

Tecumseh Alumni Association

Wall of Fame 2021

Awardee Bios

Joyce Wilbar aka Julie Parrish

Ruby Joyce Wilbar, whose stage name was Julie Parrish, graduated from THS in 1958. During HS she portrayed Mrs. Ethel Chauvenet in the Junior Play, Harvey, Florence McCrickett in the Senior Play, Torchbearers. She also participated in the Girl's Athletic Association throughout all four years.

Following graduation, Joyce won a national contest for "Patricia Stevens Young Model of the Year" at the modeling school in Toledo, OH. The prize was an acting part in "It's Only Money". Jerry Lewis was one of the judges. She went on to work at Patricia Stevens Finishing School in Hollywood, CA. Early in her career, she appeared in ads and publicity still pictures for Champion Spark Plugs, Ohio Oil, Libby-Owens and Owens-Corning.

Joyce became Julie Parrish on stage. Her career included stage roles with the Toledo Repertoire Theater, Longacre Theater (NY, NY) and Broadway, as well as with Arthur Miller productions. In 1966 she received a Los Angeles Drama Critics Circle Award for her portrayal of Maggie in Arthur Miller's "After the Fall".

She also had over 50 television appearances on ABC, CBS, NBC and Fox from 1961 through 1998. Several examples are 'My Three Sons', "Gidget", "Star Trek", "Dallas", "The Rockford Files", "Laverne and Shirley", "The Young and the Restless", "This Is the Life", "Dynasty", "Murder She Wrote", "Capitol", and "Beverly Hills, 90210" until 1998.

Ms. Parrish followed her debut in "It's Only Money" with Jerry Lewis with 11 other big screen movies. They included "The Nutty Professor" (with Jerry Lewis), "Harlow", "Winter A-Go-Go" (with James Stacy), "Fireball" (with Frankie Avalon, Fabian and Annette Funicello), "Paradise, Hawaiian Style" (with Elvis Presley),

“The Doberman Gang”, “The Time Machine”, “When She Was Bad”, “The Devil and Max Devlin”, “The Last Fling”, and “Baby M” in 1988.

Joyce earned an Associate of Arts degree (Magna Cum Laude) in Chemical Dependencies Counseling from Los Angeles Mission College in June 1990. She was presented with the Chancellor’s Distinguished Honor Award for scholastic achievement. She worked for nine years (1991-2000) as a full-time on-staff counselor at the Haven Hills Shelter for Battered Women. She also served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Los Angeles Commission on Assaults Against Women. She supported “A Window Between Worlds”, an organization that helps those affected by domestic violence.

Ruby Joyce Wilbar passed away on October 1, 2003, at the age of 62 from ovarian cancer. She was living in Los Angeles at the time.

Lee R. Britton

Lee R Britton is a 1960 THS graduate. During high school he participated in football (co-captain of the 1959 undefeated Indian team), basketball, baseball and marching band. Lee also participated in the dance band, Varsity Club, and the yearbook staff. He earned a BS degree from Michigan State University in Zoology in 1964 and entered the University of Michigan Medical School becoming president of the Galens Honorary Medical Society 1967-1968. Following graduation in 1968 he did a rotating internship and residency in General Surgery at St. Joseph Mercy Hospital, Ann Arbor completing it in 1973.

Dr. Britton entered the U.S. Air Force and was honorably discharged with the rank of Major in 1975. Following a year at the Davis Clinic in Mt. Pleasant, MI, he and his wife Harriett, the daughter of Tecumseh physician, the late Dr. M.R. Blanden and Mrs. Francelia Blanden, moved to Alpena, MI in 1976 where they still reside. He founded Alpena Surgical Associates and practiced at Alpena Regional Medical Center until 2010 when he retired. While at ARMC Lee served as a staff surgeon, Chief of Surgery, Chief of Staff and was founder and Medical Director of the non-invasive vascular laboratory. Becoming certified in Dive Medicine he became one of the principals in the Hyperbaric Medicine Program. He was the first Athena Award winner as the outstanding physician voted by the medical staff.

Dr. Britton has belonged to many professional and civic organizations. He has served as council member, treasurer, president elect, and president of the Michigan Chapter of The American College of Surgeons representing some 1200+ surgeons from Michigan and served many years on the Board of Governors of the American College of Surgeons representing surgeons worldwide. He is a member and past councilor of The Midwest Surgical Association. He is a member of the AMA, the Michigan State Medical Society, Alpena Medical Society, Society for Surgery of the Alimentary Tract, the Frederick A. Collier Surgical Society, and Society of American Gastrointestinal Endoscopic Surgeons, as well as other scientific organizations. He also served the Alpena community in various capacities including the local hockey board, the board of directors of the Michigan Amateur Hockey Association, Masonic Lodge, various local social and educational organizations. He has been an instructor teaching EMT courses, an arbitrator for the local Circuit Court, and currently serves on the Alpena County Older Persons Committee. He currently spends his time with Harriett and his dogs, Max and Diesel, hunting, fishing, reading, travel, and gardening, etc.

Dr. Britton relates the highlights of his career as "the multitude of patients who had faith and trust in me, the hundreds of staff who helped me, the many colleagues who believed in me, and my family who put up with me-through it all."

1st Lt Jack Hammel

1LT Jack Hammel was born into a prominent Tecumseh family on January 23, 1922. His father was Dr. Harry Hammel who moved to Tecumseh in 1916 and set up his medical practice after attending medical school at the University of Michigan. In 1938 Dr. Hammel and Mr. Ray Herrick led a drive to raise funds for Tecumseh's first hospital, where he served as Chief of Staff at the hospital for many years. Jack Hammel was raised in the family home at 108 North Union Street, which now displays a plaque from the Tecumseh Historical Society as "The Hammel House."

Jack Hammel was a natural leader and an outstanding athlete at THS. He was elected Class President both his junior and senior years. He also served on the Student Council for his freshman and sophomore years and as Student Council President as a senior. In addition, he was Captain of the Basketball Team. According to the 1939 Senior Echoes, Jack served on the Annual Staff as Business

Manager, had a role in the Senior Play, was a member of the Tennis Team. In his President's Address at Class Night on June 7, 1939, he encouraged the graduates to, "aim high and hit the mark."

Jack spent a year at Stanton Preparatory School at Cornwall, NY. He received a nomination from Congressman Earl C. Michener to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. Via an accelerated 3-year West Point classes, he completed basic flight training by graduation on June 1, 1943. At West Point, he was a member of the Varsity Rifle Team. Upon graduation he married Miss Anne Swallow of Drexel Hill, Pennsylvania.

Jack's first duty station was Yniestra, Florida near Pensacola where he served as a flight instructor until he was assigned overseas with the 14th Army Air Force. He was assigned to the 17th Fighter Squadron, known as the "Flying Hatchet", as part of the 5th Fighter Group, which was a key unit in the Chinese/American Composite Wing that fought together during the final two years of the war. His unit was located in the mountainous region of Chihkiang, China which was the 14th Air Force's most forward operating base and in close proximity to Japanese occupied territory. The last Japanese Offensive in China which began on April 10, 1945, was launched to overrun the base. With air support from all units in the 5th Fighter Group, the Chinese were able to thwart the attack and by May 15 the Japanese were in full retreat. As a result of their success during the Battle of Chihkiang, the 5th Fighter Group was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation for in part: **"In thwarting the enemy between 10 April 1945 and 15 May 1945, this small combination aerial force wrote a classic in the employment of tactical air power against air and ground forces in China."**

1LT Jack Hammel was awarded three air medals for his heroic participation in combat missions such as the Battle of Chihkiang. Sadly, after successfully logging scores of combat missions, his aircraft was lost over the mountains of Southern China during the waning days of the war on July 25, 1945. He was moved to his final resting place at The National Memorial Cemetery of the Pacific in Hawaii on January 25, 1949. 1LT Jack Hammel was posthumously awarded the Purple Heart for his exemplary service to our nation in World War II.

Jack Hammel is an outstanding representative of the men and women of "The Greatest Generation" who heroically served our nation during the dark days of World War II. He along with eight others from Tecumseh High School willingly sacrificed his own life to protect and preserve our way of life. Those eight other men include: Edward Brazee, '34; Orville Gove, '31; Nelson Hoekstra, '39; James

O'Neil '42; Gale Taylor, '43; Lester Wahl, '38; Donald white, '37; and Charles Wilson, '33.

Joseph Conklin Jr.

Joe Conklin was named Sports Editor of the Tecumseh High School student newspaper – Smoke Signals – in 1968. From then on, his interest was journalism. He worked on the student newspaper – CM Life – while at Central Michigan University. He was also a reporter for the Mt. Pleasant Daily Times News covering high school football, basketball and collegiate basketball. In 1972, with his BA from CMU, he was hired by the Traverse City Record Eagle Newspaper where he soon served as Sports Editor and then New Editor.

Joe was recognized and awarded the United Press International Award of Excellence for sports writing in 1972, 1974 and 1975. Sports pages under his direction also won several state-wide awards, such as the Michigan Associated Press First Place Award (1983) for his columns, Grand Rapids Press Robert S. Day Employee of the Year Award (1990), commendations from the Grand Rapids Press and the James H. Ellery Print Media Award (2002-2003) from the American Hockey League.

In 1975 he received press credentials to cover the visit of President Gerald Ford to the National Cherry Festival. He was invited to ride in a U.S. Marine helicopter from the airport to the Traverse City Country Club where the President played golf. His interviews included U.S. Senator Robert Griffin, collegiate and high school athletic directors and coaches as well as professional coaches and players. He had the opportunity to ride and write about the Concorde and inform his readers about the Interlochen Arts Academy.

While at the Traverse City Record Eagle, Joe was instrumental in starting a fall football supplement to the paper and the Traverse City Record-Eagle Track Meet, which is still in existence today after 50 years. He covered the Detroit Tigers spring training (1981) in Lakeland, FL, and the NFL Super Bowl (1982) at the Pontiac Silverdome.

In 1983 Joe and his family moved to Grand Rapids where he accepted a position as a sportswriter. Awards, commendations and special recognitions continued to

be given. Especially impressive was his 1999 Grand Rapids Press Special Commendation for "Sprinting to create an eight-page Sunday special section on the "99" River Bank Run, complete with the results of the race." This was done in less than 10 hours. With experience covering any type of sporting event: football, basketball, track, hockey or baseball, as well as education and special interest topics: the Concorde, President Ford and Interlochen, Joe certainly merits the recognition he received throughout his career.

Joe retired in 2007 and lives in Traverse City with his wife, Debbie, (Goldsberry) also a 1968 graduate of Tecumseh. They have two grown children and four grandchildren.

Chuck Gillies

Chuck Gillies is a 1968 THS Graduate who has claimed fame as an artistic illustrator. He attended and graduated from Ferris State University in 1972 with a BS in Advertising. He continued his education at Kendall School of Design in 1973-1974. He currently works as a freelance artist and illustrator.

Chuck has illustrated over 80 book covers and two complete Children's books. They are "The Sleeping Rose" by Angela Elwell Hunt and "With You All the Way" by Max Lucado. He has also made hundreds of paintings for trading card companies – with his acrylic paintings featured on books, prints, posters, and trading cards as they have been for more than 40 years.

Chuck is also a portrait painter whose commissions include portraits for Lee Iacocca, Mike Ilitch, Deacon Jones Foundation and many others. His work has appeared in The Society of Illustrators Annual, American Illustration Annual, and Spectrum Annual. He has also participated in many gallery shows, including three at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Museum in Grand Rapids, MI.

Paintings by Chuck illustrate a wide range of subjects for a variety of clients, including CBS Fox Video, The Upper Deck Company, Scholastic Books, Disney Hyperion, Dell Publishing, Reader's Digest, Planters Peanuts, Pepsi, The Bradford Exchange, Deacon Jones Foundation, Donruss, Day Spring, FTD, Ford Motor

Company, Chevrolet, Chrysler, Buick, Henry Ford Hospital, Cosmopolitan Magazine, Detroit Red Wings, AT&T and many others.

For 37 years he was represented by Skidmore Studio in Detroit, MI, while concurrently in New York City he was represented by Mendola LTD for 25 of those same years. When not working on illustration projects or fine art paintings, Chuck is using his talents teaching as an adjunct faculty member in the Illustration Department at College for Creative Studies in Detroit, where he has been since 1984.

Some of Chuck's works can be viewed at www.ChuckGillies.com, *Chuck Gillies on Behance*.

Henry Mensing

Henry has claimed Tecumseh as his home except for the 10 years he spent in college and the subsequent early years of his career. His father was the first mayor of Tecumseh when its status changed from village to city.

A THS 1967 graduate, Henry was an outstanding three-sport athlete, basketball (9th), football (9th – 12th) and baseball (9th – 12th). Henry was Tri-Captain of Varsity football team, Most Valuable Lineman, First team All-Huron Conference, First team All-Lenawee County and Honorable Mention All-State during his senior year.

Henry received the Gary Marsh Memorial Award, which is chosen by the coaches and given annually to a graduating senior (boy) in recognition of his leadership, loyalty and sportsmanship, in addition to athletic ability. He participated in Varsity Club, Student Council and attended Boys State. THS coach-teachers Vic Lawson and Tom Fagan inspired Henry's career path as well as how he would live his life: with hard work, commitment to team, family and community, in the belief that if you do work that you love, all the rest will fall into place.

Henry attended Eastern Michigan University earning his bachelor's degree in 1971. He then taught physical education for K-8 grades and coached high school baseball and basketball in Bangor, MI.

Henry returned to Lenawee County the following year to teach and coach in Onsted. During his eighteen years at Onsted, Henry coached football, baseball, basketball. While at Onsted, Henry was honored several times as Coach of the Year, including for football, baseball and softball. He also served the school as Athletic Director.

In 1990, he worked at Adrian College as an administrator and coach over the next two decades. His strong influence is exemplified by the five teams – four football and one baseball – he coached that earned Hall of Fame status; in 1983 and 1988, his football teams made it to the national championship playoffs. Henry also earned the NCAA Louisville Slugger Award in 1993 for his work with the baseball team. In 1993, the baseball team he coached won the league (MIAA) championship for the first time in 100 years!

Henry then became Athletic Director at Adrian College, holding that post until 2006 when he transitioned to Development Director for Athletics. When making this move, in recognition of Henry's huge contributions to Adrian College athletics, the College bestowed upon Henry the perpetual title of Athletic Director Emeritus. In 2009 Henry formally retired from teaching and coaching. When asked about what he loved most about his 40-year career, he says that it was having the opportunity to make a positive impact on the lives of his students and those he coached. All told, he touched the lives of more than 10,000 young people, serving as a mentor and role model for them and helping them to discern life paths that would bring them the same kind of joy and satisfaction he has achieved in his life.

For more than 25 years, Henry has served on the TPS Schools Foundation, holding offices at one or more times during his tenure. He currently serves as the Chairman of the Scholarship Committee, which, in 2019 alone, awarded scholarships to 34 THS graduating seniors. The scholarships, in large part, come from bequests from former Tecumseh Schools teachers, each one of whom played a role in Henry's education as well as that of hundreds of other students. The Mensing Family Scholarship is one of the 34 awarded.