

July 2006

Staples '55 Newsletter
"All the news that's fit to dish..."

Greetings from New Hampshire

Back in high school I can remember being a few minutes late to nearly every class. When I started writing this "spring" issue it was February. It is now going on August. You can see how the process goes...

In case I hadn't mentioned it earlier, the rendering of me at left is by Leann's husband, Randy. He did it (and one of Ronnie) over dinner at the old Biblioteque restaurant in Westport back in '82. Pretty good I thought for a guy about five margaritas into margaritaville...?

In this Issue...

Muriel Burke, RIP
Staples55.com Website Announcement Project
Website Milestone
Current Site Updates
Future Directions for staples55.com
Shirley Rice Hyman Memorial Service

Cliff Clifford, Editor & Publisher

1 Muriel Burke Sutton, RIP
Long-time resident of Fairfield

Word of Muriel's passing came from her long-time friend, Lynn Harding Huck who passed it to Gail Armitage Heath who passed it to me. According to Lynn, she learned from Muriel's sister (Muriel and Lynn's husband were cousins) that Muriel had succumbed to pneumonia after having suffered one or more strokes. A long-time resident of Fairfield, Muriel taught in both Westport and Fairfield school systems, as we read in the Connecticut Post obit of 3-12-06:

Muriel Burke Sutton, age 68, longtime Fairfield resident, died Friday, March 10, 2006. She was a graduate of Marymount College and received a masters degree from Fairfield University. Muriel was a teacher for several years in Westport and Our Lady of the Assumption School in Fairfield. Predeceased by her husband, Charles "Ted" Sutton, she is survived by a son, Kevin Sutton and wife, Ellen, of Fairfield; a sister, Carol Hull and her husband, Donald, of Milford; a niece, Kathy Elson of Milford; and a nephew, Jim Hull of Virginia.

The obituary is posted in its entirety on the Deceased page (www.staples55.com).

2 Staples55.com Website Announcement Project
Mailer to non-wired classmates

Following up on Chuck Banks' suggestion about a website announcement mailing to classmates who have no (known) email address, it's done! To recap, after receiving the first or second newsletter last winter, Chuck commented that it was too bad only the 50 classmates on the email list were privy to staples55.com. Why don't we do a (snail) mailing to the rest? And with that, he sent me \$50 to get it done!

Well, in the face of that generosity, what can a body do? So I put together a simple
Page 1

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little greeting-card announcing our website. If you click on the link, below, it will open on screen provided you have the Adobe Reader installed. You can print it out, as well. (Note: If you don't have Adobe Reader, you can download it, free, from www.adobe.com. Click the link, below. Uncheck the two, optional programs unless you want them. Then click the "Download" button and follow the installation instructions. If you are not running windows XP the download routine is smart enough to know what you have and tell you if it can install or not.)

In the announcement I simply requested folks to share photos, clippings and reminiscences of growing up in Westport and surrounding towns. To accomplish the mailing Deanna Basta Bugar (still in possession of her exemplary penmanship) graciously volunteered to hand address 80-some envelopes. The last one was dropped in the mail some time in March, I believe. About that time Deanna asked me: "How was the response from the mailing? I have leftover supplies including \$5 in stamps. Do you want me to send everything back to you or hold for my next assignment?"

Now, how's that for Fifties-style class spirit...?

In reply to the mailing we have received responses from the following classmates (see website Contacts page for email addresses):

Georgianna Maurer Mills
Craig Cooper
Lynn Harding Huck
Cynthia Whitehead Nord
Martha Ruggles Updike (no email yet)

Obviously we were expecting more. Sort of confirms what we all know intuitively: some of the class want to reconnect (to wit the strong showing at our 50th reunion), and some--at this point in their lives--flat out do not or cannot. I'm sure it's the same for every class. Nevertheless every classmate beyond email reach who can still read should now know about the site and has been encouraged to visit and share content.

Wrapping up, thanks to Chuck for his idea and for funding the idea. Thanks, also, to Deanna for helping out with the mailing. And, lest I forget, thanks to Tom Saviano for use of the Staples logos (school emblem and framed school photo) that he developed for the reunion.

Staples '55 Website Announcement Free Adobe Reader

3 Website Milestone
One thousand hits and counting...!

We've passed a milestone of sorts: the site's home page has had over 1,000 hits (visits) to date (1,360, actually). Even recognizing that a small percentage of hits are my own as I update the site, that's still very encouraging. Of course, "visits" do not mean unique visitors; just the grand total of hits on the home page of staples55.com. Who knows, maybe some of them were people trying to buy office supplies...

After nine months of operation, here's how the activity breaks out for the most active pages (by the way, you can see the no. of hits at the bottom of each page):

Home page (1,363)
50th Reunion (800)
Red Barn Photos (2,511)

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Compo Beach (1,316)
Deceased (888)
Clipping Archives (793)
Photo Archives (1,208)

Obviously the pages with photos are getting the most attention. The other pages are mostly text; either people are less inclined to read or (more likely) don't care what's being said.

The Red Barn page anomaly (2,500 hits) is probably explained by "red barn" being Googled; i.e., unintentional visits.

4 Current Site Updates
Since last newsletter...

Site update notification. A number of you no doubt noticed there wasn't any way to quickly tell if there were any new posts to the site (John Leopold was the first to bring this to my attention). Else why keep visiting? I've since corrected this oversight by putting a notice of each new update on the home page--latest on top.

Updated email addresses. Since the last newsletter we've posted the following new or updated email addresses (see Contacts page):

Mary Ann Dennert Alley
Shirley Dexter Barnett
Carol Hesse Marsland
Mike Hyman
John Leopold
Jacee McCluckie Fournier (update)
Heather Merryman Moz (update)
Russ Mumma
Nancy Needham
Dave Ruckert

Lifestyles. To better organize photos on the Lifestyles page (the ability to intersperse text and photos in this software is problematic), each classmate's Lifestyle photo group now begins with a colorful "marker" photo taken from the yearbook (see Leann example). Hope you like it.

Reunion photo attendee names. A number of you have expressed a desire for reunion attendees (in their 50-years-later disguises) to be identified by caption. I'd be willing to do so if I could better identify who they were...! Also I'd like to defer this project until plans for migration to the new website engine are firmed up (see below).

5 Future Directions for Staples55.com
What's next for the site?

Why a class website? Many of you have probably wondered why I've gone to the trouble of creating staples55.com (and the newsletter) in the first place. Why spend the time doing something that no one asked me to do? Few, if any, other classes have a website or newsletter; why should we have one?

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well, I've wondered the same, myself. And the truth is, I'm not all that sure. But here are some possibilities:

First, the website enables classmates to better keep up with old friends and acquaintances. A good percentage of the class is computer literate and should be able to get some value out of this.

Second, user-friendly web-authoring software has been around for a while and gets more user-friendly by the day. So, why the hell not? why not give it a try and see what kind of visitor activity develops? If it doesn't fly, so what? At least we tried.

Third (this is my favorite), from our youngest daughter, Julie, in weston: "It helps dad keep The Voices away..."

New web engine. I'm currently evaluating the costs of migrating the site to new web-authoring software. The benefits would be:

Comments. The present software has a comments feature, but the implementation, I've felt, is confusing. Comments allow users to express (vent...?) their feelings about any/all site content on a post-by-post basis. The new software handles comments from viewers in a clean, user- friendly manner.

Photos. The new software allows us to rearrange photos. If I need to reposition a photo using the current software, I must first delete all photos back to the desired position, upload the new photo, then re-upload all deleted photos.

Captions. The new software allows us to add captions to photos without modifying each individual photo in Photoshop. A huge time savings!

Viewing by categories. The new software has a feature for categorizing posts, so that viewers can quickly display what they want to see without endless scrolling.

General control. The new engine opens up the underlying HTML code, giving me practically unlimited flexibility in managing site content.

Depending on cost we should definitely migrate. November is the renewal period for the current software. I'll keep you posted...

Now for something important: I can use some help! what we need are two or three volunteers to call or email classmates and request material for the site. For example a simple, recent email exchange with Noel has gotten me a promise of a selection of Lifestyle photos upon his return from an Ocean City family vacation. Easy.

By "site content" I'm referring to:

Lifestyle photos. Cherry pick ten or 12 photos from, say, the past ten years and email them to me for posting. Digital preferred but I can scan the old- fashioned kind and return them to you. Please include captions.

Photo archives. Old photos from childhood in westport, weston, wilton. I'll be happy to convert them to digital form and will add captions to all photos when included.

Clipping archives. Old clippings from local newspapers about school accomplishments, youthful misadventures, felony indictments, and so forth...

In Memoriam and Memory Lane. Recollections of childhood times and fallen comrades.

Commentary. Anything you come across that speaks more or less eloquently to the cultural values we cherish and live by (or should live by), or to the divergence between today's values and those that we were mostly raised by as sons and daughters of the "greatest generation".

Obituary. If you should come across any published classmate death notices in your attic, people are naturally interested, however sad. If posted, they will be read. Guaranteed.

Ideas for the site and general comments are most welcome, as well. Always.

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Saturday, July 29, Manchester, VT

Mike and family will hold a Celebration of Life service for Shirley at the Congregational church in Manchester this coming Saturday morning. Attendance is expected to be at or near chapel capacity.

P.S. Mike has come up with a beautiful and moving audio-visual presentation about life and death and how we should view the brief time we are here before we pass on. Very much worth a look/listen.

The Dash Movie

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