

# Bisonalities, Again



A quarterly Newsletter dedicated to the Alumni of Waterford and Fort Le Boeuf High Schools

January 2003

Winter Issue

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Welcome to the Winter issue of the Newsletter dedicated to the alumni (students, teachers, and administrators) of Waterford High School and Fort LeBoeuf Senior High School. This newsletter will be issued quarterly. New issues will be posted for viewing on the Web site on, or about January 5, April 5, July 5, and October 5.

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, a nostalgia item, a real life story, or a picture you would like to share with other alumni? Do you have a snail-mail or an e-mail address of one of your classmates? Send it to me at the following e-mail address:

[bisonalities@candoer.org](mailto:bisonalities@candoer.org)

or at my snail-mail address.

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Please, **NO** handwritten submissions.

The Bisonalities, Again Newsletter is available to any and all alumni, teachers, and administrators of Waterford High School or FLBSHS on the Web site, free. If you know an alumnus, teacher, or administrator who would be interested, tell them about the Web site.

None of the material in this newsletter has a copyright. If you wish to make copies of this newsletter and distribute it to other Alumni or friends, please feel free to do so.

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**Drinking Drivers--  
Nothing Worse  
They Put  
The Quart  
Before The Hearse  
BURMA-SHAVE**

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## Death of Charles N. Miller

It is with deep regret that I inform you of the Death of Charles Miller.

Charles N. Miller, 78, a resident of Morgan's Personal Care Home, Union City, died Friday, November 22, 2002.

He was born October 17, 1924, in Homestead, son of the late Charles Miller Sr. and Margaret Miller.

He taught chemistry and physics in the Fort LeBoeuf School District. He also served as a guidance counselor.

He served in the U.S. Army during World War II and was assigned to duty in Enzo Italy.

He was preceded in death by a brother, Jess Miller, and a granddaughter, Jessie Sue Yovich.

Survivors include his wife, Zona Miller of Waterford; two daughters, Eugenie Wolf, and her husband, Tom, of Corry and Heidi Yovich and her husband, Steve of Mill Village; a brother, Bob Miller, of Munhall; two sisters, Peggy Essick and her husband, Neil, of Maryland and Olive Anderson of South Carolina; and six grandchildren.

In lieu of flowers, memorials may be made to Hospice of Erie county, 1305 Peach St., Erie, Pa. 16501-9979

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**Cat's Corner**

**T**hings have been really quiet here at Bisonalities, Again headquarters. At the present time, I have no articles to publish in the Spring Issue. Unless I receive something in the next few weeks, there will be no Spring issue.

**A**t the request of Pat Jones, I added the class of 1963 to the web site.

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**A Trivia Quiz for the Class of 1956  
(and other old people)**

1. As seniors in the brand new Fort LeBoeuf High School, we "Class of '56'ers" were split into two home rooms, one presided over by the late Mr. Bowman and the other under the firm hand of Miss Byers (Hamilton). Of course, we all remember that, but what were the room numbers?
2. In senior English class that 55-56 year, we studied a lot of "regular English stuff," and we also read a huge book by Sir Walter Scott. What was the title?
3. The junior-senior prom for the class of '56 was called "Moonlight Serenade." Who were king and queen?
4. We attended junior high in an old church building that burned a little bit a few years before we got there. When it was still a church, what denomination was it?
5. In the park, there is a rather sizeable boulder near the sidewalk facing High Street. There is a plaque on the rock. What does the plaque commemorate?
6. Where was the original location of the statue of

George Washington?

7. Did you ever notice --- almost every crossroads and bridge around Waterford has someone's name attached? Like Pollacks Bridge and Hughes Corners. So, where is Ford's Bridge?

8. The intersection of Depot Road, Donation Road, and Wattsburg Road is about a mile east of Waterford. What is the name given to these corners?

9. Who was the old fellow who operated Porter Park at the Inlet?

10. For a couple of years on either side of 1950, a tent show set up on the Diamond for a week each summer and put on a different stage play each night. The company was called the?

((Thanks to Herb Walden for furnishing this quiz and the answers, found on page 4.))

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**Ground Observer Corps**

by Herb Walden

**T**he 1950's were strange times and a little scary, too. I was in the process of being a teenager, which is a little strange in itself no matter what the decade. The scary parts were communism, the cold war, the Korean conflict, and the threat of a nuclear holocaust.

Nuclear war was the biggest worry as far as we kids were concerned. The U.S. and the Soviets were testing atomic bombs all over the place, and we were just beginning to learn the long-term dangers of radioactive fallout.

This, then, was also the era of the fallout shelter. In case of a nuclear attack, folks throughout the country were building or installing shelters and stocking them with water, nonperishable foods, and other necessities --- enough to last a couple of weeks or until it was safe to come out. Other folks said, "Come out to what?," and trusted to luck instead of a shelter.

Radar was not developed to the point that it is today, and low-flying airplanes could sneak under it. The worry in our area was that airplanes carrying atomic bombs might come in low over Lake Erie from Canada to strike major manufacturing centers like Pittsburgh. (I have no idea how these nuclear weapon planes were supposed to get into Canada in the first place, but that didn't concern me at the time).

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The U.S. Air Force developed a program using civilian aircraft spotters to fill in the gaps left by radar, (similar to what was done in World War II). The organization was the Ground Observer Corps (G.O.C.).

Erie's G.O.C. post was located on the roof of the old Richford Hotel. Tom Hart belonged to this group, which was fitting --- Tom loved airplanes and, I think, had been spotting them all his life, airborne and on the ground. One night when Tom was on duty, Ted Barton and I drove over to observe the observer. I was enthralled with the whole idea and was absolutely thrilled when an airplane went over and Tom logged it and called it in! It was also great fun to run around on the hotel roof. That, however, is beside the point.

Not long afterward, (in 1954), a G.O.C. post was established in Waterford. A few other kids and I joined right away. Our observation post was an 8-foot-by-8 foot building located in a cornfield on the very crest of Brickyard Hill. One or two of us would man the post for a couple hours at a time.

The actual duty went something like this: When an airplane was spotted, it was entered in a log. The entry included type of plane, (single or multi engine or jet), altitude (high, low, etc.), direction of travel, and time. Then we went to the telephone and dialed the operator, and when she answered, we said the magic words: "*AIRCRAFT FLASH!*"

The operator connected us to the Pittsburgh Filter Center. We'd read our log entry, and the worker there would locate our aircraft on a huge tabletop map. Our code name for the location of our post was "*Lima Metro Zero Five Black.*" I know that sounds like classified information, but it couldn't have been --- they would never have told me!

If a reported aircraft did not match up with a filed flight plan, the Pittsburgh people would notify the air base at Youngstown, Ohio, and fighter jets would be scrambled to identify the airplane in question.

This happened with one of our reports, or at least, we think it did.

We spotted and called in what, at the time, we thought was a routine report. However, the Pittsburgh center asked us to repeat the report. We did. And again. We did. This was very unusual. Then we were asked to stay on the line. In a couple of minutes, a

man came on saying he was General So-and-So or Colonel So-and-So or something important, and asked for our report again. He hung up abruptly.

It wasn't long before two fighter jets, F-86's, (I think), came over our post. Holy Cow! Gee Whiz! And other expletives!

It may have been coincidence, but it certainly made for a stimulating afternoon. We never heard of any enemy planes being shot down over Kearsarge or Union City or anywhere like that, so I guess it turned out alright.

We had a small problem at Brickyard Hill: Our telephone was on a party line. We had been told by the air force Sargent who oversaw our territory that if the line was busy when we needed to call Pittsburgh, we were to interrupt by saying "aircraft flash" and politely ask for the line. This worked well for a while. The other folks on the line were very courteous. But as time went on, and they got tired of being interrupted, they became less courteous. Even when we tried to explain that we could be saving them from the experience of seeing a mushroom cloud forming on their patio thanks to that little Cessna up there, well, they got downright nasty!

We finally quit breaking in on the line, and would wait until it was free, reporting so many minutes delay.

The factor that contributed mostly to this situation was that every airplane flying anywhere east of the Mississippi flew over Waterford. Or so it seemed. Add to that our proximity of the Erie airport, from which came at least a million Piper Cubs every weekend, and, well, we were on the phone a lot! Eventually, the air force told us to ignore all single engine, prop-driven aircraft. I guess they figured the Russians would not be likely to use one of those Piper Cubs to deliver an A-bomb. Made sense to me.

Our problem was solved in a rather unique way. In April 1955, we had a terrific wind storm in and around Waterford. Our little G.O.C. post was blown over and rolled around in the cornfield where it stood. Had stood. Had stood. Used to be.

By this time, I had worked my way up to "Post Supervisor," and somehow I managed to get permission from a whole bunch of people to reallocate

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the post. So one Saturday, Bud Owens and I disassembled the little building, which was still upside down in the cornfield. We loaded the whole thing into my old Pontiac coupe, which we converted into a truck of sorts by removing the backseat, Through the trunk, it was a straight shot all the way to the front seat.

The building was reassembled next to the water tank on Cherry Street. And when our new telephone was installed, it was on a private line!

Our post was manned entirely by teenagers, I guess the adults thought the G.O.C. was a kid organization, like the Boy Scouts or something. Anyway, none ever applied. Our kids did a good job, too. Oh, there were lots of horseplay and fooling around and probably something I never knew about, (or wanted to), but when an airplane came overhead, it was all business. And when we could go on a 24-hour alert, (a practice drill), our post was always on of the top rated.

In the autumn of 1955, I got too busy being a senior at the brand new Fort LeBoeuf High School, and gradually dropped out of the Ground Observer Corps. But I did earn my wings and 500-hours award. A few years later, radar improved, and the G.O.C. was no longer needed.

You know, it sometimes seems like a dream, those turbulent days in the fifties. Thankfully, it's a good dream. It could have been a nightmare!

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### Answers to the Trivia Quiz

1. Miss Byers - 124  
Mr. Bowman - 125
2. Ivanhoe
3. Bill Canfield and Joan Markham
4. Methodist (After the church burned, the Methodist congregation met at the United Presbyterian Church at West 2<sup>nd</sup> and Walnut Streets. It soon became the new Methodist Church. The United Presbyterians just sort of disappeared.)
5. Revolutionary War Soldiers (Those that are buried in Waterford.)
6. In the Middle of High Street (Just about straight out

from where it is now. The road had a wide spot there, so the statue was not the traffic hazard that some would have us believe. I remember of only one guy running into it and he was drunk! The statue was moved to its present location in 1948 for "safety's" sake.)

7. On Flatt Road (Between Waterford and Mill Village.)

8. Hood's Corners (Do you remember the old deaf and dumb guy who lived "down by the depot?" He sharpened saws and knives and axes and such. Well, his name was Billy Hood, and as far as I know, had absolutely nothing to do with Hood's Corners.)

9. Chet Comer (Rented boats, sold bait, hollered at kids.)

10. Manhattan Players (Jointly operated by George Melson and Kathryn Bauer. The piano player/comedian was Gordon Ray. Melson and Bauer lived in Plateau, a little place that thinks it's a town between Albion and Girard. When I was a kid, I thought they were actually from Manhattan)

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