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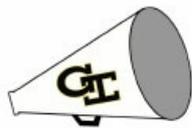
Rise Grand Island!

an Alumni e-publication of the GIPS FOUNDATION

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Rise Grand Island!

Sections



Pure Gold

At the Top

Our feature story for the issue, with an eye toward alums whose star is rising.



A Couple of Guys from the Neighborhood

In this issue of Rise

Welcome to the May 2016 edition of "Rise Grand Island," the alumni newsletter for Grand Island Senior High published every other month by the Grand Island Public Schools Foundation. "Rise" is where we connect with thousands of Islanders across the globe, keeping you and them up to date on what's happening in Purple and Gold land, and reminiscing a little bit as well.

We also really enjoy hearing from you, Islander alums who find "Rise" in their in-box every other month. Give us a shout, especially if you or a GISH alum you know has done something newsy or noteworthy. You can reach us at the email addresses on the front page.

Our feature story in this issue is by and about Sandy Philips Van Pelt, Class of 1966, who has been watching the Class of 2009's Hannah Huston kill it on "The Voice" with an insider's eye ... or should I say ear.



George Ayoub
Class of 1968
Alumni Liaison

I've Been Thinking

George Ayoub's latest observation or bemusement about life – obviously seen through the eyes of a Senior High alum.

A Distant Mirror

Remembrances, reminiscences, and darn good stories from our intrepid correspondent, Mike Monk.



New & Newsy

Shaking the World

Stories of impact from the GIPS Foundation.

Your Legacy. Their Opportunity.

Stories of alumni, educators, parents and friends who give opportunities to today's students.

On the Island

Current news from the halls of Senior High.

In Memoriam

A list of Islanders who have recently passed away.

Sandy had her own "run" on musical talent shows nearly 45 years ago and her drive and passion to perform remains strong. Her story starts the newsletter "At the Top."

Our "Distant Mirror" correspondent, Mike Monk, Class of 1967, explains exactly why his and my columns are under the a section called "A Couple Guys from the Neighborhood." He writes of our "Wonder Years" growing up just a long fungo hit from each other. I'm happy to report that some of our antics did make it into his piece.

Grand Island Senior High's 2016 commencement takes place the same day this newsletter hits your email, so I thought I'd muse a little in my "I've Been Thinking" column on the state of leaving high school and the endless party crawls that accompany graduation season.

As usual Foundation Executive Director Traci Skalberg will catch you up on the Foundation's work, and senior Emily Harders, the student representative on the Grand Island Public Schools Board of Education, has an update on what's been happening at our alma mater the last couple months. As a senior this will be Emily's last update for "Rise." We want to wish her the best and thank her for adding to our publication.

"In Memoriam" includes those classmates to whom we said goodbye in March and April.

Enjoy this "Rise" and keep pushing on.

George Ayoub, Class of 1968
Editor, Rise

Email alumni@gips.org with story ideas or alumni updates.

At the Top

Years Before "The Voice" Islander Phillips Tasted Musical Fame



Sandy Van Pelt

Islanders across the globe have cheered the Class of 2009's Hannah Huston remarkable run on NBC's "The Voice." For Sandy Phillips Van Pelt (GISH Class of 1966), however, Huston's experience brought back memories of her own brushes with fame in the musical and talent show worlds. She shares her remembrances below.

In 1968 we didn't have "American Idol" or "The Voice," but we did have "Your American College Show," the precursor to the current talent shows we see today. The show was based out of Hollywood at the Steve Allen Studio.

In the 60's living in the Midwest and wanting to pursue a singing career we had very few choices for practicing our craft or networking. I was

**Are you planning a class reunion?
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Know an Islander who's reached a significant milestone?

Email us at alumni@gips.org

being trained for opera but that wasn't my calling. I wanted to do musical theater, which, according to my UNL coach, was a less than admirable focus. We didn't have access to resources. You either had to live New York, Los Angeles, or Chicago to make those connections. Or you could start out in summer stock on the east coast. I was going to do summer stock but life (college) intervened.

As luck would have it, the talent scouts for "Your American College Show," were on campus at UNL when I was studying voice with Dr Jack Zie. An announcement was made during Singers class that they were scouting and auditions would be held the next day.

I showed up, sang, and went back to life on campus. Several weeks later I received a phone call from the producer of "The American College Show" asking if I would be able to come to Los Angeles for two weeks.

My time there was intense: training, coaching, working with arrangers, musicians, the orchestra, and ultimately taping the TV show. Dennis James was the host, with Barbra Bain, Martin Landau, Andy Griffith, and Nannette Fabre as judges. And I won!

After the "American College Show," I truly believed I was on my way. I was offered a 6-week Caribbean tour with the USO, an audition for Lou Rawls, and a TV special.

But life happened. I was minor and without my parents consent I could not accept the offers that were given to me. So I returned to finish school at UNL.

[Go to full article](#)



A Couple of Guys from the Neighborhood

I've Been Thinking

Graduation Party Crawl Not So Bad After All

I can go either way on high school graduation.

No, not that. I'm all for graduating. Clearly a high school diploma remains a useful calling card for better jobs, higher wages, and a sure portal to colleges and universities where lives can be even further transformed.

What conflicts me – even though we adults annoy the bejesus out of teenaged grads with endless questions about their futures – is that trappings of the celebration Grand Island Senior High's Class of 2016 will mark Sunday gets stuck on "Big Finish" and not on "Start Here."

It is, after all, called commencement.

Number 1 songs from many a May ago

1936

"The Way You Look Toinigt"
Fred Astaire

1946

"Laughing on the Outside"
Dinah Shore

1956

"Heartbreak Hotel"
Elvis Presley

1966

"Monday Monday"
Mamas and Papas

When I made my cap-and-gowned walk on a warm May day in 1968, I was a typical, non-introspective 18-year-old: More concerned about that night's post-graduation social activities than my or anyone else's future.

Given this stunted skill set, me musing whether I was marking an end or starting a beginning was like asking Archie Bunker to sing "Kumbaya."

Future schmuture. Brothers and sister, let's party.

And these days, nobody has to be told twice.

As you know, 1968 was well before the lavish parties we throw for today's alums-to-be. I had a couple aunts and uncles show up at our house before the ceremony, shake my hand, and call it good. No finger food, no guest book, no glitter.

Now, a few weeks before and the day and night of the big doings, Grand Island is awash in graduation party crawls, a sheet cake storm of epic proportions.

I speak from experience, my son having clocked in as a member of the Senior High Class of 2011. His graduation party, which he shared with a classmate, was a grand affair ... and that was just the price.

[Go to full article](#)



A Distant Mirror

The Neighborhood - 317 East 12th Street

Introduction: Before Rise gets too far down the road, it seems wise to be more forthright about my lifelong friendship with Scrooge himself, my buddy George Ayoub. When George includes his and my efforts in the newsletter under the heading "A Couple of Guys from the Neighborhood," he is being neither euphemistic nor inaccurate. So let's take a trip in Sherman and Mr. Peabody's "Way Back" machine to 1956.

Maybe my earliest memory of the lively Ayoub house on 10th street was when George's older sister, Monica, was making popcorn. She dumped the freshly popped corn into a large bowl a bit prematurely and brought it from the kitchen into the living where George and I were waiting for the treat. As she strode into the living room, a score of kernels popped late, flew around the room, and made a general mess. George and I, both about 6 at the time, were in hysterics.

My family moved to Grand Island half way through my kindergarten year



George Ayoub
Class of 1968
Alumni Liaison

1976

"Silly Love Songs"
Wings

1986

"Greatest Love of All"
Whitney Houston

1996

"Tha' Crossroads" Bone
Thugs-N-Harmony

2006

"SOS"
Rihanna

The source for the music was
Billboard and www.bobborst.com



**Number 1 movies from
many a May 15 ago.**

1936

"Mr. Deeds Goes to Town"
starring Gary Cooper and
Jean Arthur

1946

"The Postman Always Rings
Twice" starring Lana Turner
and John Garfield

1956

"Godzilla" starring Takashi
Shimura, Akihiko Hirata, and
Akira Takarada

1966

"Dr. Zhivago"
starring Omar Sharif
and Julie Christie

1976

in early 1955. We rented a house at 317 East 12th. I lived with my grandparents, my mother, and my sister Pat, my aunts Jeri and Cindy, and my cousin Randy. George lived two blocks away on 10th Street, and he and I immediately became fast friends. We were also best buddies with Bob McFarland, who lived on 11th street, midway between George and me, a block from each of us.

The entire Ayoub and McFarland families immediately embraced my family and accepted me into their homes. George's mother Agnes was a kindly aunt to me from the start. She would encourage me, and my success, as much as she did George and his success. She would not be afraid to keep me in line either, knowing my mother and grandmother would approve. No one was a stranger in the Ayoub house; all were treated like members of the family. We played endless cutthroat monopoly games and of course we talked sports. George's sister Monica taught me how to hit a baseball. A few years later, George and I would practice our shot put form in George's back yard with the 8-pound shot put I bought at Russell's Sports.

We went to Howard School. My transition to Howard School was very smooth, in part since I had already learned to read in the kindergarten class in the small town of Amherst, Nebraska. At Howard, reading was first taught in first grade.

I did survive an embarrassing and potentially disastrous moment in Mrs. Cordes's kindergarten class. I had been waiting to go to the bathroom, but the child in the bathroom was taking forever. I was in pain. Then, after what seemed like hours, the bathroom hog emerged, and I relaxed, only to see another student rush into the bathroom before I could get to it. My new light blue denim jeans became dark blue around the crotch, and I was allowed to go home for the day. But miraculously, this moment was instantly forgotten, and, thankfully, I was not hereafter known as the "pee in his pants" boy.

George, Bob and I bonded primarily due to a common passion for sports. Well before little league age, we regularly played baseball in the street on 11th street. Often it was just the three of us with a pitcher, a batter, and a fielder. We dreamed about becoming major league baseball players, passionately collected Tops baseball cards, and idolized Mickey Mantle, Willie Mays, and Ted Williams. My cousin Randy Garroutte, three years younger, later became a Yogi Berra man himself. In our innocent minds, playing major league baseball was a realistic possibility. Indeed batting averages were how I learned about the concept of an average. One day I was stunned to see Mickey Mantle's batting average had gone down. Hits, home runs, and steals never went down, so how could a batting average? My earliest memory of baseball on television was the 1955 World Series when the Brooklyn Dodgers defeated our beloved Yankees.

In second grade, under the gentle guidance of our teacher Miss Langdon (whom I was completely in love with, and who later became Mrs. Martin when she married the postman midway through second grade), I composed a poem. My poem, here set forth verbatim, was published in the Independent along with the poems of other fledgling second grade poets at Howard:

"I'd like to be a baseball player,
On the New York Yankees team.
And when I'd hit a home run,
I'll light up like a beam."

When we entered into Little League baseball at age nine, Bob declared, "Well, now that we are on teams, so we can't just be playing in the streets." I was totally panicked, saying, "No, we can still play for fun!

"All the President's Men"
starring Robert Redford,
Dustin Hoffman, and Jason
Robards

1986

"Top Gun"
starring Tom Cruise, Kelly
McGillis, and Val Kilmer

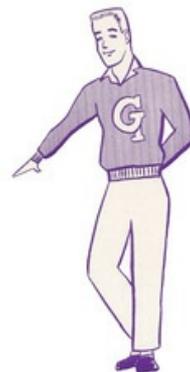
1996

"Twister"
starring Helen Hunt
and Bill Paxton

2006

"Mission Impossible III"
starring Tom Cruise and
Philip Seymour Hoffman

The source for movies
was playback.fm
and Box Office Mojo



**What people were reading
many a
May ago**

1936

"Gone With the Wind"

1946

"This Side of Innocence"

1956

"The Last Hurrah"

1966

"Valley of the Dolls"

1976

"1876"

What are you talking about?" The fear was short lived, however, since the neighborhood boys continued pickup baseball well into our early teens, generally at Howard School, often organized by Roger Dold, a friend who was a bit older.

[Go to full article](#)



1986

"A Perfect Spy"

1996

"Moonlight Becomes You"

2006

"Two Little Girls Blue"

Source: New York Times



[Donor Scholarship Reception](#)



[Martin Family Scholarship Students](#)

Shaking the World

Scholarships and Starfish

I love the starfish story adapted from Loren Eiseley's original sixteen page essay published in his book The Unexpected Universe. The adapted version ends like this "I must ask, then, why are you throwing starfish into the ocean?" asked the somewhat startled man.

To this, the child replied, "The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don't throw them in, they'll die."

Upon hearing this, the man commented, "But, young man, do you not realize that there are miles and miles of beach and there are starfish all along every mile? You can't possibly make a difference!"

At this, the child bent down, picked up yet another starfish, and threw it into the ocean. As it met the water, he said, "I made a difference for that one."

During the month of May we celebrate our starfish and our benevolent boy at the GIPS Foundation. Our starfish of course are our graduating seniors, and our thoughtful boy represents the many donors who invest in scholarships for our students. This year was a banner year as the GIPS Foundation's donors provided 141 scholarships to the Class of 2016. In all, these scholarships totaled \$646,883! This is an incredible investment in the future of our students!

All scholarships have a story behind them. People who give to invest in others have a personal reason as to why they give back. Scholarships can be legacy funds that immortalize a treasured family member or friend. Scholarships can also be a way for people to pass on their value



Traci Skalberg
Executive Director
GIPS FOUNDATION

systems to future generations. And, here is the most important part, scholarships have been given by people from all walks of life, rich, poor, athletic, musical, artistic, you name it. You don't have to be a millionaire to give...you need only the desire to leave your footprint, to share your values, to throw a starfish back into the sea.

It is my intent to tell many of these scholarship stories in the issues to come. That is why each edition of "Rise" has an article about legacy funds (Your Legacy. Their Opportunity.) You can also access many of these stories on our website in the scholarship guidelines section.

<http://www.gips.org/foundation/scholarships/scholarship-guidelines.html>

I have included links to our scholarship reception photo albums on Facebook so you can see some of the faces of both our starfish and our benevolent donors as they celebrate their paths crossing on this Island. To our students, congratulations and best wishes on your next chapter. To our donors, thank you for making a difference one starfish at a time.



Your Legacy. Their Opportunity.

All in...Living with Passion



Clark W. Reese

Clark W. Reese, GISH class of 1969, died of Leukemia in 2008. Sometimes we spend more time thinking about how a person dies, especially if it is untimely, and not enough time remembering how he lived. Clark had cancer, but Clark wasn't cancer. He was...Clark. He was all in. Clark was a salesman working for a telecommunication company and later with an investment company. But this work did not define

Clark. Clark enjoyed giving back to the community where he lived, worked, and raised his own family. He served on the boards of the Grand Island Public Schools Foundation, Leadership Tomorrow, the Crisis Center, Moonshell Arts and Humanities Council, the local Chapter of the American Cancer Society, the Grand Island Senior High Fine Arts Board, and Band Boosters Board. He also volunteered in many capacities including the Grand Island Public Schools, the Heartland United Way, and Trinity United Methodist Church. Clark initiated the first Hall County Relay for Life in Grand Island. Grand Island is a better place because of Clark's passionate "all in" attitude. It is this that defines Clark. Well, this, and his easy, sly smile, his sense of humor, his laugh. We remember.

Clark served passionately for causes he cared about. The family of Clark W. Reese established a fund in his memory to enhance Fine Arts programs of the Grand Island Public Schools. Clark and his wife Karen (Class of 1969) enjoyed the musical and theatrical gifts of their son Ryan (Class of 2002) while he attended the Grand Island Public Schools. Always a dear friend of Grand Island students, Clark supported the schools of this community by serving as a "Band Dad," and a "Stage Dad," not to mention all he did to help the Grand Island Public Schools Foundation grow in capacity. He and Karen believe in giving students the gift of educational opportunity.

The Clark W. Reese Memorial fund is perpetual in nature and makes grants available annually to benefit students in grades 6-12 of the Grand Island Public Schools. Grants support Fine Arts (Music, Theatre, Art) educational opportunities. Recent grants include an award to the 2015-16 GISH Show Choirs to bring in a highly rated guest clinician to work with the choirs on their 2015-16 show and an award to an individual student to take private music lessons.

Clark was always "all in." We miss him greatly. Clark Reese, your passion for students continues. Your legacy IS their opportunity!

For more information about how to set up your legacy fund, call or e-mail Traci Skalberg, 308-385-5900 ext. 1170; tskalberg@gips.org





[GISH facebook album](#)
[Academic Honors Reception](#)



[GIPS facebook album](#)
[Cabaret Night](#)



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[Big Band Night](#)



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[Islander Boys Baseball](#)



[GIPS facebook album](#)

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Grand Island Public Schools Foundation

On the Island

Senior High Current Events

- **Graduation day** – May 15 -- has arrived, the same day this edition of "Rise" reaches your in-boxes, our class, the Class of 2016 moves out of the nest and into the world. We will be taking the lessons taught at Grand Island Senior High with us. Not just the Pythagorean theorem or the history of the Mongol empire, but what it means to be a leader and to have integrity.



Emily Harders
Student Representative
to Board of Education

- As the seniors began to say goodbye, we celebrated the top 15 percent in our class at the **Academic Honors Reception**. We also enjoyed **Cabaret Night** and **Big Band Night** where Islanders showed off their musical skills.
- Spring sports are wrapping up as is school: The Islander **baseball team** enters the State Tournament as the number five seed in a field of eight set for Lincoln this week. The **boys golf team** is also still at it on the links and have already been crowned Heartland Athletic Conference champs last week. The

[Islander Girls Tennis](#)



[GIPS facebook album](#)

[Islander Track](#)

girls tennis team is hoping a recent sweep of Norfolk will give it momentum going into Districts and State. Meanwhile the Islander **boys track team** qualified 13 athletes with two district champions for State Track Meet in Omaha next weekend. The **girls track team** qualified eight athletes with three district champions. GISH **boys soccer** went 10-8 on the year, losing a heartbreaker in overtime at districts. The **girls soccer team** ended their season with a record of 0-13.

- We have celebrated many great successes this year including the fall production of "The Little Mermaid" by the performing arts department. The **visual arts department** had 80 art pieces be accepted into the Scholastic Art and Writing awards. In sports, this year will be remembered for thrilling Islander football wins at Omaha Westside and Kearney, girls state golf in the fall, and a nationally-ranked swimmer in Purple and Gold this winter.
- This academic year has also been one for change and growth into the future. With the introduction of numerous flat screen televisions in the hallways that constantly feed the students up-to-date information about what is happening in their school, these past four years have not only been progressive for the building, but for the GISH students, too.



In Memoriam

GENE HANSEN, Class of 1961, died March 4, 2016 in Grand Island. He was 72.

JANNA (GRUBBS) GUBSER, Class of 1979, died March 7, 2016 in Lincoln. She was 54.

PATTY (PAT) (PERKINS) CALVO, Class of 1956, died March 9, 2016 in Grand Island. She was 78.

MINNIE (BAKER) WILLIAMS, Class of 1935, died March 11, 2016 in Gresham, Ore. She was 98.

DONALD CORNELIUS, Class of 1938, died March 12, 2016 in Lakewood, AZ. He was 95.

LOUISE (DEGEN) MILLER, Class of 1947, died March 13, 2016 in Grand Island. She was 86.

MAXYNE (STEFFEN) BRANNON, Class of 1950, died March 21, 2016 in Blair. She was 82.

LAVERNE "JACK" JENSEN, Class of 1950, died March 22, 2016 in Omaha. He was 83.

PAT (WILLIS) CROSS, Class of 1963, died March 26, 2016 in Grand

Island. She was 70.

VALDA (HIPKE) BLAUHORN, Class of 1976, died March 30, 2016 in St. Paul. She lived on a farm near Palmer. She was 57.

VICTORIA (AVILA) GUZMAN, Class of 1973, died March 31, 2016 in Aurora. Victoria lived in Grand Island. She was 61.

DWAINE LEWIS, Class of 1939, died April 1, 2016 in Murrieta, Calif. He was 93.

ALAN LANHAM, April 1, 2016 in Ravenna. He was 68. Lanham retired from teaching at Barr Middle School in 2005.

CAROL (SAWYER) WIDENER, Class of 1957, died April 2, 2016 in Grand Island. She was 76.

JONATHAN RODRIGUEZ, Class of 2010, died April 3, 2016 in Omaha. Jonathan lived in Grand Island. He was 24.

LOUANN (RIDENOURE) ALEXANDER, Class of 1975, died April 5, 2016 in Arizona. She was 58.

RICHARD HODTWALKER, Class of 1962, died April 9, 2016 in Grand Island. He was 72.

RICHARD LEMPKE, Class of 1973, died April 10, 2016 in Grand Island. He was 61.

ROBERT STEINMEIER, Class of 1961, died April 12, 2016 in Little Rock, Ark. He was 72.

ANN (URBAN) MICHALSKI, Class of 1970, died April 16, 2016 in Omaha. She was 63.

DALE SWEET, Class of 1951, died April 16, 2016 in Grand Island. He was 83.

KEVIN SAMWAY, Class of 1990, died April 17, 2016 in Hastings. Kevin lived in Fairfield. He was 44.

CLARENCE NIELSEN, Class of 1957, died April 21, 2016 in Grand Island. He was 76.

MIKE WINFREY, Class of 1969, died April 24, 2016 in Grand Island. He was 65.

GLEE (LEWIS) REMBOLT, Class of 1941, died April 25, 2016 in San Diego. She was 91.

JOHN HENDRIX, April 26, 2016 in Grand Island. He was 88. Hendrix retired from Walnut Middle School as Counselor in 1992.

EUNICE (REHER) HOPKINS, Class of 1940, died April 28, 2016 in Grand Island. She was 93.

PATRICK DEUEL, Class of 1980, died April 29, 2016 in Kearney. He was 54.



Grand Island Public Schools Foundation



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