**[Roger W. Smith](https://rogersgleanings.com/2015/11/05/roger-w-smith-canton-high-school-canton-ma-50th-class-reunion-essay-september-2014-3/)**

[**50th class reunion essay**](https://rogersgleanings.com/2015/11/05/roger-w-smith-canton-high-school-canton-ma-50th-class-reunion-essay-september-2014-3/)

[**Canton High School, Canton, MA**](https://rogersgleanings.com/2015/11/05/roger-w-smith-canton-high-school-canton-ma-50th-class-reunion-essay-september-2014-3/)

[**September 2014**](https://rogersgleanings.com/2015/11/05/roger-w-smith-canton-high-school-canton-ma-50th-class-reunion-essay-september-2014-3/)

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This response is from Roger Whittredge Smith, Canton High School class of 1964.

*Where are you now? Family, jobs, special interest, whatever you would like to share.*

I now live in Queens, New York City. I came to New York to work when I was 22 and have been here pretty much all of my life since.

New York at first awed me. I was a bit overwhelmed, yet fascinated. It was like no place I had ever experienced, certainly different from Massachusetts and much bigger, active, and cosmopolitan than Boston or Cambridge. (My family lived in Cambridge before moving to Canton when I was in the seventh grade.)

The most useful course I probably ever had was Miss Meade’s typing class at Canton High. It was a skill demanded for entry level and temp jobs in New York and got me in the door several times. It was a great class made so, I think, because of Miss Meade’s personality and energy and teaching skills. I did very well.

Most of my work life has centered around writing and editing. I worked for several companies and freelanced for a while in the 80’s. My last fulltime job was with a big multinational consulting firm in their New York office. I worked mostly in the marketing dept. and never really liked it. I was laid off in November 2001 after being there for over 12 yrs. Subsequent to that, I taught English for a few years as an adjunct professor at St. John’s University in Queens. It was a lot of work for the pay but I was very motivated and enjoyed it. Despite lacking an English degree (my college major was history), I found myself very qualified on account of my writing experience and wide reading to teach writing and literature.

I have published articles, some journalism, and book reviews. My book reviews have appeared in the *New York Sun, the Indianapolis Star, Dreiser Studies,* and *Studies in American Naturalism.*

I have been happily married since 1979. Met my wife in 1977 in a chance encounter and it changed my life. We have been blessed with two sons, Henry and Stephen.

I’m still a Red Sox fan.

I walk a lot (long distances). Have always been a walker.

I am an avid reader. I have developed a deep interest and acquired good taste in literature. I have a very good private library, built up over the years. Some of my favorite authors are Walt Whitman, Theodore Dreiser, Samuel Johnson, William Blake, and George Gissing.

I come from a musical family and am quite knowledgeable about classical music (an interest I shared with Arthur Contois in high school).

I like classic foreign films. I think my favorite film director is the Japanese director Yasujirō Ozu. I love the film *Au Hasard Balthasar* by the French director Robert Bresson.

*Where have you been? Location/work/travel…whatever you would like to impress us with. (After 50 years it’s not bragging, it’s writing it down before you forget.)*

I have made frequent trips back to Massachusetts to see family and for other reasons. I always love coming back and find it easy to be there, so agreeable. Some things like the beauty of New England towns, Boston and Cambridge, the seafood (clam chowder! fried clams!) can’t be duplicated. I like New Englanders. They are polite and hospitable. I always feel kinship and rapport. Now my relatives have mostly died off and I have less reason to go.

I have been to Europe twice and Tokyo once (on a business trip). I love London and Paris. I liked Scotland a lot (went there mostly because my paternal grandfather’s ancestors came from there). I made a good friend in France on my first trip to Europe in 1972 and we have remained close friends ever since.

Modern languages I have studied are Spanish, French, and Russian.

I have traveled very little in the U.S.

*What do you remember about Canton High School? Who what where when etc.*

*-- about classmates (be kind)*

Some classmates I remember fondly: Ira Priluck, Arthur Contois, Bob Seavey, Jim Scanlon, Tom Walsh, Judy Johnson, Priscilla Marotta, Russell Mankowitz; and my good boyhood friend Bob Harris.

I went through our yearbook online and was surprised how many people I remember. Most (with only one or two exceptions) I remember fondly.

John Bosanquet was my friend. His death affected me profoundly. He was going downhill on his bicycle in the early morning before school on his paper route, had just turned the corner onto Sherman Street, was near the Canton Junction RR station when he was hit by a truck. John and I had shared this paper route for a while. I think it paid $5 a week and we each made $2.50, which seemed like decent pocket money then.

John was in a coma for a day or two before he died. It was my first experience with death and I was shocked. I asked my mother, “he isn’t going to die, is he?” and she said he could die. I was devastated.

I remember the wake. John’s family was Episcopal. John was in an open casket in his Boy Scout uniform. His dream had been to go to West Point.

John’s funeral was so sad. I was one of the pallbearers. I vividly recall the burial. It was a cold, damp, dreary day. I remember Mr. Badoian standing there in a threadbare coat in the cold with his hat in his hand. I remember Judy Johnson standing behind me in tears. I remember that I was dismayed because I heard two guys (one whose name I recall, but whom I will not name) discussing the upcoming basketball game that night and whether “they [the opposing team] will play man to man defense.”

John was energetic and bright, full of vim and vigor. He was always joking and liked to tease me. We sat at the same lunch table. He liked to talk about TV programs (in which I was not at all interested). One of his favorite programs, if I recall correctly, was “The Flintstones.”

*-about teachers/staff (almost anything goes)*

My experience of Canton High was that it was like attending a very good prep school. Most of the teachers I had (several of them new or recent hires) were outstanding. I think it was the school’s Golden Age.

I learned by far more than I ever did in college and most of my intellectual development seemed to happen in high school.

Mr. Tighe and Mr. Badoian have to go on top of the list. While I revered them, I believe that on rare occasions they could be insensitive and mean to students (myself included).

What can I say about Mr. Tighe? Nobody ever influenced my intellectual development more. I learned from him what today would be called critical thinking skills, developed through his tutelage into a thinking adult. From him alone I learned to write (a skill I polished over the years) and also learned to read intellectually challenging material.

He would have us read something brief like a quote or magazine article in class. Then he would have us write for 15 or 20 minutes about it. It was like pulling teeth — early in the morning (we had Mr. Tighe first period) — but it was great (if strenuous) intellectual exercise, thinking and writing on the spot. He would say to the class, “Say something witty and clever about this.”

The next day Mr. Tighe would have typed up and printed on rexograph sheets (with their pleasing inky smell) excerpts from four of the previous day’s in-class essays. We would then discuss, analyze, and critique them as a class. It was great training and feedback, taught me to critique my own writing.

I learned so many ground rules for good writing from Mr. Tighe. Some of his precepts were implanted forever.

When Mr. Tighe had us critique our own writing (excerpts) in class, he would make them anonymous, leave the name of the writer off. One day in class in senior year when we were involved in this sort of analysis and discussion, Pamela Boyd was vigorously commenting on one of the pieces and strongly taking the writer’s side, it seemed. We all concluded, I don’t know how, that it was Pamela’s own piece.

I actually first took Mr. Tighe in the summer after my sophomore year, in summer school. There were only three of us, males, in the class. I took the course not because I had to but because I wanted to learn to write. We had only written two or three compositions in sophomore year with Miss Roach.

I learned an awful lot from Mr. Tighe that summer. All we did was write, practically every day. Early on, he said something complimentary to me. He said, in his usual ironic way, “I hate to have to admit it, but you’re good.” (He told me, though, that I had to improve my spelling.) But then he gave me a C+ in the first marking period of junior year. This seems, in retrospect, to have been very unfair, especially since I was a very hard worker. I think he was trying to send me a message not to be too conceited.

Mr. Tighe really prepared me for college. At the liberal arts college I attended (Brandeis), most of the courses had a term paper and most of the exams were essay exams. The writing skills I had acquired were critical to success in college and I found myself better prepared than a lot of other freshmen. The critical reading skills developed in Mr. Tighe’s class were essential too.

Mr. Tighe basically used the Socratic method to teach. He lectured when appropriate, but usually class seemed to involve a sort of dialogue. Not that much would have seemed to be going on to the casual observer, but there was actually an intense interchange of ideas occurring. He did not give homework if there was no point in it. A lot of what was accomplished got done in class.

I have never been good at reading poetry, but Mr. Tighe gave us the confidence to read and enjoy poems like Blake’s “London,” Donne’s “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning” (a particularly tough poem to understand without a guide), and Andrew Marvell’s “To His Coy Mistress.” His technique was as follows. He would get us to identify words and phrases in the poem that we were mystified by. These he would write on the board. We would then discuss them until we had an idea what was being said or implied. An example would be “charter’d street” and “charter’d Thames” in the poem “London,” “dull sublunary lovers’ love” in “A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning,” or “vegetable love” in “To His Coy Mistress.” Slowly (by elucidating what the tough words and phrases meant), the poem would begin to make sense. He would say, “It all depends on asking the right questions.”

Once, as an experiment, Mr. Tighe selected four of us in the class, myself included, to read a difficult poem, “The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock” by T. S. Eliot for homework and to be prepared to discuss it in class the next day. The next day, he had the four of us sit in front of the class (our desks moved there). Then we began a discussion which was getting nowhere. None of us had understood the poem. Mr. Tighe pointed out a line: “Shall I part my hair behind? Do I dare to eat a peach?” He asked me a leading question: “So you think the speaker in the poem is a courageous, heroic figure?” Not knowing what I thought or what to answer, I said, “Yes.” Mr. Tighe said, “That does it. The experiment is over. You [meaning me and the three others] are obviously not competent to understand the poem.” He took the poems away from us and returned us to our places.

Early in our senior year, Mr. Tighe wrote a list of about a dozen books on the board one day. He said, “I’m not going to say anything more about them. These are works one ought to read in preparation for college. At the end of the year, you will be given an extra credit quiz which will be designed to determine merely if you have read the books, nothing more.”

What books were on the list? I can’t recall exactly. Nor do I recall exactly all of the books I may have read.

I think the list included Herodotus, Thucydides, Suetonius, Plutarch. It also included the following books that I do remember I read: The Iliad, Ovid’s *Metamorphoses, S*t. Augustine’s *Confessions* and Malory’s *Le Morte Darthur.* (I absolutely loved the *Confessions*.)

It was my impression that the rest of the class did little of the reading.

I thought I did okay on the quiz based on these readings, but Mr. Tighe never returned them or said anything about extra credit.

I have tried to describe Mr. Badoian to outsiders and can’t seem to. What a great teacher and what a great math teacher! How does one do him justice? I was so well prepared by him for the college boards (as they were then called, I think they are now called the SAT’s) and I scored high on the advanced math achievement test, which wouldn’t have happened without Mr. Badoian. When I attended grad school, I had to brush up on math and found I was very well prepared, had retained much of what had been drilled into me in Mr. Badoian’s class.

Mr. Badoian was so industrious and conscientious. He carefully checked every homework assignment, checked all your work. Every night. (Always returned the next day.)

With Mr. Badoian it was very important to show your work. He always emphasized that he wanted to see that you understood what you were doing. If you got all the steps right and made a calculation error at the end of the problem, he would not take much credit off, if any.

Early in our freshman year, Mr. Badoian asked the class why the sign changed when a term in an equation was moved from one side of the equation to the other. A student answered that was because you had to change the sign when you “crossed the bridge,” which was what Mr. Brady had taught us in the eighth grade. Mr. Badoian retorted angrily that that was NOT the answer. The reason was that whatever you did to one side of the equation you had to do the other side to preserve equality. If you subtracted 3, say, from the left side, you had to also subtract 3 from the right side.

Mr. Badoian was no clock watcher. He was always available after school for as long as students wanted to see him. He held a sort of after school open house in his classroom. A lot of students took advantage of this, say, to follow up on something you hadn’t quite understood in class. He encouraged us to do this.

I had Mr. Tedesco junior year for American history and senior for European history. He was a dynamic teacher and friendly. He lectured college style and this seemed very exciting. We had a great American history textbook, Thomas A. Bailey’s *The American Pageant*, which, among other things, had great political cartoons.

I think Mr. Tedesco alienated someone (other teachers or administrators) and that led to his leaving (shortly after our class graduated). I don’t know this for a fact, but from my limited knowledge had intimations of it.

We had Mr. Bowyer for civics in sophomore year. What a waste! Mr. Bowyer was one of the worst teachers I ever had. I also had him as junior varsity coach in basketball and baseball and he was a lousy coach.

In sophomore year, I had Miss Roach for English. She was not a good teacher. But I do remember two positive things about that class. The first was that we read Tennyson’s *Idylls of the King*. I absolutely loved them.

The second is that I wrote a short story in class. It was closely modeled on Ring Lardner’s great baseball story “Alibi Ike.” My story, like Larder’s, was written in the first person in the language of an uneducated ballplayer. It was about a one-armed pitcher.

I got to read the story in class and everyone (Miss Roach and students) liked it. But the bell rang before I could finish the story. Miss Roach said I could finish in a subsequent class perhaps. The next day no mention was made of my story and I timidly asked at the end of the period if at some point I would be allowed to finish the story. Miss Roach said time had not permitted but maybe it would be possible in the future. It never happened though.

I had Miss Bertrand for Latin for two years and loved it. She was very nice, was near retirement then.

I took four years of French and had Miss McCauley the first two years. I absolutely loved her class. It was so much fun and she was a great teacher. Students, who always seemed to have something unkind to say, said she wore too much makeup. I thought she was attractive and had a great personality. She liked me a lot because of my enthusiasm. Also, I did very well in French. (I recall her midterm in sophomore year, when the administration decided to have us take end of term exams college style. It was a very comprehensive and tough exam.)

I found Mr. King a little difficult to communicate with at times but thought he was a fine and conscientious Phys Ed. instructor and track coach. I found Mr. Kidd to be an inspiring phys ed instructor. I know Mr. Gibson was a beloved figure in Canton but he was very mean to me as baseball coach in my junior year and I can never forgive or forget it.

*-about classes/events/pranks (not to worry: statute of limitations in play here)*

I remember Mr. Badoian doing the twist with a student at a student dance. I remember that two of Mr. Badoian’s all-time favorite films were *Henry the Fifth* with Laurence Olivier and *Cyrano de Bergerac.* Mr. Badoian loved the actress Sophia Loren and had a big picture of her on the wall. Mr. Badoian used to tell us that it becomes a lot harder to study new subjects and learn new things as one gets older.

Bob Seavey and I participated in the science fair as a team in our freshman year.

Bob urged me to participate with him. I should say “do a science project” with him, but to tell the truth, we hardly did any project at all. I was an indifferent science student and in fact a poor one. I hadn’t thought of participating in the science fair until Bob suggested it. With his strong persuasion and feelings of guilt and obligation on my part, I agreed. Bob needed a partner.

Maybe we got extra credit for participating. Probably. I forget.

We scoured around for a topic – we only had a few days – and Bob finally came up with one, Soilless Gardening. I don’t know how he came up with it! We made up some kind of placard and textual material that we probably lifted from some publication. Then, for our exhibit, we took some plants and put them in a container of water! That was the extent of our “scientific work” and that was the whole of our exhibit.

The judges strolled around from exhibit to exhibit. When he got to ours, the judge was a bit consternated, then asked if we had grown the plants ourselves by a soilless method. We admitted reluctantly that we hadn’t. The judge seemed amused and he moved on to the next project.

In my sophomore year, we had a new speech teacher, Mrs. Fertman. She was very young, seemed quite motivated, seemed kind of insecure. John Bosanquet played some sort of prank on her, put something over on her in class. Mrs. Fertman approached me later and asked me about it. I don’t recall exactly what she asked me, something like who did it or what was up? I said I didn’t know, which was not true, because I did. A little while later, Mrs. Fertman encountered me on the stairs. She was crying and very upset. She had found out the truth and that a prank had been played on her. She said something to the effect that she had thought she could trust me, of all students, and now I had let her down, and she was completely shattered, and had given up all her faith and belief in teaching. I didn’t know what to say. I still feel bad about this incident. The reason I didn’t tell her anything was because I had been taught by my parents to never squeal on nyone and therefore felt I had to keep silent although I felt really bad for her.

I think Mr. Judge was the nicest teacher ever, a really nice man as well as dedicated teacher. He once asked me to attend a concert he was giving one evening to help him out. It turned out he wanted me to do a simple task involving opening doors to the auditorium when he gave me a signal from the stage. Somehow, I screwed this up and didn’t carry out instructions. Afterwards, instead of complaining or finding fault with me, he said, “Thank you so much for being there and helping me. I really appreciate it.” He never said anything about my messing up.

In Mr. Tighe’s English class, the term paper at the end of the senior year was a big deal.

Mr. Tighe taught us how to do research using index cards. My paper was on J. D. Salinger. I did research in the Boston Public Library. But, being a procrastinator of the worst sort, I had to stay up all night the night before the paper was due and barely got it written and typed. That night I smoked my first cigarette, a Lark, bummed from my older brother, and felt like I was going to pass out. (It felt like my head was buzzing and ringing when I took a drag.) I finished the paper late and got to school at about 8:20 a.m. School started at 8 and Mr. Tighe’s class was first period. I got to school a little late, as I have said, and one of the secretaries, Mrs. Berteletti, said to me, “nice of you to come to school today, Roger!” You were supposed to get some sort of punishment (detention?) if you were late, but nothing was done and I went straight to Mr. Tighe’s room. He greeted me as I entered and said, with gentle sarcasm, “Well, well, Mr. Smith, you’re here! Mr. Russell and Mr. Kelson [referring to Jim Russell and Warren Kelson] were saying some very uncomplimentary things about you [indicating they thought I had skipped school on the day the paper was due].” I replied to Mr. Tighe, “A heavy weight of hours bears me down.” This was a pun referring to the fact that I had pulled an all-nighter. Mr. Tighe was very amused. “A heavy weight of hours” is a phrase from Shelley’s “Ode to the West Wind,” a poem we had recently been studying.

At graduation, I got a $100 scholarship for excellence in American history from the American Legion. I was very pleased to get this award. I think Mr. Tedesco may have had something to with it.

Two exams with Mr. Tedesco in which I did particularly well stand out. One was an essay I wrote in my junior year comparing the public reaction to John Glenn to Charles Lindbergh. I started out by making a brief outline for my own benefit. Mr. Tighe had taught us to do this, make an outline before you write. (I no longer do this.) Mr. Tedesco really liked the essay, singled it out, and gave me an A. He apparently told Mr. Tighe because Mr. Tighe complimented me too. (It was not easy to get compliments from Mr. Tighe.) The other was an exam in our senior year when we were studying the French Revolution. The exam included a famous quote from Charles Dickens’s *A Tale of Two Cities:* “It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” There were several questions on the exam and then at the end, at the bottom of the page, there was a bonus question: “Do you know who wrote this passage?” I have always had a keen memory for odd facts that stick in my mind and it seemed like I might know the answer, but I couldn’t think of it. I kept racking my brain. We had read *A Tale of Two Cities* in freshman year with Mrs. Lowry and that may have helped because I suddenly thought, Charles Dickens!, and wrote that down. I was the only one who got the correct answer and I got an A on the test.

I used to fall asleep in class. It was a real problem and was embarrassing. I was over programmed with after school sports, various activities, and homework. The falling asleep started in freshman year with Mr. Moore’s science class. Mr. Moore was a very decent man and probably a good teacher but he droned on in a monotone and I couldn’t stay awake. We had him right after lunch. I got an A for the course, but I didn’t really learn anything, stunk at science, didn’t have a clue. (I did do the work.) It was very embarrassing because I would fall asleep during class, then wake up with a start and kick the chair in front of me, calling attention to myself.

Mr. Badoian was very vigilant and it was very hard to nod off or wander during his class, but I once managed to fall asleep there. I was right next to Jean Moore (a very smart, quiet girl). Mr. Badoian was amused. He said to Jean, “Catch him! He’s going to topple over!” Or something like that.

Football games were great to watch at Canton High. You could stand on the side of the field and get a great close up view of the action with no problem. You could hear the slap of the pads as the players collided and actually hear the players curse each other.

In our sophomore year, something exciting happened to our offense. The coach in a daring move decided to play Billy Gardner at quarterback. Prior to that, Joe Kelleher had been the quarterback (he had by now graduated) and he almost never passed. All he ever did was hand off. Thus, I was excited to see Billy Gardner drop back into the pocket, set up, and throw passes, a high percentage of which he completed. We didn’t have a great team, but it was a whole new dimension to the offense which made the games a lot more fun to watch.

I remember the student-teacher basketball game. Mr. Gibson was serving as play by play announcer/color commentator on the PA system and when Mr. King missed a shot, he joked, “a little high, Sky.” I remember Mr. Badoian, who was a standout player at Brown, playing in the game and taking distinctive, high arched two-handed set shots. The game drew great interest.

I recall Mr. Gibson using navy lingo in gym class (“topside,” for example). (He was a WWII Navy vet.) He liked words and always called us cross country team members the “harriers.”

I was elected class president in my sophomore year. I was not a good class president. However, I was a popular candidate and I think I won in a landslide. I won because Janet Shermehorn decided I should be elected and campaigned vigorously for me. She came up with the campaign slogan, “vote the Jolly Roger.” If I remember correctly, Janet had a crush on my older brother and that got transformed into befriending me or at least taking up my cause. I was drafted to run by Janet. (My brother, who was a senior, was still there. The election for sophomore class officers took place at the end of our freshman year.)

I was on the staff of the student newspaper, the *Mirror*, in my freshman, sophomore, and junior years. A couple of things stand out. The first is that in my sophomore year, I wrote an editorial critical of a speech (remarks at an assembly prior to the 1961 Thanksgiving football game) made by our principal, Mr. Alvino. The editorial was short and well written. The *Mirror* faculty advisor, Miss Bailey, said it was okay to publish my views. She was liberal and I think a lot of the faculty didn’t like Alvino. I sensed this and didn’t approve of him myself. In retrospect, I think I was being kind of snobbish and that my views (about Mr. Alvino in general) may have been kind of unfair. But I don’t regret the editorial.

However, I have a sneaking suspicion that the editorial may have prejudiced the administration and especially Mr. Alvino against me (though he never mentioned the editorial to me). When the National Honor Society was selected that year, I was not chosen. The lowest grade I got in my freshman and sophomore years was one B+ in civics for one marking period. I seemingly had good moral character and participated in many school activities. So, it was odd that I wasn’t chosen. (I was selected to the National Honor Society later and in fact became National Honor Society president in my senior year.)

A nice thing that happened with the school newspaper was that I was sports editor for a while and in my junior year we did an especially good job. (We also had a new and better printing format for the paper.) Mr. Tripp, a science teacher and the basketball coach, buttonholed me in the corridor and told me enthusiastically that it was the best sports section he had ever seen in the Mirror.

I became yearbook editor because Mr. Morrison drafted me for the job. He told me I had to do it.

By the end of the year, we were running behind schedule, I was having trouble keeping on top of things, and the assistant editor was pissed at me. Came the night of the senior class banquet, which I think was on the day before graduation, and several students were muttering and expressing discontent because the yearbooks weren’t there. Then they arrived (during the banquet)! The printer came through big time and suddenly everyone had a good word to say about me.

My family had a big, awkward Irish setter named Rob (known as Big Red by many townspeople) who used to run all around town attracting attention. Rob used to raid garbage pails and he would run onto the field during football games. One school day when I was in the corridors between classes, Rob got into the building and started following me. I was muttering under my breath “go home Rob!” while trying not to attract attention to me or my dog.

One day during French class, Rob started barking at the shadow of a waving flag in the parking lot and Miss McCauley stuck her head out of the window and started talking to Rob in French (telling him to go home). I must have told her he was my dog.

In the summer of 1962, the school came up with a reading program. We were to read three books over the summer and write book reports. The reports would be graded by parents in Canton who had volunteered for the job, not teachers.

I recall that two of the books I read were Shakespeare’s A*s You Like It* and *Fear Strikes Out* by baseball player Jimmy Piersall. I don’t recall the third book.

The parents were harsh graders. They took their job too seriously. The Shakespeare play I read was in a Folger Library edition paperback costing 35 cents. I mentioned in my book report that the book was a very good deal at the price. The anonymous parent grader wrote on my paper, “What are you trying to do? Sell the book?”

Nothing was said about the extra credit we were supposed to get on our first term grades for these book reports and I believe they were ignored.

President Kennedy was assassinated on Friday, November 22, in our senior year. Mr. Alvino came on the loudspeaker shortly before the end of the school day to announce that the president had been shot. We did not know then that the wound was mortal.

On Tuesday, November 26, in Mr. Tighe’s first period English class, we were given the assignment of writing a brief impressionistic piece on the Kennedy funeral. We were told that one piece would be selected to be read at a memorial assembly on the next day, Wednesday. Linda Castellarin’s piece won. I recall her reading it and the haunting lines she had written as a refrain, “And the caissons kept rolling.”

I was on the debate team in my freshman and junior years. The only debate I recall (in my junior year) was against a powerhouse team from some top high school. I do not remember what the topic of the debate was, but it was held after school. Mr. Tighe was the referee. There were two students on each side.

I was not prepared to debate the topic. The other team looked very confident, in fact arrogant. They went first. Then it was our turn. I got up and said that the other team’s arguments were irrelevant because they were debating on the wrong topic! With that, Mr. Tighe said it was true, they had chosen the wrong topic, and he had no choice but to declare us the winners. The other team was flabbergasted and annoyed. I was very pleased that we had won, especially considering that I was totally unprepared.

I would like to conclude by mentioning the 1959 Thanksgiving football game against our arch rival Stoughton, which occurred while we were still in junior high school. That was the most memorable sporting event of my life, ever! (This is saying something. I was at the game when Havlicek stole the ball. And, I was at the last game of the 1967 season when the Red Sox clinched the pennant.)

I’m certain that everyone remembers what a big deal the Thanksgiving game always was. The day before, Wednesday, was always a half school day. In the fall of 1959, we had an assembly in the morning which was a pep rally and that evening a pep rally and big bonfire which were exciting for a kid. That was Wednesday, November 25.

The new high school building had just been completed and the adjacent building, the old high school, had become the junior high school, which we had moved into. We junior highers were allowed, because of the special occasion, to attend the assembly in the building across the way.

The assembly/pep rally was really an inspiring event, with all the team on the stage. I vividly recall when one of the players, Kenny Oles, got up to speak. He was not a polished speaker. He was small for a football player. He kept saying, nervously (because he wasn’t accustomed to speaking in public) but confidently, “we’re gonna win!” “we’re gonna win!”

The other players spoke too and they were inspiring.

The game was great. Canton scored two touchdowns but the extra point try failed both times, so we led 12-0. Then Stoughton, which had lost only one game all year, scored and got a 2-point conversion, making the score 12-8 Canton. It seemed inevitable that Stoughton was going to come back to win.

In the fourth quarter, Stoughton had the ball a lot. They kept doing end runs and it kept looking like a running back was going to break free. Yet each time some Canton defender would come out of nowhere and make a crucial open field tackle.

Finally, near the end of the game, Canton got the ball back deep in their own territory. They kept moving up the field. Time was running out. Then fullback and star Charlie Patriarca made this amazing run that broke the game open. He went 40 yards into the end zone, twisting and turning and refusing to be tackled. When he scored, there was a rumble at the goal line and the officials declared the game over. I think there were only seconds left on the clock. Canton never got to attempt the extra point. The final score was Canton 18 Stoughton 8.

*— Roger W. Smith*

*summer 2014*