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BMSHS
Briarcliff Manor-Scarborough
Historical Society

Website
www.briarcliffhistory.org

Fall Newsletter 2014

2014 Late Fall Newsletter

Dear Members and Friends,

Alex Vastola, our intrepid Trustee, found the granddaughter of Chauncey Depew Steele, Sr., who was the manager of the Briarcliff Lodge during its heyday in the 1920's. She is Sandi Schneider and lives in Delaware. Alex learned that she had fabulous archives on the Lodge. He reached out to her and invited her to visit. She came to Briarcliff November 18th with several shopping bags full of the best photographs and clippings. We are on a mission to scan it all (her family wants to keep the original documents). We have been given an exceedingly valuable gift. Thank you Alex for making the arrangements. We hope you'll all enjoy Tom Vincent's four-page article about the Whitson's in this issue.

"The New Year is just around the corner! Look for 2015 membership renewal information. We thank you for your past generosity. BMSHS - Caretakers of Our Heritage."

Karen and Jan, Co-Presidents

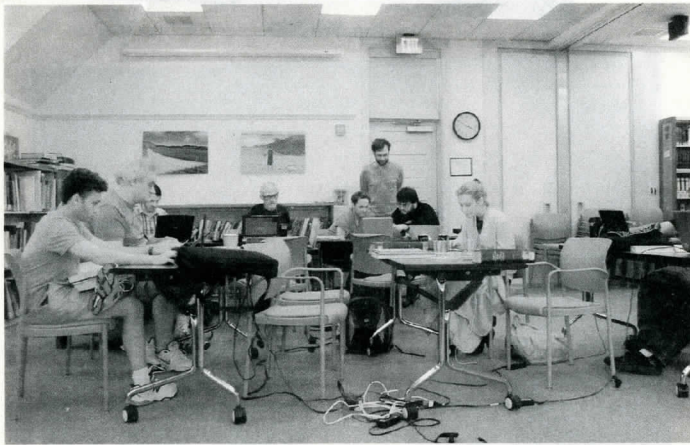


Photo BMSHS Collection

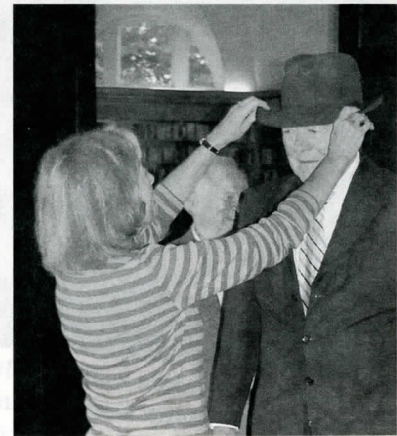
Wikipediathon Held at Briarcliff Library

Sunday, August 24 BMSHS sponsored a Wikipediathon at the suggestion of Michael Feist. The event drew together a group of exceptional people motivated by a deep search for knowledge and facts. We simply provided the site and food. There was an interesting synergy with a group of them together. By all means check out the Wikipedia article on Briarcliff Manor on the internet. Go to www.wikipedia.org and search Briarcliff Manor. Mike Feist drilled down into our village's history and we supplied him with pictures to illustrate his work. It was commended by Wikipedia as being of "superior" quality.

Beechwood Documentary Shoot

Saturday, September 22 filming took place

at Beechwood for the documentary *Money Man*. Frank A. Vanderlip, President of First National City Bank and one of the founders of the Federal Reserve, "came to life" in the form of Trustee George Behling, who cut a distinguished figure as he ambled across the beautiful Frederick Law Olmstead-designed Great Lawn. All that was missing was Vanderlip's butler, who is supposed to have met him each evening on his return from New York City with his favorite cocktail. Vicki Mack of Palos Verdes, executive director of the up-coming documentary, was the costume designer.



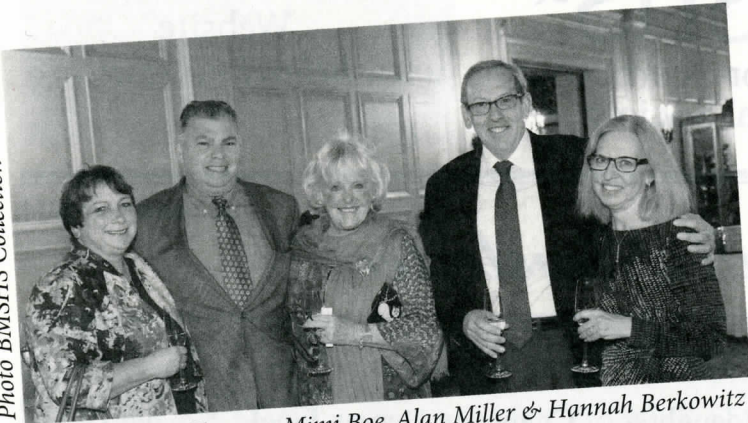
Vicki Mack & George Behling

Photo BMSHS Collection

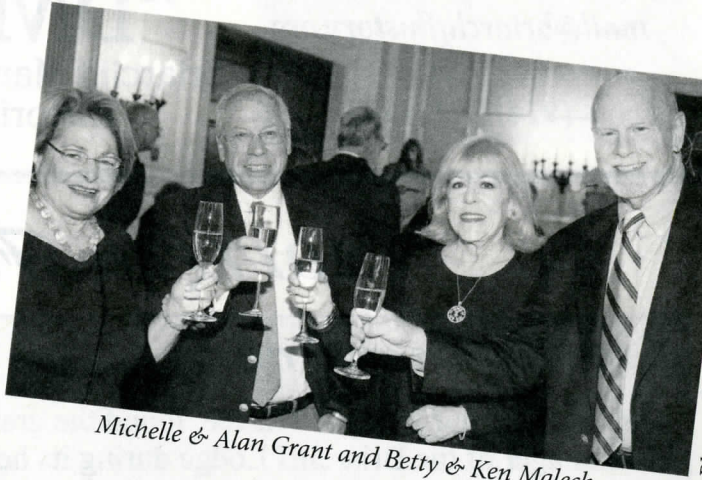
Money Man is scheduled to be premiered in Palos Verdes in mid-January 2015. Stay tuned for news about the New York premier of this TV documentary.

2014 Fall Harvest Dinner at Sleepy Hollow Country Club

Photo BMSHS Collection



Mattie & Steve Varvaro, Mimi Boe, Alan Miller & Hannah Berkowitz



Michelle & Alan Grant and Betty & Ken Malech

Photo BMSHS Collection



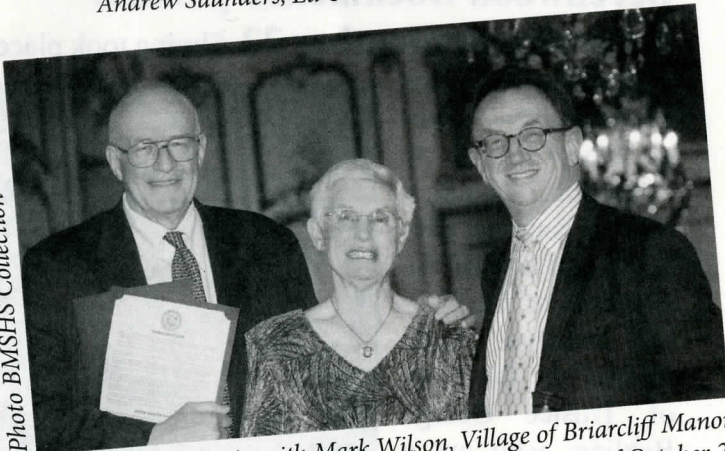
Andrew Saunders, Ed & Elaine Nolan and Carl Boe



Photo BMSHS Collection

Jan Wagner

Photo BMSHS Collection



Keith & Joan Austin with Mark Wilson, Village of Briarcliff Manor Trustee, with Mayor Vescio's Citation and Declaration of October 20 as "Joan Austin Day" and October 21 as "Keith Austin Day."



Photo BMSHS Collection

Keith & Joan Austin with Sandy Galef, N.Y. State Assembly woman, with New York Citation

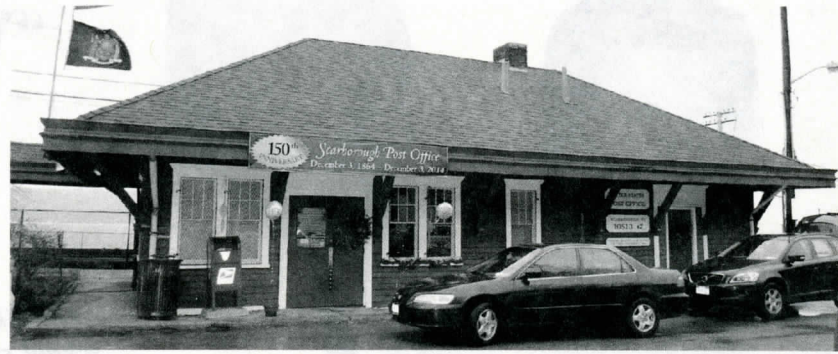
Sunday, October 19 a large, lively group of BMSHS members and friends gathered at Sleepy Hollow Country Club to honor Keith and Joan Austin at the 2014 Fall Harvest Dinner. Their contributions to the strength of the Village of Briarcliff Manor, together and individually, have been many. We have been very fortunate to have them as friends, as neighbors and as *examples*.

Everyone had a wonderful time. And we have two new holidays to look forward to. They were proclaimed by Mark Wilson, on behalf of Mayor Bill Vescio. Please make a note: October 20 henceforth is Joan Austin Day and October 21 is Keith Austin Day.

As Stanley Goldstein, who introduced the Austins at the dinner, said to Karen several days after the party, "It was a great event and everyone walked out prouder being a citizen of Briarcliff Manor after honoring such a couple as Joan and Keith"

150th Anniversary of the Scarborough PO

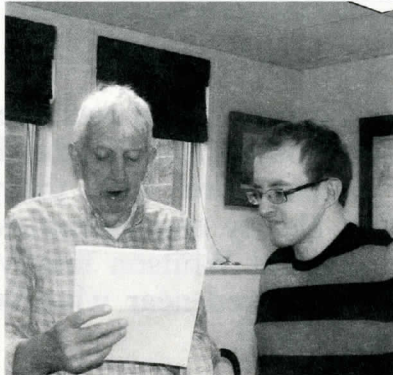
December 3, 1864 was the date that the Scarborough Post Office opened for business – 150 years ago. The anniversary is brought to everyone’s attention by a large banner over the newly painted bright, red door. Four years ago a group of Scarborough residents stepped forward to form Save Scarborough with the purpose of encouraging residents and the Village to preserve and care for this historic structure. On-going plans for restoration and beautification continue.



Scarborough Post Office, 10510.

Photo BMSHS Collection

Visit from Pete Stafford *Briarcliff Police Badge #1*



Pete Stafford and Alex Vastola

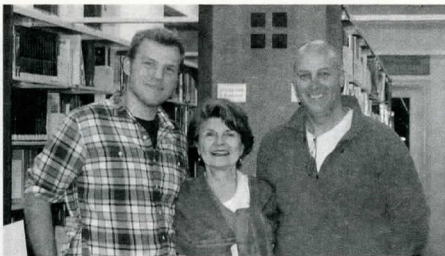
October 22 Pete Stafford visited the Center. And did he ever have stories to tell! Pete was a policeman in Briarcliff Manor most of his life.

the oft-told story is true. Chief Artie Johnson was very tough on speeders,” as is commonly mentioned.

Officially alcohol was not allowed until Theodore Law gave David Taddeo permission to open a liquor store in 1946 in Whitson’s Garage location (now Biratella’s). However, there allegedly had been a “bar,” on North State Road for some time before that -- where the senior citizen apartments are now. “Briarcliff was a good town!” Pete said, and we had a wonderful time with Pete.

Here are just a few of his quips: There were two breaks from Sing Sing while he was on the force, “but they didn’t amount to much.” “Yes,

“The Mighty Hudson” – Scott Craven



Picture of Jake Craven (son), Karen Smith and Scott Craven.

October 21 One of our favorite speakers, Hudson Valley historian, Scott Craven, gave another excellent presentation. His theme was the Hudson (or North River) and how it has served as a transportation corridor. The

North River Steamboat (or Clermont) was built in 1807 and operated between New York City and Albany. It was the first vessel to demonstrate the viability of using steam propulsion. When the Erie Canal opened in 1817 between Buffalo and Albany, it connected the Hudson and Lake Erie and helped make New York City to become the chief port on the Eastern Seaboard. It was obviously faster than carts pulled by draft animals, and cut transport costs by about 95%. Today, you can see tankers carrying Bakken Crude. And no one makes all this more interesting than Scott.

Capt. Kevin T. Smalley, USMC Received High Honor

March 14, 2014 at the Marine Corps Air Squadron facility at Cherry Point, N.C., the son of Stephen & Phyllis Smalley, Captain Kevin T. Smalley, USMC, received the Navy and Marine Achievement Medal with Combat “V.” He received this medal for his actions during the insurgent attack on Camp Bastion Airfield on September 14, 2012 in support of Operation Enduring Freedom, Afghanistan. Capt. Smalley is a graduate of Ossining High School and is a graduate of the United States Naval Academy, Class of 2001. Capt. Smalley was the speaker at Briarcliff Manor Memorial Day services in 2006.

The Briarcliff Manor Scarborough Historical Society members applaud Capt. Smalley’s receipt of this very high honor and we thank him for his valiant service!

Photo BMSHS Collection

Photo BMSHS Collection



Estelle and Everett Whitson in the early 1980s after they moved to Florida from Briarcliff

The Whitson Family & “Whitson’s Corners”: *Our Noble Village’s Forebears*

(BMSHS Board Member Tom Vincent was a 1949 high school classmate of Bob Whitson -- the last Briarcliff-based descendant of the original family that settled here in the early 19th Century — and they have kept in touch)

At Briarcliff Manor’s 75th Anniversary in 1977, the book, *A Village Between Two Rivers*, published by our Society, states on page 17:

“There is evidence that the Reuben Whitson Homestead at the corner of Chappaqua and Washburn Roads near the Taconic Parkway existed prior to 1767. It is quite certain that in the early 1800s the Whitson family, who had moved a few miles south from New Castle, exerted a heavy influence over the area on both sides of the Pocantico River in the Town of Mount Pleasant.”

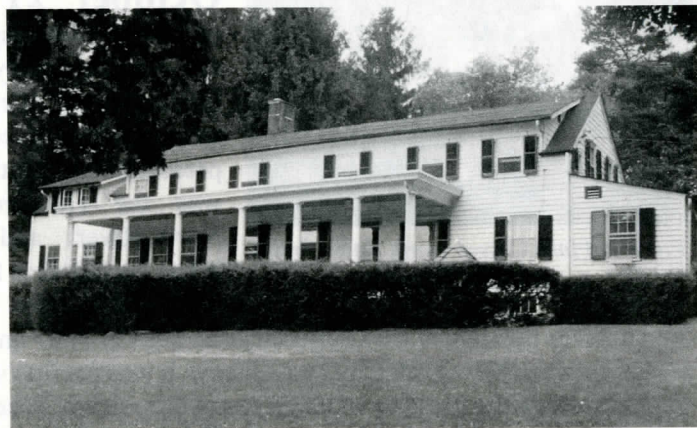


Robert Whitson and Richard Whitson about 1935

Long before Walter W. Law came to what is now Briarcliff Manor, the local area was

known as “Whitson’s Corners.” This was due to the farming Whitson brothers John, Richard and Reuben, who settled here with their families in the 1830s. Nearly two centuries before, in 1647, the original Whitson family migrated to America and lived near what is now Hempstead, Long Island!

Several generations later – until the 1950s -- their descendants still lived in our Village. The last active Whitson family home still sits directly across from the library’s entrance on Pleasantville Road. Other Whitson homes still exist, as the accompanying photo attests. Still others, like the Crossways Tea House, became more than homes then, and are gone but not forgotten now.



The original Reuben Whitson “Century Homestead” on Chappaqua Road near the Taconic Parkway, dating from 1767

From Briarcliff to Louisville

The home at 916 Pleasantville Road is where the last Briarcliff-raised Whitson, Robert,

known as Bob, lived until graduation from Briarcliff High School in 1949. He now lives in Louisville, Kentucky, with his wife Yvonne, but has kept in constant touch with Briarcliff through the years. He believes the original Briarcliff settlers would have been his great-great-great-great uncles – that totals six generations.

Bob's memories and concern for Briarcliff have been evident ever since he left. Indeed, his interest includes a sizeable recent donation to our Society, for which we are truly grateful. In recent years, he has also provided us a wealth of Briarcliff- and family-related historical papers and artifacts that will greatly enrich our permanent archives.



Briarcliff High School Class of 1949 Senior Trip to Washington: Bob Whitson, third from left in second row; Tom Vincent, second from right in second row.

Early Activists

Evidence of Whitson community activity goes way back. John Whitson was the Village's first Postmaster. Bob's Grandfather, Charles, holds the distinction of being our longest-serving Postmaster — 35 years, from 1894 to 1929. Back in 1865, John Whitson donated land for the area's first schoolhouse near the first house on the left after the Route 9A Pleasantville Road bridge going toward the Village. It was named ".Whitson's School-District #6" and was also used for church services on Sunday.

At the corner of Pleasantville and South State Roads, John Whitson's home, The Crossways, dating from 1820, became our first Post Office

in 1881. It was later known as the Crossways Teahouse and the site of Village fairs in war years of 1943 and 1944. It became the site of the Congregational Church Parish Hall after WWII.

From the 1930s through the 1950s, Estelle and Everett Whitson and sons Richard and Robert, were community mainstays. Bob's father worked in sales management for American Viscose in Manhattan, which made rayon and other synthetic materials and became part of the Monsanto Corporation after WWII. A veteran who had served in WWI, Everett was also active locally and on the Village's 50th Anniversary Celebration Committee in 1952. He also wrote about the famous 1908 International Road Race in the commemorative book.

College and Service



Everett Whitson during WWI in 1917

At the same time, young Bob was in his third year at Dickinson College in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, studying political science. Older brother Dick, a 1946 BHS graduate, was in the Navy after graduating from Washington & Lee College in Virginia.

"Dick was always into earth sciences and moved to Tidewater Virginia after the Navy," Bob said. "Traveled everywhere doing geologic work, but came back to Virginia to stay some years ago. We got together with him and Doris every year or so. I miss him." Dick died in 2006.

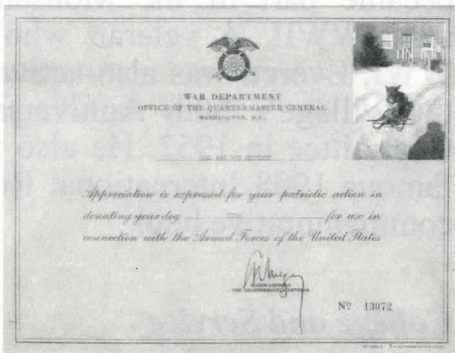
A Dog's Life

The Whitson call to service wasn't limited to humans. In the early 40s, the family puppy, King, was turned over to the Quartermaster Corps of the U.S. Army for training, followed by duty in the European Theater. In 1942, he was hard at work in search and rescue opera-

tions in the Italian Campaign. He returned after the war in good health with a certificate of appreciation from the War Department, and was greeted as a hero in the community.



In his early Briarcliff years, Bob was always active in the summer. A Village Pool lifeguard from the age of 16, he stayed with it. "Best job going", he

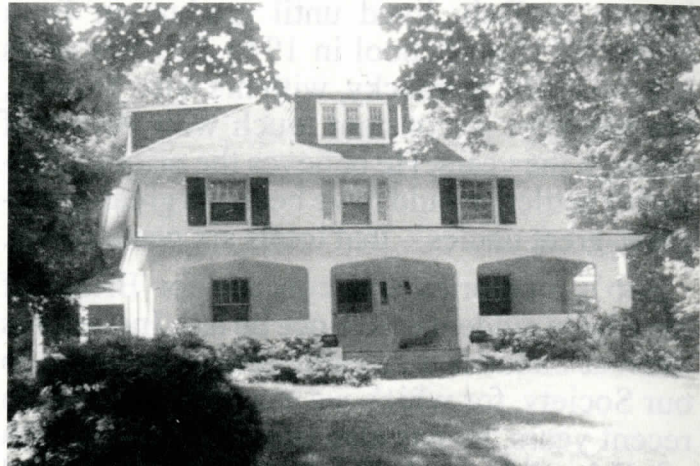


King Whitson and his Service Certificate in WWII from the U.S. War Department

said. "All I had to do was put on my trunks and walk across the street." He also was a lifeguard elsewhere in Briarcliff. In the late 40s, film actress Anne Baxter, of "All About Eve" fame, lived on Hyatt Road. She hired Bob to watch over her guests at their frequent pool parties. Guests included Phyllis Thaxter ("Thirty Seconds Over Tokyo"), Jane Wyman (Ronald Reagan's first wife), Anne's husband, film actor John Hodiak, and many other stars.

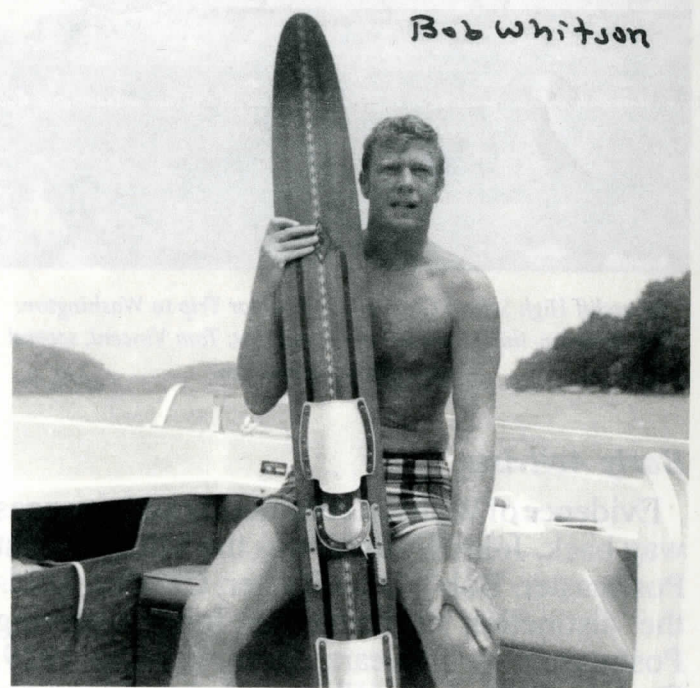
A Special Friend

Bob also worked at his Uncle Harold's Garage, at the corner of North State Road and Route 9A. At home one summer while in college, something remarkable happened. Uncle Harold knew the Hyde Park Roosevelts and did repair work on their cars. Eleanor Roosevelt often stopped to visit on trips to New York City where she was advising the United Nations. Harold introduced her to his nephew and the two quickly found a common interest in political science and government. They soon became friends, spending time discussing politics, diplomacy and world affairs..



The Whitson Home on Pleasantville Road, taken by Bob at his 38th High School Reunion - "The Big One in Briarcliff" -- in 1987

Mrs. Roosevelt urged Bob to apply at the UN after graduation. He still remembers her enthusiastic belief in its potential during lunches they spent in Greenwich Village, her favorite haunt. "So different down there from how she lived her life, she was fascinated by the difference," he said.



Bob Whitson getting ready for a "Ski-Bees" Show on Louisville's Ohio River

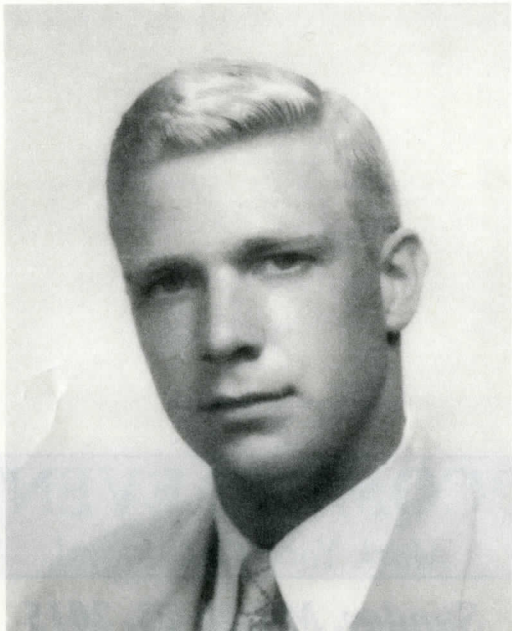
Teaching and Skiing

By the mid-50s, Bob's folks had left Briarcliff and moved to Fort Lauderdale. He decided to go to graduate school instead of pursuing the UN, enrolling at the University of Florida in Gainesville. While getting his master's degree

in English, he also taught water skiing year round. After graduating, he moved to Jacksonville to teach. As an English and Physical Education instructor at Landon Junior High School there, he learned fast.

In his second year, he was appointed school principal. While in Florida, a friend of his father's from Louisville, Kentucky, told him about his company that sold advertising space nationally on taxis and on road signs. Bob was intrigued. In 1957, he took a job with the company, moved to Louisville and is still there.

A Traveling Man



Bob Whitson's 1949 Briarcliff High School Yearbook Photo

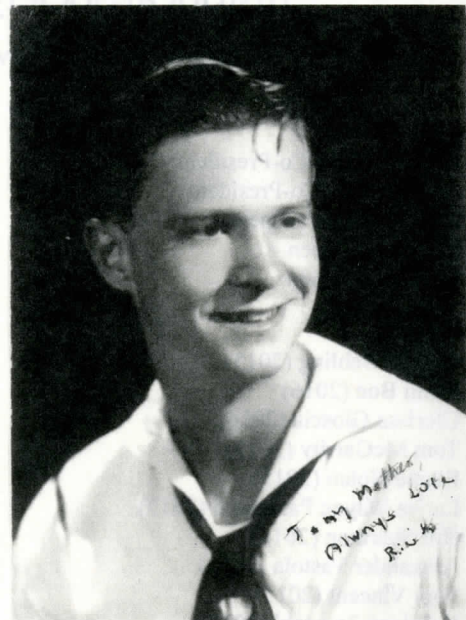
Over the years, he traveled nationwide selling for the Whaley Company, finally buying it in the early 2000s and then selling it at retirement a few years ago. Along the way, he met a charming young lady, Yvonne Newton, a Bowling Green, Kentucky, native working in Louisville. They were married in 1960 and have lived in the same house for 40 years. They also visit friends and family in Bowling Green and have a second home there.

Other than work and home, Bob's main Louisville involvement has been the "Ski-Bees", a local version of the famous Cypress Gardens, Florida water shows. "We had costumes, floats, jumps and coordinated water 'dancing' right here on the Ohio River," he

says. "Great fun, large crowds and all free. It was a real kick, but I'm a little beyond it now."

Founders & Patriots

In Briarcliff in the 1950s, Bob's parents had worked hard to establish the family's men as "Founders & Patriots of America". In this exclusive society, membership is only granted with direct proof that a family's male ancestors



Dick Whitson in the U.S. Navy circa 1949

lived in this country prior to the American Revolution. As a result of the senior Whitsons long years of research, Everett, Richard and Robert Whitson were eventually installed as members of that august institution.

Attaining this membership was a source of great pride in the family. Today, Briarcliff also takes pride in the knowledge that during most of the years since our country's founding, there has been a Whitson in our Village. Well beyond this, looking at the special relationship between the family and our community through so many years, it feels every bit as though the Whitson family is still right here with us today.



Bob and Yvonne Whitson and Doris and Dick Whitson at a Roanoke, Virginia family reunion in 1972

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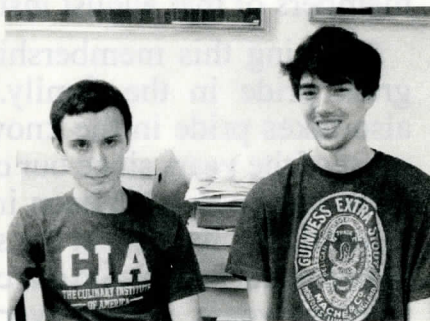
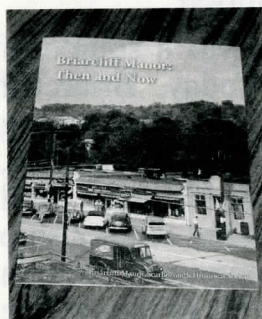
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Officers

Karen Smith - Co-President
Jan Wagner - Co-President
Vice President - Open
Secretary - Open
Treasurer - Open

Trustees

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Mimi Boe (2016)
Clorissa Gioscia (2016)
Tom McGarrity (2017)
Elaine Nolan (2015)
Larisa Wayne Paulmeno (2017)
Bill Sharman (2016)
Alexander Vastola (2015)
Tom Vincent (2015)
Kathleen Zawacki (2017)



The authors - Mike Feist (left) & Myles Ellis (right). Both are BMS grads. Mike is at the Culinary Institute in Napa County and Myles is at Fordham.

For Holiday Gift Giving *Briarcliff: Then and Now* \$15.00

Mike & Myles used BMSHS sepia-toned photographs and returned to virtually the same G.P.S. location and photographed the site again in color.

This is a beautiful 32 page keepsake book. Just call the Center at 941-4393 and we'll save a copy for you.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Mark Your Calendars!

Sunday, March 22, 2015
Annual Meeting

Presentation by Westchester County Historical Society Librarian, Patrick Raftery — “From Wigwams to Corporate Headquarters: 400 Years of Westchester History.” — historic sites, both well-known and not-so-well known.

Probably in March after snowbirds, Wes & Barbara Gottlock, return from Florida, they will give us a presentation on Bannerman’s Castle. They are retired teachers, historians and authors. The Acadia book on Bannerman’s Castle is one of the books they’ve authored.

To Be Announced — East Coast Premier of **Money Man TV Documentary**

Look for BMSHS information in your emails, on the Village Community Events Banner, our newsletters, *The Gazette*, the bulletin board outside the EOCW Historical Center, like us on Facebook, our website www.briarcliffhistory.org and the Briarcliff Library announcements bulletin board. And we welcome your phone calls to us at 941-4393 and email at Mail@briarcliffhistory.org