

J O Y F U L  
**Echoes**

*Welcome!*

*Joyful Echoes* is an Alumni Newsletter published by the Onondaga Central School Education Foundation for the purpose of keeping alumni and friends of OCS engaged with the Onondaga community and informed of current activities happening at OCS.

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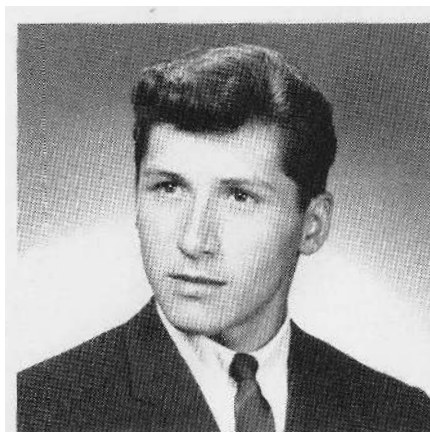
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**ALUMNI SPOTLIGHT:**  
**MIKE TARBELL**

C L A S S O F 1 9 6 6

*by Jim Molloy*

Mike Tarbell—most of his OCS classmates and his friends knew him as “Mitch”—met with *Joyful Echoes* on a sweltering day in July. Mike, who was a four-sport athlete for the Tigers, still looks trim and fit. He spoke about his current happy and fulfilling life, sharing stories with a relaxed demeanor and a quick smile. Mike acknowledged, however, that he had needed healing—both psychological and spiritual—after three tours in Vietnam and some traumatic experiences here at home that afflicted him with PTSD (post-traumatic stress disorder).



Albert Tarbell  
 "Mitch"  
 "Brave men are brave from the very first."

Mike spoke to *Joyful Echoes* when he was in town for a doctor’s appointment at the Syracuse VA Hospital. His daughter Amanda, who sat in for the interview, explained that her dad was still dealing with aftereffects from compression blasts, in particular, a Chi-com claymore mine that took the life of a new soldier. (Mike mentioned ruefully that he had known him for only “about 20 minutes.”)

When I asked whether the blasts damaged his hearing, Amanda explained that they can damage any soft tissue, in Mike’s case, his eyes. Mike said that an eye doctor told him, “Your eyes look like... *Continued on page 4*

# HAPPENING NOW

## 50+ YEAR REUNION

# Reunion ANNOUNCEMENT

The annual 50+ OCS reunion was held on May 24, 2024. 106 alums attended at The View Restaurant in the hills south of our Alma Mater. Plans will be made soon for our 2025 Reunion to be held on Friday, May 23, 2025. We look forward to introducing the Class of '75. Please save the date. Details will be forthcoming in Spring edition of *Joyful Echoes*. Due to the large turnout in 2024, we expect an even bigger turnout in 2025.

Questions can be directed to **Chuck Molloy, Class of '62:**  
**PO Box 87, Morrisville, NY 13408**  
**Phone: (315) 427-8818 • Email: [cmolloy@twcny.rr.com](mailto:cmolloy@twcny.rr.com)**

# CLASS OF 1975 Reunion

The Class of 1975 is planning our 50th reunion for the weekend of July 25 and 26. We are very excited but have quite a few people we can't get a hold of. Contact **Sue Bailey McHale** at [suebmchale@gmail.com](mailto:suebmchale@gmail.com) or **(315) 416-6211** (call or text) if you see your name or if someone knows how we can get in touch with them. Thank you!

- |                   |                 |                 |
|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| George Austin     | Bill Lazore     | Donald Tracy    |
| Michael Clark     | Daniel McKee    | Suzanne Vanetti |
| Tom Cook          | Andrew Moore    | Kathy Venton    |
| Carrie Coyne      | Judy Patsos     | Don Watkins     |
| Mike Daniels      | Marty Rienhardt | Patty Woodard   |
| David Douglas     | Jalica Ruckman  | Chris Zukowski  |
| Victoria Earnshaw | Maya Ruckman    | Rennie Xedis    |
| Mary Ellen Etz    | Bob Russell     | Missy French    |
| Julie Fletcher    | Bill Russell    |                 |
| Doug Helfer       | Kirk Stevens    |                 |

## Forever IN OUR MEMORIES

**Duane K. Wadsworth Sr.**

Class of 1955  
*October 3, 2024*

**Ronald C. Schultz**

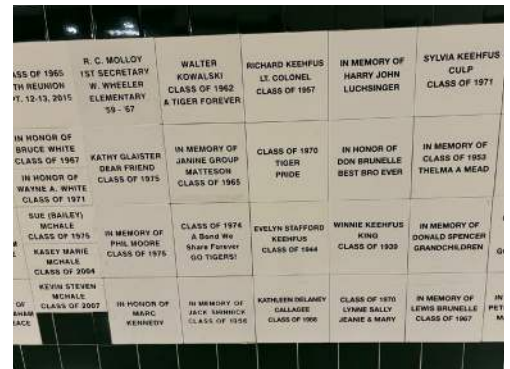
Class of 1960  
*October 16, 2024*



# O • C • S • E • F UPDATE

The OCSEF fundraising effort "Tile-by-Tile" program continues. 8x8 Tiles in the OCS Jr/ Sr High School are still available for you to honor and remember members of the OCS community. Contact **Rick Brunelle** for information at [rbrunelle2@twcny.rr.com](mailto:rbrunelle2@twcny.rr.com).

**VISIT THE OCSEF WEBSITE:**  
[OCSEDFUNDATION.COM](http://OCSEDFUNDATION.COM)



# IN LOVING MEMORY HERR HANEY

by John (Hans-Werner) Miller, Class of '85



Another legendary teacher has passed through the veil. A beloved German teacher, Herr Haney, has passed at 86. He was an enthusiastic linguist for his entire career, teaching German at our dear old alma mater. Herr began his career at Onondaga in 1967, moving into room 215, which is still the German room. Inspiring many to pursue language and opening countless students to the German culture, Herr was a classic. Spending countless hours each year preparing for and running the annual German Fest at school, he was an organizational wizard. The Schuplattler dancing, cake walk and games were always looked forward to. Each group of new freshmen were given German names and after some time, he often would only be able to remember your given German name.

An environmentalist before it was a thing, Herr brought his lunch to school every day in a brown paper bag and reused it until he couldn't.

Toward the end of his career, Herr started taking students to Germany, starting in 1983. He afforded an opportunity to students who didn't always have the means to go on such a trip. This was done through countless fundraising activities, from selling magazines and discount coupon books to the yearly Advent Calendars. Some students on those trips had never been out of the state! Those were different times, as he encouraged his students to delve fully into the culture by "sampling" beer and wine. Some classic stories resulted as you can imagine.

Herr completed his career at Onondaga at the close of the 1993 school year. He stayed active in the community, running golf leagues at local courses.

When I would run into him occasionally around town, he would always address me with my German name and we would speak some German. He instilled in me a life-long love of the German language and culture. I've been fortunate enough to have visited twice since high school. On both of these trips I could feel his presence and gained more appreciation for his enthusiasm for the language.

**DANKE SCHÖN HERR!**





*Continued from page 1*

spaghetti,” though Mike maintained he can read and see well enough.

Mike’s post-OCS story begins in the summer of 1966 at the original OCC campus in downtown Syracuse. He recalls taking an English class there taught by an OCS teacher, Dave Littlefield, who was moonlighting at OCC. Mike went to class one evening and was the only male student in attendance—all his other friends had enlisted. The next day he went to the Chimes Building in Syracuse and enlisted as Airborne Unassigned.

Mike had not consulted his parents before enlisting. Both his mother and father, he says, were thoughtful but accepting. Mike’s father, Albert, was a paratrooper in the 82nd Airborne Division and a decorated hero in World War II who fought in North Africa and at the Anzio Beachhead in Italy. He also jumped into Holland in Operation Market Garden, the subject of the film *A Bridge Too Far*, based on the book by Cornelius Ryan. Twenty-nine canvas boats went across the Waal River, but because of heavy 40mm, tank, and artillery fire, only 13 boats made it. (“That’s why his lucky number was always 13,” Mike observed.) A survivor of the Battle of the Bulge, Albert went on to take part in freeing Jewish POW’s at the Wobbelin Concentration Camp. Albert would go on to Berlin and meet the Russians at the Elbe River. Amanda proudly added that Nijmegen, Holland, has an “Albert Tarbell Strasse”—a street that bears her grandfather’s name.

Mike followed his father’s path and finished his own training as a paratrooper at Fort Benning. Albert was there when Mike earned his “Silver Wings,” pinning Mike’s wings on during the ceremony. “At that moment,” Mike reflected, “you’re invincible.” Mike said he felt proud that the commandant of the Jump School allowed that to happen.

Though three tours of duty in Vietnam certainly contributed to Mike’s PTSD, a therapist helped Mike connect some of his delayed trauma to service right here in the U.S. During the Detroit riots of 1967, President Johnson sent the 82nd Airborne troops to Detroit. Mike was part of

a “ready-alert” force, one that was prepared to deploy in 30 minutes. He and fellow paratroopers would often be ordered to board a plane, and only when they were in the air would they be told whether it was a drill or the real thing. On this mission, Mike was told they “were going in,” only the destination was an American city. When they landed, he and fellow soldiers boarded a convoy of Greyhound buses, and as they rode to Detroit, Mike saw “a glow on the horizon”: Detroit burning. He further recalls dangerous patrols in the city, getting shot at by snipers, and taking cover in filthy conditions in rubble. “You slam those things down and try to forget,” Mike reflected, “but they come back at you at night.”

A little more than a year after he graduated from OCS, Mike found himself in Vietnam, not just for one tour, as soldiers typically served at that time, but for two consecutive tours of duty from 1967 to August of 1969 uninterrupted by R and R. (For civilians, that’s “rest and recreation”; for soldiers, “rest and recuperation.”) Service in Vietnam consisted, according to Mike, of “traumatic moments with lots of dull stuff in between.” Mike was the 1st Sgt. in the 10th Pathfinder Detachment. “Our motto was ‘first in, last out,’” Mike said. Among his duties were setting up landing zones for infantry teams and rescuing helicopter crews that had crashed or were shot down. Devoted to his duties and his fellow Pathfinders, Mike finally had to be ordered out in 1969: “They sent me home.”

Mike requested an assignment back in Vietnam, but the war and the accumulation of horrors that he had seen were already taking a toll on him. “I knew I was having problems,” he now admits. He was back “in country” for a third tour (1971-72) during the “Vietnamization” of the country, a policy of the Nixon administration as it attempted to end American involvement in the war. He talks warmly and fondly about his service on the Cambodian frontier soldiering with the Montagnard people. The Montagnards—from the French for “mountain people”—were close allies of the U. S., and Mike’s being an Akwesane Mohawk prompted a special friendship with them—they were a minority. “They looked like my cousins,” Mike said, “but they were pint-sized.” Serving with



the Montagnards “was the most serene and nurturing time of my life in the middle of a war. They made me one of them,” Mike recalls, “They were protective of me. They wouldn’t let me go out on the point. When I was with them, I felt very secure.”

Mike was discharged in October of ’72, but memories of the war continued to plague him. His father, an iron worker, was still working “high steel” and helped Mike get work as an apprentice with Local 60. Mike muted his recollection of an occasion when he was tempted to jump. “My father caught me walking off into history,” is how Mike describes it, and Albert told his son he’d have to get down for a while. “I never got back up,” Mike added.

Mike recalls long periods of time when he was reluctant to sleep. “You wake up and the war is there. Then you realize it was just a long night.” Sometimes the help that is offered doesn’t work or is misapplied. “They load you up with medication,” Mike said.

At the age of 39, Mike experienced classic heart attack symptoms and sought care. Doctors revealed that Mike was indeed in the middle of an MI—and further told him that it wasn’t his first. “They told me that the bottom third of my heart was already damaged from a previous heart attack and wasn’t functioning properly.”

Mike's Uncle Leon (Tadodaho—Head Chief of the Haudenosaunee and his spiritual leader) told Mike, "You're still running in the woods. You're not home yet," but it would be a few years later when Mike was called to Onondaga for a wellness gathering. The Mohawk Bear Clan chief performed the first "Cleansing Act" in 1200 years on Mike and his father. They "combed the snakes" from his hair and wrapped a blanket around him, symbolizing the community wrapping its arms around him. "The ceremony," Mike adds, "usually takes place at the 'edge of the woods' where you're between the two worlds and can talk directly to 'the Holder of the Heavens' to ask him to forgive you for what you had to do." Mike added, "You wish to return to the woman's world as what you were before you left it, a good partner in life." The ceremony provided Mike true healing and peace of mind. His participation also "opened the door for others" to similarly acquire help, especially when conventional treatments failed.

The remainder of Mike's story is much brighter. He completed his formal education, first earning a degree at OCC, then a BA in English and Textual Studies and a BA in World Histories at S.U. He went on to complete additional graduate work at Cornell. For more than 30 years, he's taught Native American Studies at SUNY Cobleskill.

Since 1993, Mike has been the cultural interpreter at the Iroquois Museum in Howe's Cave, New York, and its assistant director. He adds that he has used the Iroquois Museum as a "backdrop to welcome educators and diplomats from all over the world." In the Iroquois world, the Longhouse {at the Iroquois Museum} is the woman's house. "Every day I go to work, I'm going home to my mother's house. So the Iroquois Museum has become my healing place." He mentions that he used the longhouse when he was a volunteer with the Wounded Warrior Project Odyssey, helping veterans who have returned from the Middle East to begin their healing.

The caption below Mike's OCS yearbook picture from 1966 provides a fitting summary of his service to his country and to his people: "Brave men are brave from the very first."

# MIKE TARBELL, Q. & A.

by Sharon Brooks, for Joyful Echoes

**Joyful Echoes:** *Your old friends from OCS will remember you as "Mitch." Can you explain the "Mitch" to "Mike" evolution?*

**Mike:** *My family called me "Mike" at home. I was named after my mother's oldest brother whose middle name was "Michael." The name "Mitch" came from the sportswriters, who took that from my middle name and shortened it.*

**Joyful Echoes:** *A Post-Standard article from May 21, 1965, reported that you threw a no-hitter against Jordan-Elbridge, striking out fifteen—and you would have had a perfect game except for one walk. Do you have any other memories from playing baseball for OCS?*

**Mike:** *If I remember one save correctly, I was playing shortstop in the 7th inning, when Chuck Walters got tired and loaded the bases. In a meeting on the mound, Wally Habel [the OCS coach] looked at me and asked whether I could finish the game. I believe I struck the next three batters out.*

**Joyful Echoes:** *Do you have any memories of OCS teachers or coaches?*

**Mike:** *Habel, Fletcher, Cook, Robinson—I enjoyed all my teachers, and it was good when I returned for a visit, but I felt lonely as I walked down those halls. My classmates weren't there anymore; they had moved on with their lives.*

**Joyful Echoes:** *Who were the Syracuse Ramblers?*

**Mike:** *They were a semi-pro baseball team in the Valley managed and coached by Danny Russo. Some of the players had professional experience . . . some played college ball but were now professional businesspeople who wanted to continue playing at that higher level. I was invited to come and play and*

*learn from these ball players. I had a letter from them that [exempted] me from being a professional ball player so I could continue to play high school baseball. That was the summer of '65.*

**Joyful Echoes:** *Did you play any baseball after you retired from the Army?*

**Mike:** *I wanted to try out with the [Syracuse] Chiefs, but I wasn't ready physically. I was running and training on my own, but injuries from a couple of hard chopper landings in Vietnam limited my ability to be a good pitcher. I did play for a while in the Champlain Valley League.*

**Joyful Echoes:** *What music did you listen to during the time you served in Vietnam?*

**Mike:** *I mostly listened to country music. My mother sang country music with the Ozark Mountain Boys, and she was "Little Sister" with that group. In Vietnam, Hanoi Hannah played some of the best music.*

**Joyful Echoes:** *Can you tell us a little about your family today?*

**Mike:** *I met my partner in life, "Susan-aka Sam," at Fort Bragg, NC. We've been married 53 years this October. We have two children, five grandchildren, and four great-grandchildren. Our daughter Amanda is an educator in native medicines and a basket maker. Our son Michael is the Warehouse Distribution Manager for the Muckleshoot Indian Casinos in Washington State.*

**Joyful Echoes:** *Where do you live today?*

**Mike:** *Today I live in a small village called Richmondville, at the foot of the Catskills. I have an old 1860's farmhouse with carriage barn that I'm trying to refurbish. It's quiet most of the time and the air is clean and fresh.*

# WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

## MR. BILL COOK

Mr. William Cook was hired to teach history at OCS in 1957 and didn't retire until 1991. Reminded that he had taught OCS students in five different decades, he smiled and said, "I never looked at it that way." During his career at OCS, four different classes—1973, 1982, 1986, and 1990—dedicated the yearbook to him, demonstrating that Mr. Cook's influence was extraordinary. The Class of '82 wrote, "His wry sense of humor and his unfailing dedication in the classroom have endeared this person to all who know him."

*Joyful Echoes* caught up with the long-time social studies teacher a couple weeks after he arrived back home following a rehab stint at a local nursing facility. "Covid kicked the living daylights out of me," Bill observed. "I use a wheelchair now when I go out, and around the house I use the walker." Still, with some help from a health care aide two days a week, Bill otherwise lives independently at his home in Marcellus.

Bill grew up in Buffalo, NY, and graduated from LaFayette High School there. His father had been a public relations specialist in the Army who had served in India and in Sichuan Province in China. Back home in Buffalo,

**"HIS WRY SENSE OF HUMOR AND HIS UNFAILING DEDICATION IN THE CLASSROOM HAVE ENDEARED THIS PERSON TO ALL WHO KNOW HIM."**

Bill's father worked in the same field for the Community Chest. In a bit of interesting OCS trivia, Bill mentioned that his father and long-

time OCS English teacher Max Metcalf had both worked as announcers at the same Buffalo radio station, though not at the same time.

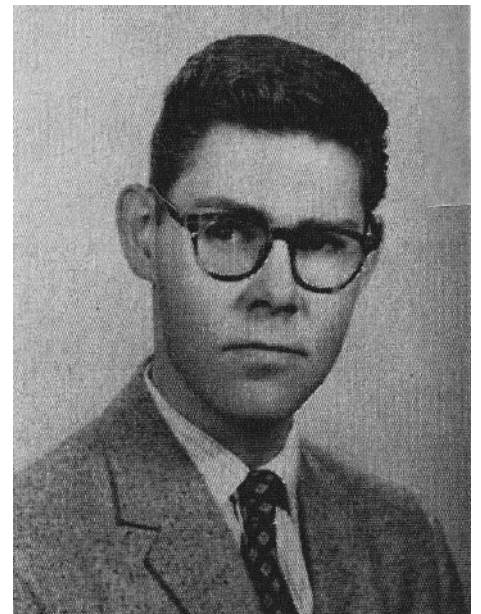
Bill enrolled at Syracuse University, originally aspiring to be a political cartoonist. He concluded, however, that being a free-lance artist would not provide a predictable income, so in his sophomore year at S. U. he decided to become a teacher and changed his major to education.

Student teaching at a challenging Syracuse City District middle school taught Bill that it was important to "get control of the class first, then relax and try to have more fun later." He benefited from the example of a veteran teacher who controlled the class without having to raise her voice constantly but just had quiet command.

The now legendary Walter Wheeler, then building and district principal, interviewed Bill for the job at OCS. "He scared the living daylights out of me," Bill remembered. "He terrified me."

A series of events his first few years on the job left Bill feeling that gaining tenure might be

problematic. "I had a study hall out in the bus garage. I was addicted to nicotine back then, and after I got the room settled, I'd light up.



Wheeler caught me still exhaling smoke." Bill recounted that Wheeler seemed taken aback when Bill got his necktie caught in a desk drawer during an observation of his class. He also thought Wheeler was probably not amused when Bill hollered "Bonsai!" when the boss was on the phone with "some bigwig in Albany."

In his early years at OCS, Bill moonlighted as a cartoonist and editorial writer for the local newspaper in Chittenango. When Bill wrote an essay critical of the local school board, somebody contacted Wheeler to see whether he could rein in the young teacher. Bill observed, however, Wheeler kind of enjoyed him and recommended that the "cut-up" be granted tenure.

Bill's experience in a tougher school helped him at OCS. "I had control of the kids. And I loved the



kids.” His former students probably remember some of his favorite methods. “I liked to say, ‘Before we get started, tell me one thing you remember from yesterday.’” He also liked to make connections between historical events and current events, often closing a lesson with the question, “What’s new in the news?”

Bill enjoyed many of the famous OCS teachers of the past, specifically mentioning Max Metcalf, Dennis Dole, Roland Christy, Dave Littlefield, and Earl Fletcher. He added, “Bill Gilbert was the best principal I ever worked for.”

In the 60’s, Bill moonlighted at the original OCC campus in downtown Syracuse. “I taught sociology. That was really my favorite subject to teach, even more than history.”

Bill’s former students will recall his thick glasses. “I had infantile glaucoma, and I’m basically blind in my right eye. I can see movement but that’s about it.” Prompted to remember any pranks, Bill recalls telling one class that he had a glass eye. “Remember those big marbles they called ‘shooters’? I rolled one down through the class and told the students I’d lost my eye,” Bill recalled, clearly enjoying the memory.

He wanted students to learn history, but he also wanted to have fun doing that. “In the 70’s, we decided that on Fridays we needed something to improve morale, so I started the

Friday Morning Downstairs Lavatory Chorale. The acoustics in a lavatory are excellent, and we would pack fifteen or twenty boys into the downstairs lavatory to sing.” One song inspired by Russian history included the lyrics, “No Lenin, no Trotsky, no foreign-diplomatski, will ever stop our plotzki, to overthrow the czar . . .”

Bill’s extra-curricular work with students extended beyond fun activities. When OCS had a student court in the 80’s, Bill was the advisor. “We adjudicated minor offenses, often having real testimony from both the student and the teacher.” He added, “We competed with other schools.”

During the years he taught at OCS, Bill sang with the Tom Dooley Choraliers, a group inspired by the Kingston Trio Song “Tom Dooley.” The group sang at the Green Gate in Camillus and specialized in Irish songs. “I love those songs. They always tell a story.” Bill recalled that his director was Michael Pinkasewicz, “not a name one would necessarily associate with Irish music,” Bill observed with a smile. Bill himself played guitar and performed at OCS talent shows.

After retirement, Bill fulfilled his objective to write a novel about an introspective person who examines his life with a sense of humor. Though the completed novel is unpublished, he has written poetry that has been accepted and printed in various literary magazines.



During the interview, Bill’s oldest son, Andy, an artist living in California, called to check on him. A second son, George, who works for Apple and lives in Trumansburg, and his youngest son, Ben, also keep track of him. Ben owns Faegan’s pub near the SU campus.

Bill doesn’t use email, but friends and former students who would like to reach out to him and share a memory or good wish may address notes to 4646 Cranapple Dr, Marcellus 13108.

## BILL COOK: SOME PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

by Jim Molloy Sr.

Mr. Bill Cook taught me world history in the 1965-66 school year. When I called him to arrange an interview, I asked whether he remembered me. He not only said yes, but inquired about my sister and brothers, all OCS alumni—and he correctly remembered their first names. I knew his sense of humor was still intact when he observed that subsequent

to getting covid, he had acquired a “Tim Conway walk.”

Even though I taught for 31 years myself (North Syracuse CSD), I addressed him as “Mr. Cook.” After all, he had been my teacher. I still said “Mr. Cook” even after he gave me permission to call him “Bill.”

In class, “Bill” was always prepared and interesting—and often funny. He affected and improved the lives of literally thousands of students.

*Joyful Echoes* thanks Kelly Conway, OCS library aide, who researched school archives and yearbooks and provided numerous photographs.

# REQUEST FOR SUBMISSIONS & INFO

This newsletter is a product resulting from submissions made by our alumni. Please send us your stories and news! Do you have a favorite memory? An interesting story idea? Or an alumni announcement - wedding, birth, obituary - you would like to share?

For submissions of news, ideas and/or stories, please contact us at [ocsalum34@gmail.com](mailto:ocsalum34@gmail.com) or send to:

**OCSEF Alumni Coordinator**  
**3479 Cherry Valley Turnpike**  
**Syracuse, NY 13215**

The OCSEF has established an Alumni Database. It contains contact information of OCS alumni, community members and current and former staff members. If you know of someone who would like to receive future issues of Joyful Echoes and other alumni-related

communications, please forward the Alumni Data Form to him or her. You can find it on the OCSEF Web Page: [ocseducationfoundation.com](http://ocseducationfoundation.com)

O N O N D A G A

JOYFUL  
*Echoes*