

June 2016

Richie Rebel says, "*Here's to our boys of summer.*"

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Life & Times of the Rebels of '69

Thornton Fractional Township High School South, Class of 1969, Lansing, Illinois



*This month's "Back to the Past" revisits Lansing Little League. **Dave Kats** gives us two essays about growing up with baseball.*

Think I Can't Play? Watch Me Try Harder!

by **Dave Kats** (Indiana)

I played four years of Lansing Little League and sat on the bench most of the first year. When a bully picking teams for a pick-up game at Lan Oak Park told me I couldn't play with them 'cause I sucked, it pushed me to try harder and get better. And I did.



Under Pressure

We were playing a team at the Knights of Columbus field. We were down two runs in the bottom of the last inning. The other team's pitcher walked two guys. Then their coach put in a new pitcher, who struck out the next two batters. And then...I was up.

Our coach promised to take us to a Cubs game if we won, so I had a lot of pressure on me. The count was 2 and 2 when I hit one hard down the third-base line. The ball skipped over the base. I saw dust come up. I knew it would get past the left fielder.

As I ran hard to third base, I saw that the outfield had thrown the ball to the third baseman, who was now getting ready to throw it in to the catcher. I went for it. As I neared home plate, the ball flew past me and the catcher missed it. He quickly recovered it from backstop, just as I slid in and beat him to the plate. We won and the kids carried me off field.

Right after that the coach had the kids vote for MVP and I won. I don't know if I was the best on the team, but I was on that day.



I used to keep my MVP trophy on my dresser. My wife didn't like it there, and she would put it in the closet and I would put it back on the dresser. One day I noticed that my name plaque on the trophy was missing. I asked her what happened to my name, and she said she didn't know

Knock Out Ball

I loved playing at Lions Stadium, a beautiful field with a fence, but I never could hit one out of there. On this day, we were playing a team with supposedly the fastest pitcher in the league. He was fast and very wild. The kids were terrified to face him.

and she would find it. That was 30 years ago and I'm still waiting! My little MVP trophy is safe now, up on a shelf in the computer room. It still has no name plaque.

He walked two batters in the first inning and then I was up. I don't remember how many pitches I had on me, but I popped one up deep to center field, just missing the sweet spot. I had never hit a ball that high before. It went to the fence, but didn't go out. The fielders missed it and I got a single.

A couple on innings later, I was up again. This time the first pitch was at my face. I backed up, but instead of turning away, I turned toward the pitcher and was knocked out cold. I don't know how long I was out. I just remember people clapping when they walked me back to bench. The coach was talking to me, but he made no sense. He said my mother was coming, but she never came to any of my games.

The coach said I had to get x-rays and couldn't play any more that day. I'll never know if that kid threw at me on purpose, but like I said, he was a wild pitcher.



As for that bully who wouldn't let me play, he showed up again two years later at a park pick-up game. We spun a bat to see who picked the team and it came to me. Well, I picked him and he thanked me, even though he was not my first choice. I ain't no saint, but that made feel better than the time he sent me home crying to myself. I once read, "Be kind to those who are unkind, because they need it the most." I will always remember that.

Highest Honors to an Outstanding TFS Player and His Coach



In 2011, TF South High School retired the baseball jerseys of Curtis "C.J." Granderson No. 14 and Coach Bill Anderson No. 22. Their numbers hang from the right field scoreboard at Bill Anderson Field.

Curtis (TFS '99) started his baseball career in the Lansing Babe Ruth League. At TFS, he played varsity for Coach Bill Anderson. Then he attended and played ball for the University of Illinois-Chicago. He started his MLB career in 2004 and is a three-time MLB All-Star currently playing outfield for the NY Mets. Curtis's Grand Kids Foundation recently donated scoreboards and a hitting facility to the Lansing Little League.

Coach Anderson headed up baseball at TFS for 34 seasons and is installed in the Illinois Baseball Coaches Association Hall of Fame. His teams won 578 games in his 34 seasons at TFS. They also racked up seven conference titles, six regionals, one sectional, and in 1990, a spot in the Class AA Elite Eight.

"It all comes back to T.F. South," Curtis said in a 2015 interview. "This is where it all began for me."

Video Bonus: Watch Curtis Granderson talk about his favorite play in baseball.
[Click Here!](#)

TFS TEAM69 Heard from...

Marilyn Rea Beyer (Massachusetts)—When the *Life & Times* pops up in my email inbox, I always save it until after work so I can read and enjoy the stories at my leisure! ❤️ the Life & Times!

Rob Garrison (Illinois)—Read the *Life & Times* first thing this morning! Look forward to it

every month! Thanks for all you do to keep us together.

Kenneth Hanes (Indiana)—Another great job. Thanks everyone!

Kathy Orban (Illinois)—Keep up the wonderful newsletter.

Bud Jenkins (Illinois)—Another excellent newsletter.

Happy June Birthday!

Nancy Hekkema, Paul Carter, Harrison "Butch" Porter, Lynda Schneider Gleim, Kathy Neumann Smith, Donna Franklin, John Valco, Rich Wold

Celebrating May Wedding Anniversaries

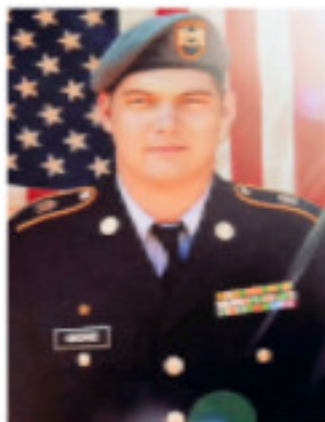
Bill and **Janet Truman Clark** (Indiana)—47 years

Rich and **Donna Fazio Mrskos** (Indiana)—32 years

Jane and **Dave Kats** (Indiana)—44 years

Robert and **Kathy Dyrzcz Orr** (Illinois)—42 years

Graduation Congratulations!



Bill George's (Florida) first grandson, Clayton George, graduated with his high school Class of 2016 and is going on to Jacksonville University this fall. After college, Clayton plans to enter the U.S. Marines as an officer.



Our condolences to classmate Denise Zygowicz Gordon (Colorado), her sister Tina Zygowicz Johnson (TFS '68), and their families on the passing of their father, Martin, in May. Mr. Zygowicz, 97, served with the US Army Air Corps in WWII and was an active member of St. Ann's Church and the Lansing Knights of Columbus since 1951. He was known as the "KC bass master" as his favorite fishing hole was the K of C Lake. In the past few years, Mr. Zygowicz enjoyed good health and comfort at the home of his daughter Kathleen in Washington.

Help Us Connect with Our Classmates

If you are in contact with these classmates, please invite them to subscribe totally for free to our TFS Class of 1969 *Life & Times* e-newsletter at our website tfsclassof69.weebly.com or ask them to email us at TFSouth69@gmail.com.

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Dawn Arney Irby
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Kristine Anderson Barrett
Karen Anderson Hasselbring
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For the June *Life & Times*

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***Our Mission:* To promote and grow our network of TFS Class of 1969 friendships by sharing information and planning reunion events to keep the spirit of the 40th Reunion alive and vibrant.**

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