

Blue 'n' Gold

Fall 2020

HVRHS Alumni Association

Volume 22, Issue 2

Housatonic in the Age of COVID

by Principal Ian Strever

On the third day of school this year, I greeted Audra Leach, one of our new agriscience teachers and, with masks affixed and standing six feet apart, we chatted about the opening of school as students trickled into class. We had gotten past the opening-day jitters, which were especially anxious after almost six months away from seeing students in person, and she was welcoming the second cohort of students to her farm to table class.

As we talked, a student bounced in and exclaimed, "Ms. Leach! My girl!" and went in for a hug. We both cringed and pulled our hands into a defensive posture, and the student apologized profusely. Such is life these days at Housatonic, Pandemic Edition.

If you have followed the news, you no doubt know about the many safety measures we implemented that allowed us to open with a hybrid learning model that has students in school on Monday and Tuesday, cohorted in opposition to another group that comes in at the end of the week. You probably know about the masks, the social distancing and the plexiglass barriers around the school.

But now that we are back, it is the behaviors that constitute the most dramatic change to what school has been. No more hugs and handshakes, no more side-by-side group work and team sports in gym class. Lamentably, no more class events or pep rallies.

For now, at least. Yet for all we have lost, we are slowly starting to learn how we can recover school life in new and innovative ways. We are leveraging digital learning tools and starting to apply them to student activities. The Student Government Association held the first Spirit Week that featured days it had chosen during an online meeting, and our fall sports season is winding down, too, almost as usual.

All of this is a result of new behaviors and habits, too. Students have been fully cooperative in wearing masks, and they are learning to keep their distance

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VISITING WITH SOME GRADUATES

Ray Baldisseri, Class of '49

At 91, **Ray Baldisseri's** voice is still as strong and vibrant as when he was performing on radio and stage all those many years ago. He is quick to break out in song when a guest makes a request, filling the room with rich tones that can only make one smile.

"My voice is still with me," he said proudly.

Though born in Albany, Baldisseri spent most of his youth in Canaan, part of a large Italian family, whose many descendants are still in town.

He has very fond memories of his days at Housatonic, noting, with some modesty, that he was "quite popular."

He played football for Coach Bedini's first team in 1946 and ran track. He received many superlatives in the yearbook; class musician, most sophisticated and best dresser.

He learned to type from Mrs. Smith—just he and one other boy were in the class, but those lessons served him well in the Air Force. "My days there were wonderful," he said wistfully.

Baldisseri's singing talent was apparent from a young age and as a boy he was recruited to sing at the Belden Tavern in East Lee, Mass. After renditions of

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Ray Baldisseri as a young performer



Ray Baldisseri today

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whenever they are together. No longer do they circle the hallways in the morning, but they are able to reconnect in the cafeteria, where they can remove their masks and socialize across the plexiglass barriers.

This is what it means to go to school this year, and to be honest, it's a lot quieter and more muted than we would like. We miss the buzz in the hallways and the electricity that is generated by groups of teenagers in close proximity. But we will take what we can get, for now. After our long hiatus, being able to work with students in any capacity has reminded us why we chose this career, and slowly but surely, we are getting to know these students, who are different from their predecessors in just about every way, for better and worse.

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"Ami Polla" and "The Star-Spangled Banner," the hat was passed and he was rewarded for his music. It was while he was attending Housatonic that Torrington radio station WCLR did a remote in Canaan and he was asked to sing on the program.

This was a momentous occasion for the boy who was fascinated by radio. Soon he was being mentored by announcer Jim Cipriano and he eventually read his first commercial for Baldwin Electronics, a local town business. Later he was tapped to do a regular 15-minute segment each day at noon.

In August 1950, Baldisseri enlisted in the Air Force soon after the Korean War began. He was stationed in Mississippi where he was trained in Morse code. He rapidly learned speed and languages and was then sent to Brooks Air Force Base in San Antonio where he became an instructor teaching the interception of Russian and Chinese code messages for the cryptography department.

Knowing his interest in radio, base officials asked him to be the front man and vocalist of the Security Starbusters.

The conductor of the 4th Army military band at Fort Houston heard him and suggested he sing on the weekly radio program called "The 4th Army Show." The show had a large audience, mainly GIs, and was beamed to the western part of the United States each week.

It was during this time that Baldisseri took the advice of the show's producer and changed his name to Ray Marco. He met his future wife, Marie, at a base dance. A portrait of her as a young woman hangs

prominently in his current apartment and he spoke lovingly of her throughout the conversation.

The couple returned to northwest Connecticut in 1954 and Marco sang and read news on WTOR in Torrington. He was also part of "Ray Marco and the Three Cheers."

In 1959, wanting to escape the cold Connecticut winters, the pair relocated to southern Florida and Marco had an active career performing in clubs throughout Europe and South America, and working with such entertainers as Eartha Kitt, Peggy Lee, Bob Newhart, Maurice Chevalier and Tony Bennett, among many others.

One of his fondest memories was singing the song "Abilene," that was used as the unofficial tune in President Dwight Eisenhower's re-election campaign in 1956. Baldisseri takes pride in knowing his record of the song is in the Eisenhower Library and Museum in Abilene, Kan.

He moved back to Canaan in 2018 to be near family after the death of Marie. They were married for 66 years. His voice has not quieted. He sings at funerals and parties and he's happy to take any requests from those who want to hear a song from his large repertoire.



Miriam Jones

Miriam Andrews Jones,
Class of '76

Miriam Andrews Jones loves people, so her position as Sharon's social services director is a perfect fit.

As soon as she stepped into the job, she displayed her caring nature by passionately stating at a Board of Selectmen's meeting that no one should be alone at Thanksgiving and urged dissemination of information about a free community meal.

Raised in Salisbury, Jones said coming to Housatonic was a chance for a new beginning. "I had a vision impairment from a very young age and while surgery saved my sight and with the assistance of coke-bottom glasses I could see, unfortunately, I was targeted with a lot of teasing in my hometown and school. The summer before my freshman year I had an opportunity to be fitted with hard contact lenses; they were very uncomfortable but I endured because my infirmity was hidden."

Once she got to Housatonic, Jones said she thrived. She joined the first girls field hockey and track teams and she found she loved the variety of friends she made

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from the other towns. Among her best friends were Gail Cross, the late Pam Becker and Joanne Pulver, and those friendships have lasted throughout time.

Her favorite classes were math with Mr. Jones and social studies with Mr. Gutzman. Mr. Kirby's class on the wild west fascinated her. Coach Kennedy helped her become more social, since the field hockey team would meet at her home for special events. Track taught her endurance and to challenge herself. And in a sweet teen memory, she shared, "I would be remiss if I did not mention a first date and stolen first kiss from Jim Anderson."

Following graduation, Jones attended Northwestern Connecticut Community College in Winsted for a year before joining the Army.

"I wanted more opportunities," she said, recalling how shy she was. Jones made the right decision because, there too, she thrived.

"I loved crawling in mud, shooting M16 machine guns and repelling out of helicopters. We had to be combat ready."

Her military career spanned nine years, serving in bases around the United States, as well as Korea and Germany. It was during this time she met her husband.

After they retired, the couple settled in Washington state, living there for 26 years. He died in 2010 as a result of Agent Orange, and in 2016, she felt the need to return to the Northwest Corner.

Since 2007, Jones has been an advocate for veterans, primarily volunteering her time to help widows get the benefits to which they are entitled. She became knowledgeable due to her own experiences and enjoys assisting others.

"People have no one to help them if their spouse dies," Jones said. "Luckily, I know both sides. There's a great need here." She also volunteers at her church, Church of Jesus Christ in Goshen, helping people deal with issues such as substance abuse and housing problems.

She began her social services job at the end of 2019 and while she is finding her job rewarding, it is her clients who gain so much due to her caring and dedication. She makes herself available at all times and is happy to do it. She pointed to the food pantry closet in her office, which is well-stocked because of the generosity of townspeople, and noted it is used often, especially in the time of COVID. Active in her adopted hometown, Jones is on the local emergency squad and a member of the Sharon Woman's Club.

Bits from the Board

*Greetings alumni! Your Alumni Board has become increasingly active over the last few years in an effort to keep you all better connected to your alma mater. The most exciting new happening is the completely revamped website. **Dick Gustafson**, class of '59, and his wife, **Joanne Walters Gustafson**, class of '61, spearheaded the design of the reconstructed website and provided most of the financial support. Housatonic Valley Regional High School is so lucky to have such dedicated and supportive alums! Watch for the new website at hvrhsalumni.org/ that should be coming soon. Look forward to more "Bits" from the Board in the next issue of the Blue 'n' Gold.*

Your Alumni Association Board sends a special and most sincere "thank you" to each of you who contributed to our Alumni Association funds in 2020. Your donation provided a much-needed and appreciated "shot in the arm" to the association's available funds to help defray expenses. Please remember to claim your tax-deductible Alumni Association donation as you prepare your 2020 taxes.

We all join in wishing you and your families good health and "Happy Holidays" and a "Merry Christmas" even though many of our usual plans are being so affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. May 2021 find our world and all its people healthier, safe and in the rapid process of total recovery. Let all of us, positively, join in the creation of an adjusted normal life, filled with God's blessings.

IN MEMORIAM

John Turrill, '42	Antoinette "Toni" Crawford, '66
Marion Glazer Olsen, '47	Robert "Duffer" Hunter, '66
Thomas V. Carberry, '49	Milanne Miles Shea, '67
Ann NeJame, '50	Dennis Togninalli, '71
Dorothy Boibeaux Pitcher, '50	Donald Kenniston, '72
Cora Sleighter Stackelberg, '51	Frank Wendover, '74
Laurence "Topper" Smith, '52	Megan Alexander, '76
Joan Walsh Killawee, '53	James Anderson, '76
Richard Cantele, '54	Gloria Fife, '76
Benjamin Golden, '54	Cynthia Hanes, '78
Andrew Olson, '56	Kevin Neary, '84
Therese Fravezzi, '60	Kimberly Wright, '84
David Whitford, '60	Erin Keane, '08
Nancy Page Manley, '61	Faculty
Ida Von Richthofen, '62	Peter Barrett
George King, '63	Roland Cinatti
William Goodsell, '65	David Lindsay

Remember to check out the Housatonic Alumni Association's Facebook page.

David Bartlett Lindsay

1938 – 2020

The Housatonic Valley Regional High School community has lost a remarkable educator who gave so much to the life of the school. His excellence in the classroom and his incredible enthusiasm for making learning an exciting challenge for his students carried over in his zest for life as well.

In my first month as HVRHS principal, I first met Dave and Barbara in front of the school on a hot July Saturday morning in 1966. Superintendent Dr. William Nolan had notified me two days earlier that a candidate for my former earth science teaching position was coming for an interview, but he would be away. Nolan's instructions were, "If you like him, hire him." The interview went well though Dave appeared to know little about our local geology, explaining with a twinkle that, "At UCONN, we were taught that there was no land west of the Connecticut River." Dave's sense of humor, overall knowledge and enthusiasm convinced me he was the right person. He was hired on the spot.

Born in Hartford, Dave grew up in Farmington, graduating from Farmington High School where he played varsity football and was a member of the jazz band.

Entering UCONN in 1956, Dave earned his bachelor of arts degree with a concentration in geology, graduating in 1960. Shortly after, he was drafted into the U.S. Army and served six years in the Connecticut National Guard and the U.S. Army Reserve.

Dave began his illustrious career at HVRHS as a teacher of earth science. In addition to his classroom teaching, he modernized the science laboratory and conducted local and national field tours for students and adults.

In 1970, Dave teamed with the HVRHS principal to teach a senior class course in geology, covering not only the upper Housatonic Valley Watershed, but also the total USA and parts of Canada. He became chairman of the science department and, in 1985, was nominated Region 1 "Teacher of The Year."

Throughout his teaching career, Dave increased his own education, including National Science Teacher Association grants at the University of California Berkeley and Vassar College. In 1979, he earned a master of science degree from the University of Vermont.

As the high school curriculum changed, Dave introduced robotics to the freshman science program and then as a club activity for all student levels where his teams won acknowledgement at both the state and national levels.



David Lindsay

In 2011, Dave was appointed site manager/coordinator of the Mahoney/Hewat Science and Technology Center and established the robotics program in the former vo-ag structure, a building he had led the way in convincing the greater community it should remain and be put to practical use.

Along with his excellent teaching career, David Lindsay was an outstanding coach. He became coach of cross-country and boys and girls track and field teams with many successes. In addition, he formed the club hockey team, the indoor track program in 1970 and became coach of the wrestling team in 1989. In track, Coach Lindsay led HVRHS to Berkshire League championships in 1982, 1983, 1984 and 1988. During these busy teaching assignments, he also served many years as editor of the White Oak, the school's yearbook.

In 1997, Coach Lindsay was elected to the "HVRHS Athletic Hall of Fame" and, in 2007, the track complex was named in his honor.

Dave was more than just a teacher or coach; he was also an adventurer, one ready to take off on a moment's notice for the Canadian border or a small airplane flight over the recently erupted Mount St. Helens. With a fine sense of humor and extensive knowledge, Dave was always wonderful to work with.

On behalf of the HVRHS Alumni Association, sincere condolences are offered to Dave's wife, Barbara, daughter Lori, daughter Kelly, her husband, Douglas Webster, and grandson David Webster.

David B. Lindsay was a man who made kids want to learn and succeed, a rare quality. He will be missed.

Respectfully,
Ed Kirby

Alumni News by Class and Decade

1950s

Stan Brady, class of '55 sent this note:

In past issues of Blue 'n' Gold, I have read about the activities of some alumni. It's interesting to learn something about the paths taken by past friends. I will give you a brief summary of where life has taken me.

Immediately after HVRHS, I enlisted in the Air Force where I spent four years as a weather observer. After my discharge, I returned home to Falls Village and worked at a clothing store in Torrington. That's where I met my wife, Paula. At the same time, I began taking courses at UConn, where I ultimately earned bachelor, master and sixth-year degrees in business education. I diverted to the insurance industry as a claims adjuster for a few years before finally making my way into teaching. I then spent 30 years in the West Hartford school system, most at Conard High School, where I taught and was vice principal. Paula was a teacher at East Hartford and Penney high schools.

In 2000, we retired to Brewster on the Cape, after living in Vernon for almost 30 years. We do a lot of volunteering, traveling and are active in a number of social organizations. I have been on the executive committee of the Orleans Yacht Club for over 10 years and was commodore from 2013 to 2015.

We had two sons, Michael and Christopher. Michael was a stuntman and lost his life ironically while setting up his equipment for a TV show. He had meticulously staged and performed countless dangerous stunts during his career, only to get killed falling off a ladder! Christopher is a graphic designer living in San Diego, along with his wife, Leighangela, and our only grandchild Noah. Leigh is superintendent of schools in National City, California. Noah graduated from high school in 2020 and plans to attend UCSF.

There you have it. Sixty-five years since my 1955 graduation encapsulated into three paragraphs. But that's about how fast the 65 years have flown by! Where does the time go?

Best to all.
Stan

P.S. The only ones in the photo of the Alumni Association board that I recognize are Bunny and Ed. Bunny, of course, was a classmate and I saw her at our 60th reunion. Ed was a young science teacher when I graduated. I never had the pleasure of being in your classes, Ed, but I remember fondly your great personality. Your tenure at HVRHS has been long and distinguished. If we are lucky it will continue for a long time yet.

Dick Gustafson, class of '59, reports that he and his wife, **Joanne Walters Gustafson**, class of '61, meet periodically for Sunday brunch in Portsmouth, NH, with **Jerry**, class of '59, and **Judy Clark and Susan Steiger Lamb**, class of '59, to keep in touch and to enjoy the many memories of their time at HVRHS. All have had travel plans squashed by COVID-19, but still can enjoy the sights and sounds of the Port City.

1960s

From Chapel Hill, NC, comes this article about **Nick Nickerson**, class of '64.

Seventy-four-year-old **Nick Nickerson** recently completed a run of 3,000 miles to raise money for research into the causal factors associated with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD). His run began on April 2, 2017, the 10th anniversary of the United Nations World Autism Awareness Day, and concluded on the steps of the U.S. Capitol building on Sunday, Jan. 12, 2020.



Nick Nickerson at the finish line for race to fund autism research.

"If we don't find the cause, and eventually the prevention of autism, it will be the disability of the CENTURY," Nickerson said. "Currently, almost 2% of children are impacted by autism. This is not sustainable for our society. Either family, friends or the government will have to provide for most of this population throughout their lifetime," he added.

"This run has been an amazing experience. I have met a ton of generous and caring people, many I don't know, who have supported my effort," Nickerson said. Adam Nickerson, Nick's 30-year-old autistic son, was on hand to hold the ribbon as Nickerson passed through the final mile.

"My family and I understand first-hand the difficulties of raising a child with autism and the strain it places on the family unit. I don't want any family to go through the same experience, so I am dedicating the rest of my life to raising awareness and funds to be donated to research focused on finding the cause of autism," Nickerson concluded.

For more information about this amazing accomplishment by a 74-year-old dad or to donate to

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help find the cause of autism, visit the website:
3000MilesForAutism.org.

Contact: Nick Nickerson
3,000 Miles for Autism – a 501(c)(3) non-profit
PO Box 16544
Chapel Hill, NC 275

From the class of '66, the Lisks, Ullrams and Perottis (three couples who were high school sweethearts and married after college) enjoyed wine tasting, delicious food and great conversation at the Chamard Winery in Clinton, while social distancing during COVID this past September.

Don Meuten, class of '66, was chosen as a Distinguished Member of the American College of Veterinary Pathologists. This is the highest honor the college recognizes and is another in the long list of awards that Don has received over the years. He continues to compete in endurance horse racing but, unfortunately, recently fractured his elbow significantly. Fortunately, he has fully recovered and is back in the saddle! His radiographs = 3 plates and 30 screws...., his surgeon said it was a nine out of 10!!

Esteemed and prolific song-writer, **Greg Perantoni**, class of '66, has returned to the Woodstock, NY, area

from Sedona, AZ, with his artist wife, Ellen, modern-day proponent of the "Hudson River School" of painters.

This is a link to one of his songs called "One Horse Town" about growing up in Canaan. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q4IRo-duMTw>

The following is a link to Greg singing several more of his songs:

https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=greg+perantoni.

His wife's paintings can be viewed at this link:<https://www.saatchiart.com/AllenPerantoni>.

1970s

Lynn (Kilmer) Stanton, class of '76, is the proud publisher and editor of *The Hills*, a tri-state magazine that features many local artisans and businesses. She often borrows HVRHS yearbooks to bring the past alive again in the articles she publishes.

2010s

Max Vadakin, class of '14, received a bachelor of arts degree cum laude from Southern Connecticut State University with a major in English.



Class of '66 members visiting with each other: Top photo: John Perotti, Bev Nelson Perotti, Suzanne Hutchinson Ullram and Bob Ullram. Bottom photo: Suzanne Hutchinson Ullram, Bob Ullram, Ed Lisk, John Perotti and Mary Anne (Maze) McGuire Lisk.

Telephone: 860-927-4057; Email: KCSRuthe@aol.com

To reach the Editor: Ruth Epstein

246 Warren Turnpike, Falls Village, CT 06031

c/o HVRHS

HVRHS Alumni Association



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