

EAST ANDOVER ELEMENTARY HOLDS ITS FIRST REUNION

By Frank Richards
EAES '60

The East Andover Elementary School (EAES) reunion was held on August 27 at the Andover Fish and Game Club. The event was scheduled from 2 to 4 PM. However, people began



to arrive before 1 PM. It didn't break up until a little after 5 PM.

It was well-attended and every bit as nostalgic as anticipated. We were the sixth grade in 1960. We were the last class to enter Andover High School in 1962.

There weren't a lot of people moving in and out of town back then. We got to be familiar with each other. We were together from fourth grade until ninth, when Andover High School closed down.

At about 3 PM, we hiked up to the old school building. Wyman Ordway had obtained the key, so we were able to go inside and reminisce.

Fifty years later, I got to stand where my desk had been in sixth grade. It was just incredible. In one single moment, I experienced both the distance of my life and nostalgia on steroids.

There were about 900 people living in Andover when we grew up during the '50s and early '60s. Today, it's about 2,300. Yet somehow, everything seems much the same.

Even though I've had half a century to observe, I have no explanation for why Andover has always been different. It was different in the 1950s. It is different today.

Many small towns are cohesive and functional. Yet, how many have a newspaper? How many put on a Fourth of July celebration? That's just the tip of the iceberg.

In the 1990s, I read a quote in the *Beacon* from a girl in elementary school. She said something to the effect of, "We are fortunate to live in Andover where people care about each other." Those are close to the exact words.

I remember thinking, "So, that's still true." It was gratifying to realize that even though the population had more than doubled, Andover was still Andover.

An amazing number of people know each other and care, even if they may not be intimate, personal friends. It makes a big difference in how the town operates.

That was true when I was growing up, as well as today. However, it was



The nucleus of the Andover Little League, circa 1960: Steve Smith First Base, Steve Wollmer Pitcher, Jim Alley Shortstop, Bobby Currier, Catcher. Bobby's dad Lyman was the coach. Photo: Nancy Burney

another historical period. Rural New Hampshire was still making a transition away from the harsh poverty of The Great Depression.

A couple of kids in our elementary school didn't even have electricity at their houses. TV was just coming in. There were only a few channels, all in black and white.

Big, mainframe computers were the subject of science fiction. None of us could have imagined there would eventually be personal computers in



Front row Jim Alley, Beverly (Miller) Seely, Steve Wollmer, Betty (Shampney) Adams, Wyman Ordway, Susan Huntoon, Carlene Longfellow, Cynthia (Phelps) Alley. Second row Frank Richards, Andy Hatt, Bob Carpenter, Beryl (Gove) Sanborn, Wanda (Prescott) Smith, Nancy (Burney) Rondeau, Donna (Fortune) French, Steve Smith, Joan Downes. Third row Lance Ford, Loring Ford, Larry Ford, George Barton, Jerry Hersey, Bobby Currier.

our homes and they would enable us to reconnect when we were in our early '60s.

About a year ago, Cynthia (Phelps) Alley "friended" me on Facebook. Within a month, Nancy (Burney) Rondeau, Lillian (Jurta) Blalock, Steve Wollmer, Andy Hatt, Susan Huntoon, and I were all Facebook friends.

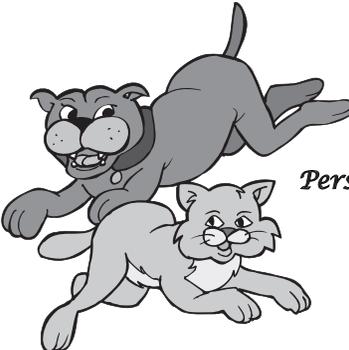
Everyone seemed to enjoy the contact. I think it was Steve Wollmer who suggested a reunion. Then, Steve Smith, Cynthia, and I met and decided to organize.

Andy Hatt e-mailed a sixth grade photo that he'd kept all these years. There

were 28 little faces. I still knew every name, plus three more people who'd likely skipped school that day. That makes 31. Six were deceased. It was chilling to count, especially when I realized three of them had died from cancer.

By subtraction, that makes 25. I was able to track down addresses for 23. I mailed those invitations in mid-July. The *Beacon* ran announcements for us in July and August. We tried to make it clear that this was open to anyone who'd gone to school there at about that time.

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