

November 2016

Richie Rebel says, "Seems like only yesterday."

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# Life & Times of the Rebels of '69

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



**Mike Wright** (Colorado) shivered in the pre-dawn hours of Colorado's Elk Mountains to capture this October sunrise on the Maroon Bells twin peaks that rise over 14,000 feet.

[www.mwrightphotography.com](http://www.mwrightphotography.com)



## Sgt. Gene L. White

Sgt. White (TFS '65) was lost in Vietnam April 3, 1969 when he fell in action during rocket & artillery fire of Operation Wayne Grey in Kon Tum, Vietnam. Sgt. White served as a Light Weapons Infantryman with Co. B of the 3rd Battalion, 8th Infantry Regiment, 4th Infantry Division.

In a letter to Sgt. White's family from a fellow officer, the White family learned that their son had been the last of several men jumping into a foxhole to escape enemy fire when he was hit.

Platoon Sgt. White was a Varsity letterman at TF South. He was drafted into the U.S. Army in 1968 and trained in California. In a letter from Vietnam to his father, George White, Sgt. White wrote that a fellow soldier had been killed during a battle, and not wanting to leave him behind, he carried the man's body on his back all

# The Gene White Award

by **Ed Kubic** (South Carolina)

I played football for four years, wrestled for four years, and played baseball for three years before being cut my senior year at TFS. Admittedly, my skills and my size seldom put me in a first string (or sometimes even second string) position, but I always gave my best to help my team.

Most of the time this amounted to running plays against the starters in football and taking some nice hits. You guys remember, "first man stands him up and second cuts him in two" drills? I do. It also meant giving starter wrestlers as much resistance as I could so they could improve their skills.

Since I did not play baseball my senior year, I did not expect to be invited to the spring athletic banquet. It was quite a surprise to be informed that I should attend to receive an award. The award: The Gene White Award for the athlete who gave his all, all of the time, even though never being a star.

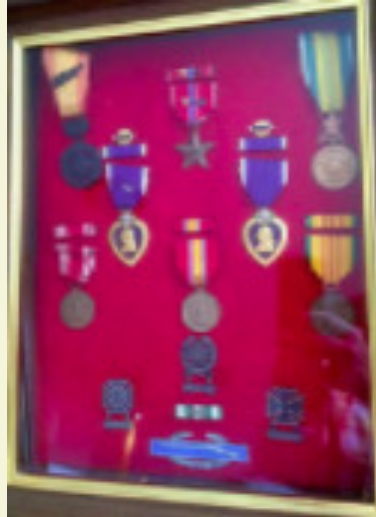
I did not know Gene White, nor can I remember ever having met him. What I did learn was that Gene always gave his all, in all his endeavors. He was always there to help his teammate, his school, and anyone he ever met. Gene gave and gave, right up to giving his life for his country and his fellow soldiers in Vietnam.

I sit here tearing up writing this and thinking about his sacrifice, knowing how proud I still am to think that people thought I was worthy of this recognition. That inspiration has stayed with me throughout my life.

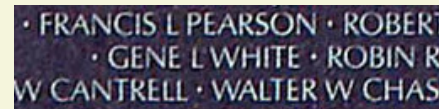
Thanks to all of our fellow classmates who served in the Armed Forces protecting our freedom. Thanks also to all of the servicemen who have ever served protecting this great country. And last, but not least of all, I would like to thank the White family for their sacrifice and to say,

the way to camp.

Mr. White, a World War II Navy veteran, said that his son kept a lot of what was happening overseas from him and his mother Selma, but carrying his fallen fellow soldier was the most difficult thing Gene had to do.



Sgt. White's name is inscribed on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, DC.



**Gene L. White**  
**Panel 27W, Row 008**

GOD BLESS THE USA, THE GREATEST COUNTRY  
IN THE WORLD!



Daughter Kelli and family—Evan, husband Paul MacDonald, Alex, and Faith with **Ed and Peggy Peacock Kubic**. Kelli and Paul are TFS alumni.



Son Eddy III with his wife Melissa and son Edward James with Peggy and Ed. Eddy III is a TFS alum.

**A Really Great Guy—**

## **My Brother Gene**

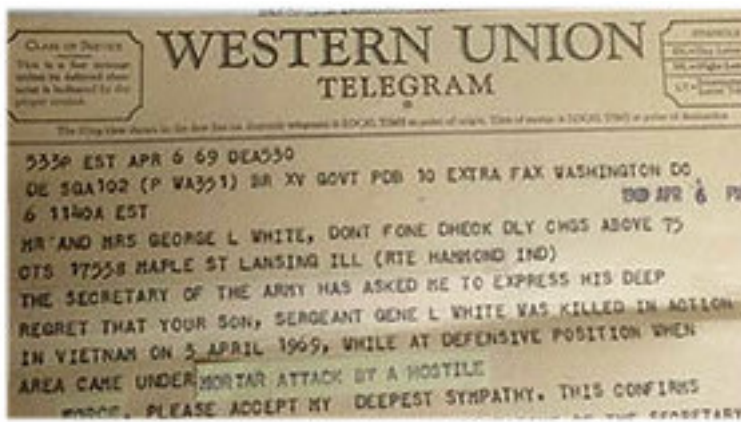
by **Dan White** (South Carolina)

**How do I start?** First by thanking all the people involved in putting together this great idea for a *Life & Times* issue, and all the other great stories. Mine will not be written well,

because I am a terrible writer and speller! But it will be a great piece, because it is all about a great guy, my brother Gene White.

Great guy does not even touch on how I felt about my brother. He was everything to me and someone to look up to, just like I looked up to my father. He taught me a lot of what I know and how to do it the right way. We had good times and great times and some times not as good. I was very lucky to have a brother and father that could teach me so much. It would take far too long to list all the great and learning times I experienced with my brother, because each remembrance makes me think of others.

I always remember what an outgoing person Gene was and that he always put everything he had into whatever he was involved in. I was amazed how many people he knew and how they all cared so much for him. I regret that my younger sister, Gail White Hack (TFS '75), did not get to know him like I did. Sure, she knew and loved her older brother, but she was too young to do some of things we experienced.



There is one thing I wish no one had to experience—that dreadful knock on our door in April 1969 informing my family of my brother’s death in Kon Tum, Vietnam.

My sister-in-law, Jennie Courtney White (TFS '65), was staying with us for awhile at that time, and she was the one that saw the vehicle pull up out front. Not a sound I ever

want to hear again! It’s not a good memory, but it comes with all the good times that flood back into my memory.



Heidi and **Dan White** stand with the Gene White Award displayed in the TFS gym hallway.

I am so proud that Gene’s name and memory live on in the annual Gene White Award given out at TFS and on the plaque that hangs in the TFS hallway. I was very happy that

Ed Kubic won the award in 1969 and that the daughter of one of my best friends, Mike Manno (TFS '71), also won the award.

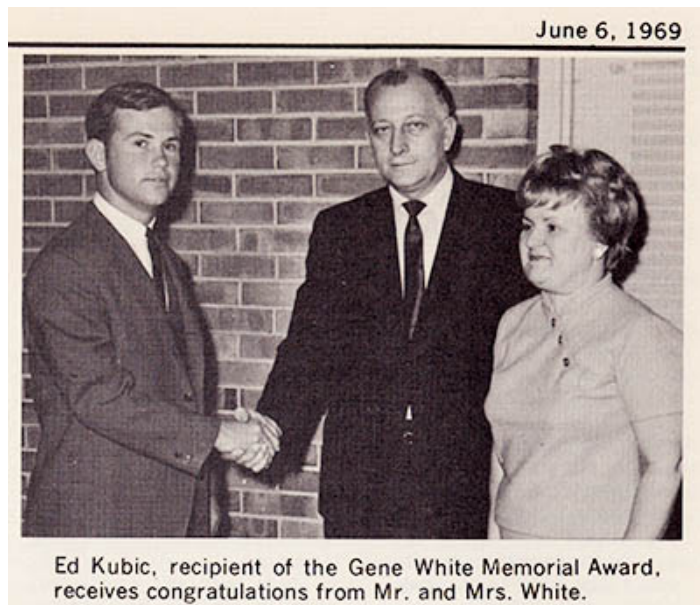
When Mike's daughter, Renee Manno (TFS '02), won, she asked her dad, "Who in the heck was Gene White?" And Mike was able to tell her that Gene had taken him under his wing and was one of the few people to teach and work with him on anything to do with sports in our neighborhood. Tim O'Connor (TFS '70) and I took the brunt of this "Gene and Mike Team," because it didn't matter if it was basketball, football, baseball, Wiffle ball, ping pong, or mumblety-peg, Tim and I had to go against them!

Thanks for the memories. Seems like it was only yesterday.



## TF South *Rebel Rouser* June 6, 1969

from the P. S. Sports column by Paul Warn



And the most recent Memorial Award is the Gene White Award. This is given to the athlete who shows the maximum amount of spirit, hustle, and desire, all characteristics of Sargeant White in his high school days and his life in general.

Gene who graduated in 1965 won 4 major letters in track and 2 major letters in both football and baseball. This award has been forseen to be a lasting tradition because of the type of a man Gene was in both athletics and in life in general. And this year the boy felt most fitting, and I think it was an excellent choice, was Ed Kubic.

[Dan White found an error in the June 6, 1969 *Rebel Rouser*. Gene White lettered in basketball, not baseball. Thanks for the correction, Dan!]

**On Veterans Day** and all days, we honor our TFS classmates who have served our country, and we add **David Rosner** (Indiana) to our list. David served in the U.S. Navy from 1970 to 1995. He is



a veteran of Vietnam and Desert Storm and retired from the Navy as Chief Warrant Officer 3.

**We Thank** all the men and women in uniform who are serving or have served our country. We would like to tell you about WWII Pvt. Joseph Veenstra, Jr., cousin to classmate David Kats (Indiana). Pvt. Veenstra was 20 years old when he was killed in action on Omaha Beach on D-Day, June 6, 1944. Pvt. Veenstra was one of the first infantrymen to land on the shores of Normandy, France, that day. He is at rest in Homewood, Illinois.

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## Classmates Reconnect Over Lansing Pizza



**Dave Dickinson** (California) (standing) caught up with TFS classmates in September while in town to watch his son David run a 5K race at O'Hare Airport. How did they reconnect? First Dave got in touch with **Dennis Knoerzer** (Missouri) (center), who was in Lansing for a wedding, and Dennis contacted **Dale Robinson** (Illinois) (left). Then Dennis saw **Phil Stewart** (Illinois) (right) at church and brought him along. The end result—Pizza at Begger's in Lansing and lots of reminiscing.

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## Kathlene L. Dyrz Orr 1951–2016

**Kathie**, our Memorial Jr. High and TFS Classmate, passed away in September 2016 following an illness. For 37 years, Kathie taught Grades K through 8 and served as an administrator and Principal of Grissom Elementary School in the Chicago Public School System. Kathie retired in 2011. Our hearts go out to her husband Bob, daughter Elizabeth, her family, friends, and the many children and teachers whose lives she touched.



**Mike McNary** (Georgia) and **Marilyn Rea Beyer** (Massachusetts) share their memories of Kathie with us.

### **Kathie's Song**

Something always so subtle in your  
smile  
Hidden way back  
In your hoarse soft whisper of a  
voice  
Some ancient wisdom insinuating  
"You know"—"Don't give me that"  
Your large laugh waiting there  
Behind all of life's pretensions

We were twelve  
Then we were twenty  
We were kids  
But somehow you knew the bigger  
score  
"Old Soul" they call it today

Remember January 1971?  
The Grateful Dead performing  
On a cold Chicago night  
They wanted to know if we were  
kind

You LIVED that song  
You never had time to hate  
You barely had time to wait  
You judged no one  
You listened—You forgave  
You understood SO deeply  
You were a TRUE friend  
The world's already missing you  
I know I am

### **Positively Sophisticated**

It was the middle of the '60s in the middle of America. We hadn't been to the moon yet, but we could take a train downtown.

"She seemed so sophisticated to me," Ginger Grundler Chinnici said. "I'll never forget going Christmas shopping downtown. She had a credit card! And she knew how to use it."

Kathie was fashionable—and so organized. In 8th grade, Ginger, Dyrzcz, and I bought matching ruffled white blouses at Penney's. "The Supremes!" Kathie insisted we all wear them for the Memorial Jr. High student newspaper staff yearbook picture. We lined up Motown style for our photo op, but the photographer would have none of it. Kathie was steamed!

But mostly Dyrzcz was full of fun and love. Her positivity was pressurized, ready to pop like a champagne bottle into her effervescent laugh. A teacher at Grissom Elementary School where Kathie was the principal, said, "You could feel the energy when you walked into the school. It came from Mrs. Orr. She treated every child



—Mike McNary

like her own.”

Kathie was known for standing by her teachers, standing up for children and putting family first—her own family and the families of her staff and students. She was there for them from beginning to end.

That’s the mark that Kathie Orr —“Our Dyrzcz”—has left.

Positive. Warm. Loved.

—Marilyn Rea Beyer

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## TFS **TEAM69** Heard From...

**Bill Hutchison** (Indiana)—It is a very touching photo in the October issue. ["The Dutch People Remember...", Oct. 2016] Knowing that the cause the soldiers sacrificed their lives for is still very much appreciated is wonderful. I often wonder if the current generation really knows how lucky they are and understand how many lives were changed and hearts were broken with the loss of those that gave the ultimate sacrifice. This photo proves that some really do know and care.



**Maureen Ryan Hutchison**—What a lovely tribute. ["The Dutch People Remember...", Oct. 2016] I looked this up: In addition to the graves in Maastricht, there are 19 other US military cemeteries in Britain, France, Brittany, Belgium, Luxemborg, Italy, plus more in Africa, and, of course, in the Pacific. There is very little “glory” in war, but vast amounts of pain, suffering, and death. [American Battle Monuments Commission](#)

**Brenda Koedyker** [Dear Brenda of the "Deep Respect" video, "The Dutch People Remember...", Oct. 2016]—This is a very nice newsletter. I clicked on the link to Jean-Paul [Toonen]'s video letter to me. I'll bet I have viewed it 100 times, and every time, it grabs me and brings me to tears. I am forwarding the newsletter to him, as he will be interested in the Netherlands connection to the region and your hometown, as well.

**Dave Kats** (Indiana)—Another great job. The video ["Deep Respect," Oct. 2016] made me proud of my Dutch heritage. Your crew putting together the newsletter should be proud of themselves. Thanks for all your hard work.

**Jack Wiers** (Hawaii)—From a Dutch-roots standpoint ["The Dutch in Our Hometown," Oct.



2016], we were OLD Dutch by Lansing standards. My great-grandfather Jacob Wiers was adopted by the founding Munster family around 1855, and my grandfather inherited a large portion of farmland in Munster/Highland. A good portion of that land was sold by my grandfather, Gerrit Wiers, back to the Municipality in the 1920s. It became Wicker Memorial Park and was dedicated in 1927 to the "doughboys" of WWI by President Calvin Coolidge, shown in this photo. My Grandfather Wiers then bought a farm in the Lynwood/Glenwood area and eventually retired in the early 1950s to a little house next to the Lansing police station on the corner of Henry Street.



**Darlene Barzda Snell** (Florida)—This was such an interesting article ["The Dutch in Our Hometown," Oct. 2016]. Especially since I was brought up in Lansing and we are Polish. Makes me wonder why my parents chose Lansing compared to anywhere else. Wish they were alive to ask. I know they always mentioned the Dutch people in town and maybe liked the hometown feeling there. Great job with the story as always!! Thank you. It's never too late to learn about our little town.

**Dan White** (South Carolina)—Great stories and a real learning experience! [Oct. 2016] Keep up the fantastic work. Said it before and will say again, you guys are the best!

**Kathy Orban** (Illinois)—Another great issue!! [Oct. 2016] What a nice glimpse into the Lansing history and the Dutch influences it possesses. Thank you to those who work so hard at putting this newsletter together.

**Clifford Purnell, Sr.** (Indiana)—Thanks for the invite to the TFS *Life & Times*. You guys do a GREAT JOB!

**Barbara Homans Schwarz** (Florida)—Thank you all for all the incredible work you do to keep us all up to date on the lives and losses of fellow classmates. I think you do an amazing job and you do it from the heart. It is always saddening to learn of the passing of another classmate. Hearing about new babies born, weddings, small classmate reunions, and interesting happenings in lives of classmates brings us closer, I feel. The class of 1969 is an amazing group of people.

**Alan Eckhardt** (Georgia)—I hadn't written before and wanted to let you know just how much I've enjoyed the newsletters. The articles, pictures, and info are top notch, well done. Thank you. I was curious where you hired all the old people in the pictures. :- ) See you all in a couple of years.

**John Jones** (California)—You guys give us something to look forward to each month.

Thank you for a great job. It is quite interesting to see how we've spread out across the country.

**Robert J. Murray** (Georgia)—What everlasting friendships... '69 all the way. Almost 50 years, baby!!!

**Mike Manno** (TFS '71)—Thanks for forwarding me the TFS **Team 69** newsletter. It's awesome, great job by all. Keep it up.

**Laurie Steinbach Webster** (TFS '70)—Love your newsletter every month, always fun to see what everyone is up to.

**Denise Steinberg Johnson** (Illinois)—Great issue. Thanks for all your hard work every month!

**Diana Steinweg Plese** (Illinois)—Another great issue! Thanks for all you do.

**Larry Valent** (Illinois)—Top shelf as usual. Thanks gang.

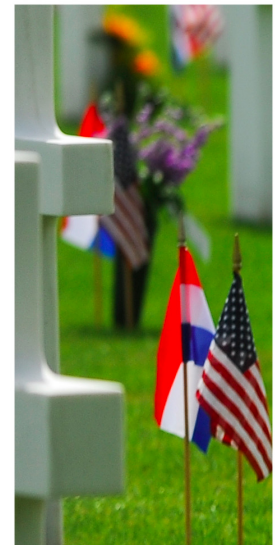
## And **TEAM69** Heard from the Netherlands

Many thanks for sending us the article and mentioning our Foundation for Adopting Graves American Cemetery Margraten Netherlands as a remarkable organization. ["The Dutch People Remember...", Life & Times Oct. 2016] For us and all our members, the adoption families, it's an honour to be part of the mission not to forget the fallen heroes buried at the Cemetery in Margraten.

All support in spreading our Foundation's mission—Lest We Forget—in the US is very much appreciated!! One of our hopes for the coming years is to establish as much as possible connections between adopters here and next of kin in the US. Please find attached a link to the article within the Washington Post after Memorial Day 2015.

Kind regards, Roger Caelen [www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl/](http://www.adoptiegraven-margraten.nl/)

["The Dutch have never forgotten," Washington Post, May 24, 2015](#)



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## *Happy November Birthday!*

Paul Warn, Barbara Homans Schwarz, Craig Gutowski, Dick Schoon, David Bulla, Donna Zentz Diver, Patty Bain Mansker, Cindy Graham Kats, Dave

## *Celebrating October Wedding Anniversaries!*

Juno and **Marion Luszyk Bunge** (Indiana)—34 years

Holly and **Dave Ervin** (Indiana)—40 years

Wanda and **Keith Gardner** (Illinois)—43 years

Deborah Moss and **Rich Wold** (Indiana)—45 years

Bobbie and **Chris Cooper** (Illinois)—39 years

Bob and **Anita Harris O'Dell** (Indiana)—46 years

## *Thank You, Coach Tom Padjen!*



Tom Padjen (TFS '68) hangs up his whistle this fall after more than 40 years as Head Football Coach of the TFS Rebels. As coach, Tom led the Rebels to 233-plus victories. As a TFS player, Tom was named All-Chicago Tribune in 1967. Says New Orleans Saints Super Bowl Champion Pierre Thomas (TFS '03), "It was the Padjens [Tom and Bob] who pushed me to this point. They made sure I had the right focus." Congratulations, Coach Padjen!

## *Congratulations, MLB Player Curtis Granderson!*

Curtis Granderson (TFS '99) is the winner of Major League Baseball's 2016 Roberto Clemente Award given to a player who best represents baseball through character, community involvement, philanthropy, and positive contributions on and off the field. Curtis's Grand Kids Foundation fosters education and offers baseball opportunities for inner-city youth. This year, Curtis batted .237 with 59 RBIs and 30 homeruns with the NY Mets.

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## **Our Heartfelt Condolences to...**

**John Giles** (Georgia) and his family and friends on the passing of John's beloved wife of 18 years, Brenda Bratlie Giles, in October 2016. Brenda, a mighty cancer warrior for over thirty years, always had a shining, cheerful attitude. John is grateful for the army of prayer angels who stood with them.



**Mike McNary** (Georgia) and his family on the passing of his mother, Meleda McNary, 95, in October 2016. Mrs. McNary (TF '39) was the First Lady of Lansing as the wife of Mayor Jack McNary from 1962–1978. Mike thanks his mom for all her love and care over so many years.

**Sandy Fritz Zaborski** (Illinois) and her family on the passing of her mother, Eleanore

I. Fritz, in July 2016. Mrs. Fritz, who would have turned 87 the following month, was a lifelong member of St. Ann's Catholic Church in Lansing, Illinois. Mrs. Fritz loved flowers, especially purple and lilac flowers.



### Help us Reconnect with Our Classmates

We appreciate your help locating missing classmates and welcome all tips to their whereabouts. Our mission is to find and connect with every classmate and invite them to sign up for the newsletter. This month, we're hoping to hear from—

Jerry Ogborn  
Carol Noort Jabaay  
Donna Nigohosian Magro  
Catherine Matzko Deffley  
Lynn Nelson Bergman  
Robert W. Murray  
Judith Morehouse  
Diana Moore Hall  
Deborah Moeller Freeman

Bruce Millis  
Kathleen Miller  
Deborah Miller Wahlert  
Arlene Miletich Kehoe  
Laura Merkel  
David Mellendorf  
Margaret Melko Frass  
Darlene Meeter Vanderbilt  
Thelma McKechnie Shimps



### Forward to Classmates, Family, and Friends

#### Remember to Update!

Click the update link at the bottom of our newsletter to update your email address with our MailChimp emailing service.

And to keep your snailmail, email, and phone numbers current in our class database, send changes to

[TFSouth69@gmail.com](mailto:TFSouth69@gmail.com)

or message us on our Facebook page  
Tfsouth Classofsixty-nine

#### For the November *Life & Times*

**Photos:** Mike Wright, Family of Gene White, Ed and Peggy Kubic, TFS Rebel Rouser 1969, Family of Kathleen L. Orr, Dave Dickinson, U.S. Air Force, TFS HS, John Giles, Bill Hutchison Photography

**Technical/Design Consultant:** Bill Hutchison

**Editorial:** Pat Walsh, Cheryl Ridder Woldhuis, Dave Dickinson, Alan Eckhardt

**Delighted with Newsletter:** Bud Jenkins

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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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