

Bisonalities, Again



A quarterly newsletter dedicated to the Alumni of Fort LeBoeuf High School

October 1999

Fall Issue

Volume 1 - Number 1

Welcome to the premier issue of a newsletter dedicated to the alumni of Fort LeBoeuf High School. This newsletter will be issued quarterly. New issues will be posted to the Web site on October 5, January 5, April 5, and July 15.

The Web site may be viewed by going to:

<http://www.geocities.com/candoer1>

The success of this newsletter will depend on you. I need contributors. Do you have an interesting article or picture you would like to share with other alumni? An address of one of our classmates? Send it to me at the following e-mail address:

bisonalities@candoer.org

or at my snail-mail address:

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Please, **NO** handwritten submissions.

Nostalgia

The following was copied from the May 1956 issue of the Bisonalities.

Senior Personalities

This lad is 5' 9" tall and weighs 147 pounds. He was born in Waterford, on October 12, 1939, which makes him 16 years of age. His eyes are hazel and his hair is brown. He likes Chevy hotrods. He plans a career in the service when he graduates. He has attended school in the Waterford area his entire life. His favorite food is chicken, and he dislikes Spanish Rice. His favorite sport is baseball, in which he participates. His favorite song is "Love is a Many Splendored Thing" and his favorite band leader is Guy Lombardo. Who is he?

((This information will be revealed later in this issue.))

Letters to the Editor

The following letter to the Editor was received from Joe and Ruth Ann (Allen) Leech:
Oct 16, 1999

The frost truly was on the pumpkin last night in the moonlit fields surrounding Pittsburgh. It was the first time for us this year, but as we are a bit south of Waterford. Probably not the first time for the folks "at home." Fall has come fast... summer was so hot, so dry, but now we have had a little rain, and as I got the mower out yesterday, I wonder if it will be the last time this year. There's still large patches of brown in the yard I hope will recover next spring. We have an interesting yard here in Pittsburgh ... like so many homes, we sit on a hill, but the road in front of our home has become almost a "mini turnpike" with the development around us. Traffic all the time, and when snow comes, our favorite pastime is sitting in the family room watching the panic on the faces of the novice drivers as they put their brakes on going down the hill, only to lose complete steering control, and usually either end up in one of the banks or a yard... or deciding it's better to go down this half mile gauntlet at 50 miles an hour with steering control, than sliding down slowly... often sideways. Ahhh.... decisions. We didn't have things like that in Waterford in winter. It was flat, and we even had sidewalks. How many remember "Hoot" Gibson and his speed on the snowplow... or the alternative.. pulling the wooden "V" shaped sidewalk plow behind a horse? Our hill has some other interesting benefits... we're about half way up it. It runs East and West, and you go from the bottom at the east end to the top on the west, from where it's about another half mile to the Northway Mall. Some of you may have even been there or remembered it.. It was the first covered mall in Western Pa and was developed after our first mall up home... surely some of you will remember when the West Erie Plaza out on 8th---to 12th... was the first mall up home. Before that, downtown still was popular and so many of us met at the Boston Store. Boy, we could talk about change! I remember landing a piper cub at Millcreek Airport. If I tried the same thing today, I'd crash right into the men's department of Sears! And that area

hasn't even finished growing yet. Now this might not mean much to all of you who stayed in Waterford, but boy, the changes are so evident.

We were just talking about the Boston Store and downtown...You should see the new highway along the bay, and the tower at the now 'half size' old public dock. Not the same

But we were talking a little about fall and pumpkins. I was up through Waterford last week... Still working (probably will forever) and I had a client in Erie and another in Edinboro to see. Sorta makes me sad to come into Waterford from the South... The "Wye" and Porter Park used to be so nice, and held so many memories. I know there was a handful of us who used to roller skate a couple times a week or more. Took my grandkids skating in Pgh a couple months ago... can still get around pretty well, but my "4 wheelers" were about as in style as a Model T at the Indy 500. No one skates to music any more, particularly organ music. Oh, they call it "music," but its mainly noise and the agenda is to go as fast as you can. No more couples skates, ladies choices, waltz, congo trios, or grand marches. But then again no one does square dances (and polkas) like we used to.. Remember when we sponsored the class dance and hired "The Happy Gang" as our band? And did anyone EVER figure out how Mr. Dingle got around the floor as adroitly as he did?

The skating rink, and Eddie Hopkins place, "The Showboat", along with the nice green park was pretty then. In the summer, the rink window covers were opened and you could hear Dot Pinchins melodious organ music out on the lake. It always sounded good, but did anyone ever notice how she used to swing that left foot and leg? Come to think of it, Hoartie Hinkson did the same thing when she played at the Methodist Church! Always enjoyed Dot... she gave me my first informal organ lesson. Never forget it....."don't try and do chords like you do on the piano; the organ is meant for two figure harmony." Music always invokes memories, but as this is Bisonsalities and about school... probably none more poignant than when McCummins played his trombone in assembly, usually accompanied by Howard Markham on piano. Those were sounds.. and the class of 54-55-56 dance band wasn't all that shabby either. Specially compared to today! But today, the Wye is such a junk pile. Sorta reminds me of Dogpatch. They ought to clean it up.

Came back through Waterford, but on the progress end, the Eagle Hotel has a nice restaurant in it, and the post office is under construction, doubling it's size. For those of you who haven't been through town for a long time, it sits where Ozzie Moore used to have his Chevy dealership, and Stub Lindsley was on the corner. Memories there too...I won't mention the ones I recall on double dates with Bill Canfield and a certain classmate date of his known to be able to carry a tune.. now that was Entertainment!!!!...but I will recall seeing one of the first ever Chevy Corvettes. All white. Wire protection over the headlights. Probably cost all of about \$5000 then. But you could also get an Impala for \$2500. Fun thing about doubling with Bullet Bill was he always got a new car to go out in. And he, for some

reason, liked the back seat with his date, so I got to drive. Good thing rear view mirrors can't talk.

It was around 4:30 when I came back, and a nice fall day. Leaves have fallen...and in Waterford, some people still burn them. Boy, the aroma sure invokes memories. Talking about fall, and fires, reminds me of bonfires...and something else we did it seemed every fall was the hay ride. Out to Markham's farm, and then back to some field to roast hot dogs, or marshmallows, or something. I think there was some other "roasting" going on on the wagon then, but a few of us kept our naivete a little past 1956, so I can't recall even seeing that at the time. But my idea of being risque at the time was either getting some 3.2 beer from New York, or maybe smoking some corn silk in a corncob pipe. Now there were a couple of classmates ahead of us a little more sophisticated who smoked real pipes...remember Tom Hart or Dick Giles?

What sorta precipitated this trip down memory lane was an email I got from Bob Catlin the other day talking about the Bisonsalities issue we did after the last class reunion, and then some discussion that we ought to keep up the communication with all the classmates. I agree, and statistically, most of us seem to have computers and do email, only mainly to keep in touch with our kids and grandkids. If you're reading this by computer, you have arrived! Funny thing is... do you know what the totally most useful class I ever had at Fort LeBoeuf was??? Latin! Helped me understand the Catholics. No.. just kidding.. it was.... T Y P I N G! Miss Malone. And I think I was one of only 2 or 3 guys in the class. Took a lot of ribbing for taking it, but from college days and the old manual typewriter to today, it was the course I have directly used the most!

Anyway....back to talking about Waterford for another moment as passing by what was Mom's store, and is now an Italian Restaurant comes to mind. Most of you will probably remember it as "Herb and Helen's", the name it acquired after the big new remodeling in 1955 when Sealtest came in big time. Before that, it was "The Sugar Bowl" and I still occasionally hear people refer to it that way. Funny thing about "Herb and Helen's"... Herb wasn't there a whole lot as he liked the bar better, and the Helen could have as easily been Helen Wilcox as "Mom"... boy, if not for her, that place just would not have ever run. And then there were any number of you who did some time "behind the soda fountain"... but regardless of which side, it was like a big family atmosphere. Many of you knew Mom as this was the gathering place after parades, dances, ball games, or whatever. A 5 cent coke, 20 cent soda, nickel plays on the juke box..... I'm sad to share with each of you Mom passed on last April. She was 87, and living alone in a very nice and active mobile home park for seniors in Fla. She had been widowed (for the 4th time) about a year ago, and while lonesome, was active. Church, community affairs, singing with a seniors group (the Hi Los). Apparently in good health for a person her age, she suffered a sudden and massive heart attack in her own home while coming to the door to let a neighbor in. It was over in a matter of minutes, and while we all miss her, all Ruth Ann and I can say is that it's not a bad way to go. She had things on her calendar for the week, and

didn't apparently have a clue anything was seriously wrong. She had been with us for most of December, having flown, by herself, from Orlando to Pgh. In fact, we had such ice storms last December that it was hard to get out, and she was a little perturbed that we had such a domestic and inside life here, compared to her social schedule with a lot of retired friends in Fla.. a dance at the community house one nite; cards the next, a potluck weekly... etc. Makes our work-eat-sleep-work-eat-sleep-weekend out for a play, concert, movie; Sunday church routine seem boring.

Getting back.. "Cat" (Bob Catlin) brought up the idea; I hope everyone agrees, and I'm looking forward to more stories from each of you and news, then the next revolution... oops, reunion. Would like to drop about 35 pounds first, but why... no one would know me if I was thin! I think an old high school nick name was "Stoker Belly".. Hell! Looking back at some of the 1956 pictures I'd like to be that thin and in shape. When Cat brought up the idea, he told me about the first and current issue on the Internet, and I went there and read Herb Walden's writings. Good stuff. You know, doesn't Herb sort of remind you of being the Garrison Keilor of Waterford (for those of you who don't know who Garrison is, you gotta tune into NPR (national public radio, FM) on Sat evenings, where ever you live!) The only thing different is that if Herb got into that mode, he would probably tell stories about the Methodists instead of the Lutherans. Not many Lutherans in Waterford in the 50s.

Wrapping it up, for anyone wanting an update since the reunion.. not much. Still running my rep business, but now very active in the Internet and just became the owner and developer of the North Hills Virtual Mall (nhillsmall.cjb.net). Looking forward to a great Christmas season there. Then we help people save bunches on their income tax with a class at taxcit.hypermart.net, and also help people with wealth ideas and things to sell at pyubkits.cjb.net. There's others, but they would bore you. Ruth Ann is most active in helping both of our married children with their home schooling and she teaches classes here at our home regularly. Art, nutrition, and other subjects. Between it all, we seem to be busier than we were even five or ten years ago. Some of you may remember Ruth Ann's parents.. we moved them to a nursing home just north of Butler, and did so last June. That ended all living family ties to Waterford. Her mom is in the full care unit, but her dad is a feisty 89 and looks forward to celebrating his 90th in a few weeks. He is only in the assisted care wing, and if PennDot had not pulled his drivers license for being legally blind, he would still be keeping his apartment and living on his own in Waterford.

Well, that about wraps things up from this end for this time. Hope we have brought some smiles to a few faces and maybe even a warm fuzzy or two. If anyone is near or around Pgh, or even lives in the area, we'd love to either hear from you or have you stop by. Always a pot of coffee around, a good bottle of wine or bourbon. We have tons of old Waterford 50's vintage pictures to share... plus if you twisted our arm, about another 5000 or so slides from anything from the Air

Force days to the current... But you'll have to insist first. Won't otherwise put you to sleep... on the other hand, they say that as some of us age and lose our melatonin, getting to sleep is a problem and this might be a cure for you!.

See you again soon, we hope!
Regards, /s/ Joe and Ruth Ann

Waterford's heritage: people and places

by Herb Walden

I spent the 1940s being a kid. Not just any kid, mind you but a kid growing up in Waterford.

Now that we're all celebrating the 50th anniversary of -- uh -- 1949, I thought it might be fitting to share some of my memories of Waterford's business district

I remember stores that lined High Street in the '40s, and a few others off the main thoroughfare.

For instance, there were five grocery stores along the west side, Laing's, Irwin & Cross, Patten's, Phelps' (which later became Doolittle's), and the Red and White.

My father's brother, Vic Walden, owned the Red & White at the corner of High Street and West South Park Row, and my dad, Bill, worked for him

Mr. Patten's store at the corner of West 2nd and High Streets wasn't exactly a fully stocked grocery, but in addition to the foods he did have, there were also boots and shoes. Mr. Patten didn't have a cash register; he kept the money in a drawer under the counter.

There were two hardware stores, and my purchases back then were often paints for toys, bikes, bird houses, and such. The brands were "BPS" at Myers' Hardware and "Lucas" at Bowersox Hardware. These were real paints, not the watercolors we have today. Oh, sure, they were probably full of lead, but as long as a kid didn't lick his fingers clean, he was fairly safe

Some time in the late '40s, Sam Myers moved his hardware to the building now occupied by the Stancliff Hose Company and expanded his farm supply business. I still half-expect to see Farmall tractors sitting in front of the building whenever I'm in Waterford.

Mr. Brown's Variety Store, or 5 & 10s, as those stores were called, had just about everything. There were toys and hats and greeting cards and toothpaste -- sort of a miniature K-Mark with prices that even a kid could afford.

Mr. Brown started his business in a store between 1st Street and the 2nd Alley. About 1944 or so, he moved up to the next block to the former Lindsley Hardware, just two doors from our Red and White. Waha's Restaurant took over Mr. Brown's old store and they were succeeded by Holman's Clothing.

Hewitt's "Park Pharmacy" was between our store and the 5 and 10, and Coon's Drugstore was down in the next block. When Mr. Hewitt retired, Eaton's moved in for a time, followed by Pizzo's and then Parke Phillips took over. Most drug stores had soda fountains back then, and Parke's was the place to get the best marshmallow sundaes with chocolate ice cream!

Beyond Coon's was Kingen's Dry Goods, well-stocked with bolts of material and all kinds of sewing needs. The store was operated by Mrs. Stinson and her sister, Mrs. Gates. I liked going in there with my mother or grandmother because of the slippery bent-wood bench and tilting stools, both entertaining things for a little kid.

Merle Heard's "Sugar Bowl" at the corner of High Street and 2nd Alley was a favorite stop. I think single-dip cones were a nickel, and double-dips were a dime.

At Roberts' Dairy Bar, Fred and Eleanor Roberts made their own ice cream. They started in business in the little building next to the Waterford Hotel. (The old Civil War recruiting station). They soon moved into the Masonic Building when the post office moved out. Robert's cold fudge sundaes were the best ever made -- plenty of delicious vanilla ice cream with enough fudge in which to lose your spoon. All that for 20 cents.

Once in a while during the summer, Freddie would make what he called "Frosted Malteds." That was my introduction to soft ice cream, and it was a thousand times better than anything you can find nowadays.

The Gem Restaurant, owned by Mr. Twitchell, was my supplier of Fudgesicles and Choco-Pops (chocolate-covered ice cream bars). Sometimes after finishing off a Fudgesicle, I'd find the word "Free" stamped on the stick. This meant that I could redeem the stick for a free Fudgesicle. And I did!

When Mr. Twitchell went out, Baker's Restaurant moved in. Eventually, Dave Doolittle took over the restaurant and tore out a partition to enlarge his grocery store

There were four automobile dealerships in town: Delavern's "Central Motors" at West 2nd and High Streets sold Fords along with John Deere farm equipment. Moore's Chevrolet was on the corner of East 1st and High Streets, where the Post Office is now located. Humes DeSota-Plymouth was on East South Park Row, across from the baseball diamond. Humes also sold Case farm equipment. You could buy a Pontiac at Cross' Garage on High Street.

The dealerships did auto repairs, and so did Lawrence Burdick at the "Pioneer Garage" on the northern outskirts of the borough

Gas stations (or filling stations, as we called them) were not numerous. In the midst of downtown was Lockhart's Kendall, where the bank now stands. Humes' Keystone was just beyond the baseball diamond, and right across High Street was the Mobile Station operated by my uncle, Ronnie Walker. Way up High Street, just beyond 6th Street, was Cap Mauer's Gulf Station, taken over later by Mr. and Mrs. Cook

My uncle's Mobile Station burned down in 1943 and was replaced by a new Atlantic Station operated by Jim Breon.

The big building across West 1st Street from the Eagle Hotel was Lyn Phelp's furniture store. Lyn was also the undertaker and had caskets for sale in the back. I didn't care much about going in there

Mr. Mike's shoe repair shop was a busy place because this was still the era of leather soles and rubber heels, both of which usually wore out before the

uppers and cold be repaired or replaced. Remember heel plates?

Dr. Elmer Coop's office was on High Street and Dr. V.K. Worster's office was on West 1st Street, just behind the furniture store.

Doc Worster delivered me and did his best to keep me healthy all the way through my college years. Doc was a big, strapping man with a big, booming personality. The word "robust" may have been coined specifically to describe Doc Worster. When I was sick, I always felt better immediately when Doc came in. I viewed Doc as a celebrity. It seemed like everyone in the world knew him.

When I graduated, I received an envelope in the mail from Dr. Worster. Scrawled on it was the address: "Herbie Walden, City" -- no number, no street, no town, no state. Evidently, Doc was in a hurry that day.

In the envelope was a congratulatory note, hand-written on a prescription blank. He couldn't have sent me a better gift. It is one of my most-treasured mementos

Dr. Hood, our dentist, moved his office into the "Civil War Building" when Fred and Eleanor Roberts moved out.

Two barber shops were on the main street - Art Babbitt's and Guy Doud's. Haircuts were 50 cents

The bank was locally owned by Mr. Ensworth, while Mrs. Waltz owned the Waterford Electric Light Company.

Two feed mills served the many farmers of the area: Burger and O'Brien on East 3rd Street, and the G.L.F., located a mile beyond and next to the railroad depot. EL. Heard's store and coal yard was across the road from the G.L.F.

To serve the alcoholic needs of the locally gentry, there were bars in the Eagle Hotel, the Waterford Hotel, and Curley Ober's Cafe.

Gordon Marsh's Sales and Service was located on Walnut Street at the end of West South Park Row. Gordon dealt in home appliances as well as Surge milking equipment.

Business hours were the about the same for everyone, except bars (ice cream and otherwise, which seemed to be open all the time). Everyone else closed at 6:00 p.m., except on Wednesdays when closing time was noon, and Saturdays when the stores stayed open until 9:00 p.m. At least, that was the plan. In reality, most places didn't get their doors locked until 30 minutes or more after closing. As long as there were customers, the stores stayed open. On Sundays, everything closed except the ice cream/restaurant places -- "Blue Laws," you know.

On Saturday nights, especially in the summer, the downtown was a gathering place for everyone in the area. Some came to shop, but many came just to sit in front of the stores or in their cars and visit with everyone who came by. It was a good social time and welcome break for farm families who worked so hard the rest of the week.

Waterford's "downtown" district has changed a lot over the past 50 years, thanks in large part to the shopping plazas, malls and super-giant stores of Summit and Millcreek Townships.

Oh, I know, there are still many small shops and stores, but as someone once said, "It ain't the way it used to be."

I think it was me.

Editors note: Herb is a graduate of the Class of '56. Herb has retired from teaching in Albion. He is a regular contributor to the Erie Times, and hopefully to our Newsletter.

(The answer to the Nostalgia question: Arnold Loop.)