even a fallout shelter in the basement of the school.

Primary subjects included, reading, grammar, handwriting, spelling, arithmetic, science, social studies. Additional subjects included music, art and library. Upon reaching 7th grade courses in home mechanics were added. All students in seventh grade learned basic sewing and cooking skills. Additionally, students learned how to iron clothes. The 8th grade boys learned plumbing, electrical and carpentry skills. The girls continued one with more advanced sewing and cooking classes.

There were gym classes, too. Upon reaching the 6th grade one day of the week was reserved for 'recreational gym' that included dance lessons. Gym teacher Mr. Helfrick taught the students polka, fox trot, waltz and square dancing. But that was about to change. By the late 50's rock 'n' roll became the dance music choice of the students. Students would observe the latest dances on the American Bandstand television program and bring them to school. Mr. Helfrick was able to reluctantly incorporate this music into the school dance program. The twist dance craze of 1960 created some trying times.

As for extracurricular program there were none that I know of. There were no math or chess clubs as common to today. There were no school athletic teams either. In the winter months the gym was open on Friday evenings for dance parties. The activity was known as "Social Center." The boys would sit on one side while the girls sat on the opposite side. It was now time for the students to get their fill of that "evil" rock 'n' roll music. Looking back at the music it was all so innocent. The girls would bring in the latest 45's rpm records to be played by DJ. Generally, the girls would be dancing to the latest rock 'n' roll dances: The Fly, the Pony, the BOP. Boys would sit quietly and observe as they did not know the latest moves or were too shy to ask a girl for a "Fast" dance. When a "Slow-Dance" was played the boys would ask a girl to the dance floor. Dance fads such as the Twist or The Stroll would bring the students to their feet. I don't recall when the "Social Center" activity was abandoned.

I believe sometime in the late 50's the school instituted departmentalized teaching for the upper grades. Students would switch classrooms to go to those teachers who had a specific expertise. Mrs. Hirshberg taught music and math to 8th grade students. Mrs. Polka taught English while Mrs. Halbasch taught science.

Through the late 50's and on into the 60's the student population continued to grow, though there was no expansion of the building. I believe the student population peaked at over 600 by the 60's. Classroom sizes of over 40 students were not unusual. Still, teachers were able to have decorum in the classroom. Even with these large classes instruction did not appear to suffer. Edison and surrounding grade schools were some of the best in the Chicago Public School system. This can be reflected in the student population of William Howard Taft High School. From the 40's and on into the 70's was one of the best high schools in the city. Dropout rates at Taft were almost non-existent and many students went on to college. By 1961 I had moved on to education at Taft.

Principal Gale left the school in 1961. She went on to bigger and better things in the Chicago Public Schools

system. She eventually became principal of Ronald Amundsen High School, Chicago. She was an educator of some renown. The new principal, James Lorio, arrived in the fall of 1961.

Up until the 1960's students whose birth date occurred around February were allowed to enter school mid-term. Classes were split into semesters, not by year. To balance out class sizes dual classes generally consisted of two semesters. Brighter students of a lower semester tended to be paired with slower students from the semester ahead. Exceptional students often skipped semesters. But that was about to change.

In the late '50's or early 60's, the Chicago Public School systems decreed there would be no more semesters but classes would be on the year. I believe this was to make graduations compatible with colleges whose programs were on a yearly cycle. I don't recall the exact procedures, but all mid-term students had to get on a year cycle. This necessitated those mid-term student's education to be accelerated. Four semesters of two years were somehow compacted into 3 semesters effectively promoting the students to one semester ahead and on to a yearly schedule. I believe the very last mid-term graduation class from Edison was January 1963. All graduation classes thereafter were on yearly basis.

The 1970's and 80's saw the gentrification of the community. The parents remained only to have the children who attend Edison move out to the suburbs or out of state. The "Little School" along Oriole was demolished and is now a long lost memory.

I remained in the community to note the deterioration of the school. I would return to the school to perform my civic duty voting in elections. Voting booths were (and are still) held in the school gymnasium. Residents took pride in their community and the school. Residents and parents wanted the school repaired. I seem to recall reading in the community newspaper an effort of local activists to paint the school only to have obstacles placed before them. As the janitors/maintenance engineers for the school system were unionized they objected to nonunion personnel providing much needed renovation - restoration of the building. I don't recall what became of this issue.

Finally, by the early 1980's the school population had dwindled to a point where I believe it was no longer

justified to keep the school open. With efforts to improve education opportunities a magnet school for gifted students was proposed by the Chicago Board of Education. Edison was reopened as the Edison Regional Gifted Center around 1983.

Physical improvements to the facility included new windows. (I don't know if the school is now air conditioned, but I suspect it is). Those attending in the 60's might recall the open windows and not being able to hear teachers with jet airplane traffic from the new O'Hare airport. New hall and classroom lighting was installed. The old-style globe chandeliers were removed.

In 1991 I returned to my alma mater to present a lecture on my career whose foundation was laid at Edison. On first entering the school I observed how small everything seemed. Of course back in the 50's as a child every thing appeared larger. I observed subtle changes in the operation of the school as well. Students were now bussed in from around the Chicagoland area. As children arrived they were allowed entry in the building for preparation of their day. A handicap ramp was added to the entrance to the school.

Long gone were the days when the students would play in the schoolyard, line up into their classes for entry at 8:55 AM. Food service was now provided. I noted the food storage lockers in one of the classrooms. I learned that student population was under 300, less than one-half during the "Baby Boom" era. Background music was played in the hallways. A new generation of students was being provided a quality education. Today, the school is one of the finest in Chicago if not the state, but it also has a previous history of providing quality education to the children of the Edison park community. I guess not much has changed.

[These are] my personal reminisces about my days at Edison and living in the neighborhood from 1954-83. Its almost a half a century since I began attending classes at Edison, so my recollections may be somewhat blurred by father-time. Readers, classmates are welcome to share with me their reflections about the school.

Special thanks to Anne Lunde who provided information on Edison Park community history [along with the Ebinger and Taft Alumni Associations].

New Members Wanted

The Taft Alumni Association is always looking for alumni who are not currently members of our Association. If you know anyone who came from Taft and is not a member, please encourage them to join. Send us their name and address (and year of graduation, if known) at:

Taft Alumni Association, 6530 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., Chicago, IL 60631 or email us at taftalum@cox.net.

Lost Classmates

Searching for old classmates for whom you've lost touch? The Taft Alumni Association does not provide names or addresses of alumni from our records other than for legitimate class reunions. However, we will help you in your search by publishing the name(s) in this newsletter. If that party responds to us, we forward that person's name and address to you.

The suggested donation for this service is \$5.00 per name. Send your request and/or response to Taft Alumni Association, c/o Taft High School, 6530 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., Chicago, IL 60631.

Wilber Koch (June 1947) is looking for classmate of his and his late wife, **Shirley F. (Meyers) Koch**. Anyone knowing the whereabouts of **Lois Wachtel** from the years [about] 1945-1948, please contact us so we can forward this information to him.

Leo Drummer (Jan 1957) is looking for **Carol (Strickland) Smith** (June 1958). Contact Leo at wilmaleo5@aol.com



TAFT Alumni Bargains

Static Window Stickers: \$3.00 ea. (Plus \$1 S/H)

"Taft High School - You Can't Hide Eagle Pride"
(Profits go to the Taft Athletic Department)

T-Shirts: \$10 each (XXL & XXXL - \$12 each)

Light gray with NEW Eagle logo silk-screened in blue.
Sizes - Medium thru XXXL

Baseball Caps: \$15 each

Royal Blue with NEW Eagle logo in gray/black stitched emblem on front. Adjustable buckle tab - one size fits all.

Jackets: \$30.00 each

Special purchase blue nylon windbreakers with a white flannel lining and snap front with a drawstring bottom. The silver emblem on the left breast area reads "TAFT HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI" with an eagle in the center: M (38-40), L (42-44) only. (XL SOLD OUT!)

Look for new Taft merchandise with our new logo in our next issue of TAA newsletter!

TAFT Alumni Order Form

Quantity Ordered	Description	Price	Extended Price
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

+ 6.00 postage/handling

TOTAL Enclosed \$ _____

Send check to: Taft Alumni Association
6530 W. Bryn Mawr Ave.
Chicago, IL 60631

(PLEASE PRINT)

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

Month/Year of Graduation _____

TAFT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION APPLICATION FORM			
Name		Maiden Name	Month & Year Graduated
Address (Home)		City	State Zip
Address (Business)		City	State Zip
Home Telephone No: ()		Email Address:	
Name of Spouse		Year Married:	
Number of Children:	Ages:	Number of Grandchildren:	
College(s) Attended, Degree(s) Earned, Year of Graduation _____			
Occupation:		Other Interests:	
Other News or Information: _____			
<input type="checkbox"/> I am enclosing \$ _____ to defray newsletter cost. <input type="checkbox"/> I am enclosing \$15. 00 for two-year membership. <input type="checkbox"/> I am enclosing \$20. 00 for two-year Husband & Wife membership.			
Return to: Taft Alumni Association 6530 W. Bryn Mawr Ave. Chicago IL 60631			
			<i>Winter 2005</i>

Taft Alumni Association Officers

President: Kay Kuciak (1963)
 Alumni Liason: Frank Heyer (1948)
 Vice-president: Jeraldene Bloom (1962)
 2nd Vice President: Anne Lunde (1969)
 Secretary/Treasurer: Shirley DeWeese (1960)
 Directors: Tom Kuciak (1962)
 Joe Popp (1966)
 Paulette English (1967)
 Kevin Kreiger (1973)
 Judi Lenihan (1973)
 Richard Lindberg (1971)
 Barbara Rodriguez (1970)

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 Website Coordinator: Kevin Krieger

Renew Now !!

Look at your address label on the back of this page. Check your year of graduation in the box on the lower right corner. Is it correct? The most important area is here. This is also the section that has the expiration date of your current membership with the Taft Alumni Association. If the date is close, the TIME is NOW to sit down and write out a check for \$15. Not one, but TWO full years of newsletters with opportunities to learn about classmates, reunions, school events and alumni programs. Be sure to use the application above to fill in the latest updates in your life.

The Taft Alumni Association publishes the Taft Alumni Newsletter quarterly. Send all general correspondence and changes of address: **Taft Alumni Association**, 6530 W. Bryn Mawr Ave., Chicago, IL 60631 or E-mail at **Taftalum@cox.net**
 Website: <http://www.taftalumni.org>
 Alumni Directory E-mail address: **eagleemail@taftalumni.org**

TAFT ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
6530 W. BRYN MAWR AVE.
CHICAGO IL 60631

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