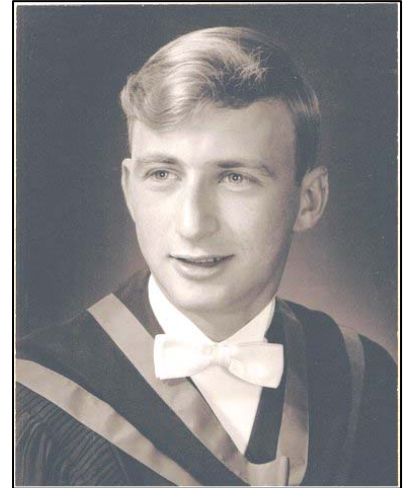


Position held:

TH&VS Staff Member 1967-2001

In 2001 when I retired from the staff at Timmins High I was asked to give the speech to the graduating class (because I had become so wise). Before the ceremony began, a mother, whose son had been a regular visitor to my vice-principal's office, was bemoaning how long it had taken her son to graduate. I replied, "Don't feel so bad. I started grade nine here in 1958 and I'm just getting out now!"



If that sounds like I was comparing my time at T.H. to a jail sentence - it was anything but. It was truly a 43-year adventure (with plot-lines and a cast of characters) that I was swept into from almost my first step into the halls of the old school ("lovingly" dubbed, by a rival coach at the French high school, "La m!#@*! ecole sur la colline"). Over four decades later I took my last step out, bringing with me a legion of great memories, as did my wife, son, and daughter, all of whom are TH graduates.

I met my grade 9 Phys Ed teacher, Bob Menard when Hugh returned to TH to teach), on the first day of classes and by the third day he had me hooked (what took him so long?). By the end of September, I had pretty-much resolved that no bus carrying a sports team would be leaving from TH without me on it. That was an ambitious goal because I had just broken the 5' barrier in height and was still a few ticks shy of 100 pounds. It was also a



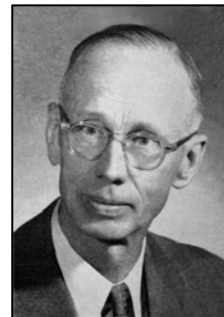
Bob Menard with Hugh

goal spawned by my desire to be "one of the guys". While I had participated in sports during elementary school, my father (who had grown up in Denmark) wished to ensure my "cultural education" and had taken five years of classical and folk dance, four years of music lessons on two instruments, and Ted Jewell (music teacher at Central School) had terrified several solo wins out of my vocal cords at the Porcupine Festival of Music. (I can admit to all this now because I am now an old guy and immune to ridicule). While these were all great experiences - they did not meet the "on the bus" criteria and needed to be rapidly replaced.

Thus, in Grade Nine, I became Bob Menard's manager for both the junior and senior basketball teams (and learned to write down everything in very small books with tiny pencils). I also managed the junior boys' football team for Coach Otonicar, bowled in the very competitive school league, and ran track for Bob Menard in the spring (winning the regional 440 yard dash). I was on the same team as my heroes - Jack Imber and Brian Barrett! I was "in"! I made every bus!

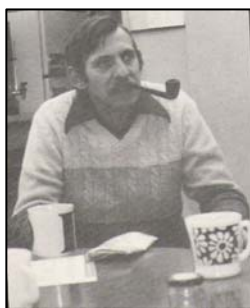
There were also some "outs" to being a frisky, Grade Nine jock. One morning in home room when Mr. Yeo had gone to the office for the attendance sheets, Ronnie Webb and I were horse-playing and tussling at the front of the class when "The Shadow" walked past the open classroom door ("The Shadow" was the Principal, Mr. Rose, a very tall man on a skeletal frame. I held my breath for a second, but my hopes were dashed when The Shadow

re-appeared and flowed into the room, grabbing both offenders by the collars, and pushing us apart. I was close to the blackboard. He had long arms and inadvertently slammed my back into the board. Being a quick-thinker (and possessing reasonable dramatic skills), I slid down the blackboard and wall while a snowfall of chalk dust floated down on me. This Oscar-deserving performance had the desired effect, abating The Shadow's displeasure with the two rapscallions in his clutches thus leading to an escape from further repercussions. Almost! Later that morning during Miss Seccombe's art class, The Shadow made an unannounced visit to the classroom, drifting up and down the aisles examining the art work, until he got to me where he asked, in a ghost-like whisper, "Are you alright?" Armed with an affirmative response, The Shadow departed, but it was another five minutes before I was breathing normally.



Principal Rose
"The Shadow"

Grade 10 was basically a repeat of Grade 9, same activities but adding officiating in hockey, basketball, and fastball to the mix. By grade 11, now almost five and a half feet tall and weighing in at a massive 118 pounds, I tried out for Johnny Boissoneault's junior football team, making it as a defensive halfback. "J.B." like Bob Menard, was an inspirational coach, making you feel (long before Red Bull) that you had wings. This, coupled



Football Coach
John Boissoneault

with our motto, "A team that WON'T be beaten, CAN'T be beaten!" led to an ill-fated decision at practice one afternoon when we were scrimmaging against Bob Heath's seniors. Unfortunately, while Danny Cybulski was a mere six inches taller than I, he did carry about twice my body weight and also happened to be the regional senior sprint champion in the 100, 220 and 440 yard dashes. So when offensive guard, big Eddie Casanato, wiped out the entire left side of the junior defensive line, Danny was pretty much untouched and at full speed when he reached the vicinity of my defensive backfield position and I was past the point of no return in my decision to tackle him (so much for my quick thinking). Making that decision is the last part of this story I remember, but apparently Danny did a flip in the air and crashed to the turf (I think he tripped on me when his knee hit my chin). Next year, I started officiating football.

Things were rolling along pretty nicely in Grade 12 until my "miss no bus" resolve was unceremoniously shattered by new principal, Alan Baker. I was comfortably settled into my usual seat on the bus, waiting to depart for Kirkland Lake, when he appeared (unlike Mr. Rose, he was not of "shadow" proportions). Apparently he had been apprised of my declining math marks just before I saw him striding purposefully up to the open door of the vehicle where, peering in, he ordered, "Meyer, get off the bus!" This was not an era when such a sentence could be discussed, pled down, or disobeyed. I had another math test in the middle of the next week which showed remarkable improvement - I never missed another bus.

By the time I became "a senior", in Grade 13 and getting ready to leave Timmins High, Bob Menard had become like a favorite uncle to me and "Buz" an older brother. They helped usher me through the winding path of adolescence with only minor detours along the road to success. My marks were decent, I had established a few records in track, and through officiating and helping them manage teams and organize events, I had received daily lessons in applied psychology and motivational techniques.

But along with them, the visages of many other staff members are imprinted on my mind, their voices indelible in my ears - some even haunting my dreams. I can still see Miss Bourne standing in the hall in front of her classroom door on the main floor, wielding a metre stick (almost as tall as she), making sure that everyone was moving quickly and in single file. The occasional sound of a “whack” followed by a “yelp” indicated the mitigation of behavioural problems.

Grade thirteen with its provincial exams was a stressful year, and the teachers who guided us through it are often central to our memories. For me, one such person is math teacher, Mr. McNamara, who, despite my troubles in math, convinced me to go to university rather than North Bay’s teachers’ college.

Mr. Yeo (who apparently possessed x-ray vision) taught our six-person geography class in which we were all seated at a round table (“Hugh, stop playing footsies under the table with your girlfriend...”) He had been a special teacher for me ever since Grade Nine.



Mr Yeo

Mr. Jury had eyebrows so bushy and arched that he always *looked* surprised (but never was). Early one winter morning, he came across me in the halls where I had been running before classes for track training. I was drinking a soft drink and, being a purist, he scolded me saying, “You call yourself an athlete and you’re drinking THAT!” He strode off, leaving me to gaze down at the offending Orange Crush in my hand. I drank juice after that.

All Grade Thirteen students had to take two English credits - literature and composition. It was common and *essential* knowledge that Miss Anderson abhorred *Cole’s Notes*. But using them was a temptation that some could not resist. We were discussing a question on *Hamlet* one class when she called on one of my buds to read his answer. Part way through his response she stopped him and asked, “Mr. Jones (name changed to protect the guilty), have you been using *Cole’s Notes*?” “Oh, no, Miss Anderson!” “Curious,” she replied, “that appears to be a direct quote from page 17 of *Cole’s Notes*...”. The silence in the room was deafening.

We also had to take two French credits, taught by the irrepressible Miss Wilson. Concerned that two classes were not enough to ensure high marks for all, she also instituted an extra half hour a day with “voluntary French club” every morning at 8:15 (that we all *had* to attend). Finally, one brave girl in the class had the guts to ask, “Miss Wilson, if it’s *voluntary* French club, how come we all have to be here?” Without missing a beat, the reply came, “Voluntary on my part, compulsory on yours.”

That pretty well summed those teachers up - there was a lot of voluntary effort on their part to ensure our success. I once heard a renowned coach at a basketball clinic say, “A coach’s job is to stretch your potential until you cry out for mercy.” I believe that this mantra was instinctual for many of the teachers I had at Timmins High. They stretched our potential, and sometimes infuriated us or even made us cry out, but I always believed that it was because they cared about us and wanted us to be the best we could be. That is why, when I left for Queen’s University on my way to a teaching career, there was never any question as to where I wanted that career to occur.

They say you can never go back. You can, but not without some trepidation. The first day I walked into the men's staff room in the fall of 1967, I greeted the first person I saw. "Hello, Mr. Cousineau", I said, to which the reply was, "It's John, Hugh". That seemed to smooth my transition into the ranks of "staff" and I found that those I had thought of as "the holders of all knowledge" were human, too, and were still there to help me. Thus I found myself sharing office space with Lily Anderson, staff parties with Dan Andreatta, and staffroom banter and bridge games at lunch with an interesting and diverse group of people.

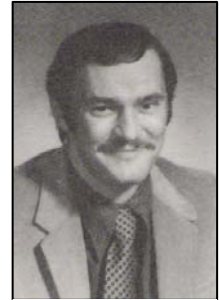
Timmins High's school population had grown and the staff was now over 100 with many new teachers arriving yearly in the late 1960s and early 1970s. A new "core" of the teaching staff was being formed, among them



Brent Read

Brent Read and Frank Graf who became my best friends.

Together, along with many others, we coached teams (basketball, cross-country, and track), convened athletic events (intramurals, NEOAA track, and OFSAA basketball championships), and organized special events like the "CN Tower Run" (from the top of the CN Tower to Timmins in support of the school's new auditorium – see picture of the CN team at end of the event with Principal Bob Sampson on City Hall steps at bottom of page) and the "Marathon" (from Timmins to the Toronto Parliament Buildings and back in support of the new district hospital). It didn't seem to matter what schemes



Frank Graf

or dreams we had, there were always staff members ready to help out and always support from the administration.

Thirty years later, many of the "new core" (Brent and Frank, Rick Woram, Hedy Graf, Bill Macauley, Lou Bennett, Gord Spylo and others) had become the "old guard", guiding the last of the Grade 13's and OAC's to graduations at the turn of the century.



Principal Sampson welcoming the Hugh & boys back home after the CN Tower run.

There are a lot more stories from my student days at Timmins High, but, to quote my favorite fictional character, Holden Caulfield (from the last page of *The Catcher in the Rye*), "That's all I'm going to tell about", and the stories about all the students I taught in my classes, or the exploits of the kids I had on my teams, are tales for another time. Holden finished that thought, as the book ends, as follows: "About all I know is, I sort of *miss* everybody I told about... It's funny. Don't ever tell anybody anything. If you do, you start missing everybody." My sentiments exactly.