

## **A Remembrance by retired teacher Richard Siegelman**

**[Click here to see the contents of the 1963 Bermingham Time Capsule](#)**

**&**

**[Click Here to see the Newsday Video about this story](#)**

The Oyster Bay-East Norwich School District's dear, departed John F. Bermingham Elementary School was "born" in September 1962, but tragically "died" at the tender young age of 20 years old in June 1982. It did technically "survive" for another dozen years, but only as an (almost literally) "empty shell" of itself---and it no longer nurtured hundreds or thousands of the community's "best and brightest" children. Although its premature 1982 demise as a school was only a "closing," in which its students merely moved down the hill to its surviving 1962 "twin" Theodore Roosevelt Elementary School (which continues to thrive, and celebrated its own 50th birthday/Golden Anniversary in September 2012), the Bermingham School's building was demolished by a wrecking ball in the mid-1990s.

Of course, the Bermingham School still "survives" in the memories of its former students and their parents, plus its teachers and other staff members; and it also lives on in its June 1963 Time Capsule---which had its copper box (literally) opened in a January 2001 assembly program held at the Vernon School. The "time capsule" , which had originally been scheduled to be opened in the supposedly-milestone year of 2000, ended up being opened in the actual first year of the new century and millennium. It contained photographs of many of the Bermingham School's first 438 students, plus their imaginative drawings and compositions about what they imagined life would be like 37 years in the future ("Life in the Year 2000").

Although I put all the contents of the time capsule on display, in the Vernon School's main hallway from February through June 2001, relatively few of the drawings, writings or photos were requested by the now-grownup artists, authors, or photographic subjects. They can still be viewed at the following website ([www.obenschoolsmac.org/about/Archived\\_OBServers.htm](http://www.obenschoolsmac.org/about/Archived_OBServers.htm)) . Just scroll down to "5-21-2010 Volume 4 Issue 32" and continue clicking and scrolling (several

times) until you finally reach "Click here to see the contents of the Birmingham Time Capsule from 1963".

I would still like to "reunite" these photos, drawings and compositions with the Kindergarten through 6th grade "children" who posed for, drew or wrote them back in 1963 (although their ages would now be between 57 and 64). Or perhaps to their own now-elderly parents, or their own children (!) or even grandchildren (!!).

I know that if I personally had the chance to reclaim a long-lost photo from my own elementary school days, or a story that I had written, or the childhood superhero comic strips I used to love to draw, I would be willing to pay good money for such "treasures" from my past---as if they were valuable antiques. But the nostalgia I am now offering to these almost-former-students-of-mine (I didn't begin teaching in the Birmingham School until September 1966) are absolutely FREE of charge.

So, if YOU ARE one of the 160 former Birmingham School time capsule (former) "kids" whom I will list alphabetically at the end of this letter, and would like to retrieve your personal historical "artifact", I hope you will contact me at my e-mail address (mrsiegelman@yahoo.com). Or if you are one of their relatives, friends, or neighbors, I would welcome your contacting me on their behalf too.

But before I list those "children's" names, I would like to quote from a few of the time capsule items I found the most interesting :

1. From the complete June 17, 1963 issue of the New York Times included in the time capsule, the real estate section included one ad for a 5-bedroom, 2-bath Cape Cod with a basement and attached garage, on a 60' X 100' plot in East Norwich, selling for a mere \$20,000; plus an ad for a 3 1/2 year-old brick/fieldstone split with 3 bedrooms, 2 1/2 baths, formal dining room, family room, full basement and 2-car garage, in Oyster Bay selling for only \$29,500 (or less : "make offer").

2. The sports section informs us that the (second-year) Mets are in last place, while the Yankees are in first; and that a young Cassius Clay, while training in London for a fight, said "I'm so angry, I am frightened that if I go outside I shall fight in the streets for no money at all. I'm real mean and moody, man, and that bodes no good for Henry Cooper".

3. A reel-to-reel tape, recorded on April 24, 1963, contains a 5th grade class' "spontaneous, unedited" responses to their teacher's direction to "Think of a problem existing today in 1963 that you hope will be solved by the year 2000, plus something of beauty or goodness existing today which you hope will still exist in 2000". What follows is part of what the last student to speak on the tape (Alfred Lizza) said : "I think that at this time, the most beautiful thing is the freedom we have. I wish that in the 21st century we will still have freedom of the press, freedom of religion, and freedom of speech. I hope we don't have Communism in this world, and I hope we still have our red, white, and blue flag over our heads to protect and guard us." (I hope to hear from the other 25 "kids"---from Mr. Kane's 5th grade class--- who would be interested in listening to what they and their classmates said 52 years ago, back on April 24, 1963.)

4. Principal Thomas Miller (the only principal the Bermingham School was to have over its too-short 20 years of existence) wrote (on June 17, 1963) "Our world of 1963 is one that is fraught with a great deal of turmoil and tension...There is constant talk about the moon race, whether or not the Russians or the Americans will be the first ones to land someone on the moon. I am sure that by the year 2000 we will have progressed much beyond this, and even exceeded our wildest dreams as to what we might actually be capable of doing...Perhaps by the year 2000 we may have a Jewish president, or a Negro president, or perhaps a woman as our president...I am sure that we feel that the world in the year 2000 is going to be an even better world than it is in 1963..."

5. School district superintendent Howard Imhof wrote (in June 1963) : "I wonder what our 1962 buildings will look like in the year 2000 ? We hope that we have planned wisely, that the buildings have been constructed solidly, and that they will be durable and practical for the children who will be attending the schools in 2000. I am certain that the hindsight of those who

view our efforts will be better than the foresight that we have shown...There is great concern in our world today concerning the matter of survival. We talk constantly about the preservation of our freedoms here in the United States of America. As I look toward the future, I look at it with a deep faith that our country will survive the pressures of Communism...and that wisdom and justice will prevail...I feel certain that you who read this letter will be wrestling with many of the same problems that we have today, and that you, in turn, will be worrying about the future...I am sure that the problems that we are concerned about today will be small in comparison to the magnitude of those that will be facing you..."

In closing, here are the (alphabetized) names of the 160 "children" who contributed something to the 1963 Birmingham School Time Capsule---which I hope to return to them (or their proxies) in the near future :

Charles Abbate, Eugene Abbate, Laurie Abbate, Celia Abrahamsen, James Alexander, Aina Andersen, Karen Andrews, Holly Bader, Helen Ball, Jake Ball, Bobby Barnett, Andrea Barshov, Cindy Barshov, Mary Beccarino, Perle Beck, Candy Bell, Lloyd Bernstein, Steven Bernstein, Barbara Blasius, Beth Blaustein, Jonathan Blaustein, Matthew Blaustein, Patty Bott, Eugene Box, Steven Brauner, Roberta Caltabiano, David Carl, Richard Carrier, Karen Cernek, Christina Cirelli, Bruna Cogliandro, Diane Cohen, Debbie Coile, Scott Connere, Elaine Cooper, Debbie Corey, Allan Cullum, Barbara Dalton, Victoria Dean, Vicky DeAngelis, Thomas DeJesu, Vincent DiNapoli, Robert Dixon, Debby Dolen, Terry Donisi, Marcie DuBrul, Peter Dunn, Carla Fechter, Nancy Feinberg, Susan Feinberg, Cecilia Ferrari, Virginia Ferrari, Jacki Fishman, Thomas Flaskal, Paula Fletcher, Carolyn Foster, Kevin Franznick, Carl Frappaolo, John Gallagher, Kevin Gallagher, Ellen Gallo, Elin Gaynor, Stephen Gigen, Andrea Ginas, Danae Ginas, Neal Glaser, Nancy Glynn, Thomas Goddard, Ira Goldberg, Mike Gordon, William Gottbeb, Paul Grabscheid, Steven Grabscheid, Leola Green, Lisa Green, Jill Greenberg, Thomas Haefele, Christopher Haines, Peggy Halpin, Thomas Heelan, Peter Higgins, Randy Hodes, Elise Hollabaum, Brian Johnson, Kevin J. Johnston, Matthew Johnston, Robert Joyce, Virginia Joyce, Joseph Keegan, Doreen Kingsbury, Scot Kingsbury, Marly Klein, Cindy Kokas, Jeffrey Kradin, Brian Lassally, Robin Lassally, Michael Lederberg, Fred Lent, David Lesser, Susan Lesser, Marie Liggero, Alfred Lizza, Nancy Lochrie, Celeste L. Maneri, Elise R. Maneri, Regina Maneri, George Manley, Michael Mason, Valerie Mays, Patricia McCarthy, Robert McGuire, Craig McKernin, Doreen Mihailin, Larry Miles, Leslie Ellen Miles, Robbie Millner, Virginia

Millner, Barbara Mills, Jill Mills, Lynn Mills, John Molesky, Joseph Molesky, Keith B. Neilson, Richard Nisi, Frances Pettit, Theadora Pflug, Gayle Ratcliffe, Lisa Rehman, Catherine Reilly, Robert Reilly, Donna Roberts, Jeffery Robey, Alexander Romas, Peter Romas, John Ross, Steven Ross, Janna Russell, Marc Russell, Sue Russell, Mary Ann Sarry, Charles Savage, John Sheridan, Nancy Shore, Steven Silver, Debra Skolnick, Laura Sommerhalter, Karen Spero, Sanaye Sujishi, Kerry Thek, Byrne Tozer, Robert Vecchione, Jeffrey Vickers, Patricia Ann Villani, John Vosburg, Janette Wachter, Robert Walles, Neil Wechsler, Stewart Wechsler, Victoria Wells, Kenneth Windt, D.J. Wright, and Jane Zinman. Some of the Birmingham School's other 275 students do appear (unnamed) in photos, and some unfortunately omitted their names (or last names) from their writings or artwork. Perhaps they can identify themselves or their "work" when seeing it in person. I welcome them to also contact me at my e-mail address (mrsiegelman@yahoo.com).

For your information, here are the names of the teachers of that school year's 17 classes (and the number of students in each; unfortunately, only 10 of those classes' teachers had their students sign their names for a class list that went into the time capsule) : Kindergarten : Ms. Betz a.m. class (19) & p.m. (19); Ms. Keene a.m. (21) & p.m. 20; 1st grade : Ms. Bassen (29), & Ms. Trenkle (30) ; 2nd grade : Ms. Powers (30) & Ms. Salamon (32); 3rd grade : Ms. Knettel (23), Ms. Purcell (23) & Ms. Smith (23); 4th grade : Ms. DeGraff (22) & Ms. Fitzpatrick (23); 5th grade : Ms. Kaneclides (30) & Mr. Kane (33) ; 6th grade : Ms. Kitt (31) & Ms. Murphy (30).

Educationally yours (and hoping to hear from you at mrsiegelman@yahoo.com) , I remain

Mr. Siegelman (but I think that for any former K-6 Birmingham School student who is now 50+ or 60+ years old, it would be okay to call me "Richard")