

The Class of '63 (continued)  
By Carol Schweizer and Alan Maddaus

The photo below, taken in May of 1951 on the lawn of the Donald Smith residence across from the old Galway town barn on East St. shows the prospective Class of 1963, at completion of Kindergarten.



Seated: Robert Lathrop, Robert Bagden, Donald Hersey,?, **Lynn McConchie**,?, Wayne Mechanik, Frank Chase.  
Standing: **Carol Hathaway**, **Mary Lou Benson**, **Carol Michelfelder**, **Joanna Yurkins**, ?, Nan Griffin, Yvonne Cousson, **Mary Lynn Bender**, **Pat Wilson**, **Alan Maddaus**, **Sharon Euler**, **Janet Glenn**, Barbara Wright, Dorothy Verklas, Diane Simboli, **Claudia Murauskas**, Bonnie Funk. Teacher: Mildred Follett

Of these, the 11 indicated above in bold type would graduate from Galway Central High School in 1963. Others would join the original group as the school district centralized from one room schools in various hamlets like East and West Galway, and Harmony Corners. Some departed, for example, when their family moved from the school district.



*Galway Town Barn, ca.1970  
Ted Chamberlin, artist*

Kindergarten class was held in the old town barn meeting room. Cots were stacked against the walls and brought down daily for rest time. Finger painting was a favorite activity, crafts, music games and nap time took up most of the day. By contrast, today five year olds are often reading before they leave Kindergarten. Mildred Follett, a good teacher and kindly woman perhaps in her thirties when the photo was taken, was the one and only Kindergarten teacher in Galway for many years. Small bottles of milk were delivered daily for us to have with our lunches brought from home. A station wagon, driven by Bill Kania, served as a bus for some of the students. Recess (play time) when weather permitted was in the town hall driveway or in the field behind. There was no playground equipment. A highlight was searching for wild strawberries in June.

First grade was held in half of the Methodist Church meeting room in combination with the second grade. Anna Booth was the teacher. The new high school was completed on the existing North St. campus in time for the 1952-53 school year, and the district, centralized in 1948, consolidated to facilities in the Galway village. Second grade was on the second floor of the old high school on East St.

with the class size increased by addition of students from the hamlet single room school houses. Mary Fonda, wife of Hawley Fonda, proprietor of Fonda's general store on Route 29, was the teacher.



*Methodist Church, ca. 1950*



*Galway High School, East St., ca. 1950*

Third through sixth grades were in the east wing of the current high school which provided space for elementary grades until the adjoining, but separate elementary school was built in 1958. It was exciting to go to third grade in a new modern building, with gleaming tile floors, new desks, playground equipment, a cafeteria with hot, prepared meals and a gymnasium. The gymnasium also served as an auditorium with folding metal chairs set up and taken down for storage to accommodate assemblies held for the entire student body. Third grade was in two sections, one combined with half of the 4<sup>th</sup> grade with Ethel Overbeek teaching, the other, all third graders, Alice Widmann, teacher. After that, presumably due to an increase in class size, there were two teachers for each of the elementary grades: 4<sup>th</sup>, Charles Olendorf and James Rowland; 5<sup>th</sup> Mary Pilon and Mildred Getty; 6<sup>th</sup> Richard Gerlach and Anna Booth. All elementary school teachers were fine, dedicated, well trained people who cared about their students.

Junior high school teachers were particularly noteworthy. Jeanne Schwarz taught local and NY state history as well as advising the Yorker clubs. She is credited by many former students with creating a lasting interest in local history. Edward Gorga was our science teacher, who combined skill in maintaining class room order with a sense of humor, and a gift for explaining concepts in practical terms. Richard "Dusty" Rhodes, our shop teacher, and Ailene Estus, home economics, had similar talents. Richard Lukasiewicz was the beloved leader of the band, a music teacher who was equally popular with those of no musical inclination. Band practice and trips left many with very positive memories, and the snappy, royal blue wool band uniforms, trimmed with gold were proudly worn in many area parades. Sadly, Richard passed away on January 3, 2010. Coach Donald Mealy, also deceased, was the hardworking athletic director, who coached boy's baseball, soccer, basketball teams and gym classes. In addition he was a very capable gymnast, and a fine mentor. He is missed by many former Galway HS student-athletes. Carolyn Chapin was the very capable girl's athletics coach.

High school was similar to Junior high – Teaching was of high quality: Ernest Sutton – Science; Bryan Simmons – History; Richard Lewis – English; Joseph Swierzowski, Math; Elaine Blessing Richards, Math and French; Marion Fahey - Commerce. While not known specifically for pursuing academic excellence, the Class of '63 received more NYS Regents Scholarships than the preceding class.

Basketball games and school dances were the big draw for entertainment. In the 50's round and square dances were held with live country bands. By the time we graduated, record hops were the "in thing". All proms were held at the school with the junior class doing a great and enthusiastic job of decorating around a theme, usually with twisted crepe paper streamers. Our junior prom was called "East Wind" and used lots of Japanese paper lanterns for effect.

Life in the fifties and early sixties was safe, secure and probably a little innocent. This class is technically not classified as "baby boomers". We graduated just before the turmoil and protests associated with Vietnam, the related drug culture and sexual revolution, as well as the technological

onslaught. All of these events have changed society so radically and forever. 1963 was a good time to live in Galway. Some of us have stayed and those who left enjoyed a chance to come back and reconnect.

The class of 1963 met for the 50<sup>th</sup> year reunion at the C&R restaurant on July 20, 2013. The photo below, shows class members who attended, along with friends who had left Galway for other alternatives prior to graduation.



Seated: Gary Nowicki, Harry Barker

Standing: **Joanna Yurkins Iosue**, Allen Wolfe, Paul Thibado, **Carol Michelfelder Schweizer**, **Mary Lou Benson Wilcox**, Veronica Ingraham, **Carol Hathaway Loughner**, Regina Berry, Cheryl Lyons Lee, **Janet Glen Stangle**, **Pat Wilson Sanders**, Karl Brinkman, **Alan Maddaus**, James Holbrook, Bruce Yesse, James Mills jr., J. Bruce Sanders, Richard Traitor (**Boldface**- in kindergarten photo)

As a group the Class of 1963 has done well. Most of us married and have children and grandchildren, with some marriages approaching the 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. We found employment in a variety of professions including manufacturing, engineering, research chemistry, human resources, IT, teaching, retail sales, skilled trades, accounting, legal, and farming. Approximately 25% of the class is still employed, others are active as volunteers for a variety of charitable causes. About 50% of the class graduated from college, several have advanced degrees. Mary Lynn Bender, our Valedictorian, earned a Ph.d and served in the Peace Corps. Several served in the military, including during the Vietnam conflict. Many still make their home in the area, others live in Alabama, Florida, Indiana, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, and NYC.

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