

VC ECHOES

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Bidding VCTA Vice President Jay Sussdorff A Long and Healthy Retirement

Jay Sussdorff is retiring after 33 years of service to the Valley Central community. Jay spent his career instructing students in the finer points of English grammar and literature at both the Middle and High School. When Jay retires, he will leave a void that will be felt by both staff and students. Jay's dedication to his craft, students and colleagues are irreplaceable components of a man who has improved with age—which is danged fortunate since he is, without question, getting really old.

Jay has been a humble servant and distinguished ambassador for education throughout his years. He has taught night school, summer school, worked in the library, coached girls' basketball (1990 Coach of the Year) and served as mentor for new teachers. Jay is a strong unionist. He has served the membership of the VCTA as a building representative, Trustee and Secretary of the Benefit Fund, VCTA Negotiator and Vice President for the past 7 years. Jay has also represented the VCTA as a member of the District's Health and Safety Com-

mittee and the Budget Advisory Committee.

We have developed a bond of trust and respect for Jay over the past several years that will continue to be a source of comfort and stability for us as we continue our work within our classrooms and within our local union. Jay's insights, wit, humor and sarcasm are a constant reminder of his incalculable contributions to our special area of the world. Jay's seniority, of course, makes him a role model by default to young whippersnappers like us. He will always be "dad" (to Tim) and "grandpa" (to Rich)—because if wisdom comes with age—Jay is surely one very wise old fart.

Serving as fellow officers with Jay on the VCTA Executive Council has been a privilege. Working beside Jay has been an incredibly valuable learning experience. He is a wealth of knowledge; he is willing to share that knowledge while letting others (us, for example) take credit; he remained loyal and true to his friends, colleagues, educational call-



ing and union activism when circumstances might have persuaded lesser "men" to respond differently. Because of these and numerous other qualities, we are privileged and honored to call Jay our friend.

As Jay starts a new chapter in his protracted life, we want to extend him some elderly but mature wishes: May the wind always be at your back; may the sun always shine on your face; may your bike always remain upright; may your cars remain scratchless and shiny; may your drives be straight and free of slice and hook; and may you always smile when looking back or ahead, or when simply enjoying the moment.

*With Love, Respect and Admiration
~ Tim and Rich
President/Vice President*

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A college degree and a teaching certificate define a person as a teacher, But it takes hard work and dedication to be one.

~ Paul McClure

Jay Sussdorff...A Man for All Time



Jay Sussdorff, back in the '80's. Were bowties in then?

Jay made a great point when considering his long career at Valley Central. "I have been teaching longer than you have been alive," stated this old, wise man! This is certainly true but I have never held that against him. Despite this apparent age difference, we became fast friends and could always be overheard exchanging quick and friendly quips. Jay became my mentor, my friend and someone that I will hold in high regard and admiration.

As he nears the end of his 33rd year in this district, he is filled with nostalgia, sadness and a deeply embedded connection to the family he has made here. Jay will be greatly missed by all, faculty, staff and students alike. Anyone that had the chance of crossing paths with him will remember the sapience he has to offer and the dedication to his students. I suppose the only thing I can hold against him is that *I* am not ready for him to leave.

Mr. Jay Sussdorff was born in Plattsburgh, NY. He grew up in Oneonta primarily but lived all over New York State. As a wee lad, he attended many different schools. He claimed to enjoy moving around and the constant uprooting due to his father's job did not

bother him. Jay finally made his way to our neck of the woods and graduated from New Paltz High School in 1968. He attended SUNY New Paltz where he received his Bachelor's Degree in Secondary Education and English and his Master's Degree in the same.

Jay was a student teacher in the Valley Central Middle School where he was hired in 1972 as a (SURPRISE, SURPRISE) sixth grade Science teacher. He spent 3 years in this position before he made his move to 7th grade English. He remained in this position for five years before gracing us with his presence in 1980 at the Valley Central High School as an English teacher. This is where Jay remained for the rest of his career. During his time here, Jay taught at all four grade levels and many different elements. He was a tremendous influence in the classroom. His knowledge and love of language arts and literature was valued by his students over the years. I'm sure many of them can remember conversations about Stephen King and cinema; as well as his ability to make any literary theme tangible for the minds and hearts of countless students.

Jay had an enormous impact beyond the classroom as well. He coached Girls' Basketball for 19 years— 16 years coaching Varsity, 2 years coaching Junior Varsity and 1 year coaching Modified. Jay has been advising Revelation— Chas's Art and Literary magazine—for the past two years and this year led the Mentoring program here at the High School. Perhaps he is most widely known for his Vice Presidency in the Valley Central Teacher's Association. He has secured this position for 7 years and served 1 year as a Building Representative.

Jay's professional accomplishments and contributions are not



all that he is proud of. Jay is the father of two lovely children, Amy and Chris. He enjoys spending time with them and is proud of their accomplishments over the years. He is looking forward to being able to spend more time with his family upon retirement.

As far as future plans go, Jay plans to continue working at Apple Green's Golf Course. He is adamant in his desire to continue communications with the VCHS faculty and staff through substitute teaching. He also plans to travel, reads ferociously and play with his many vehicles. Jay will not miss correcting the many essays he has always assigned his students and, of course, waking up at the crack of dawn.

We all wish Jay happiness as he embarks on a new phase of his life. May you enjoy continued good health and fortune. The Valley Central community is losing a great teacher, mentor and friend in Jay Sussdorff. Remember as fondly as we will surely remember you.

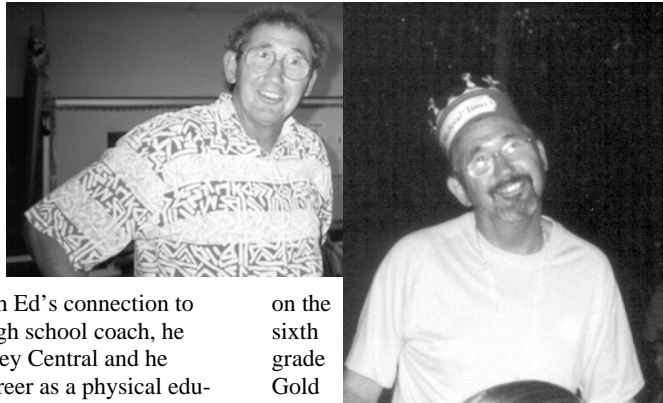
*~ Melissa Verlin,
High School*

An Era Ends...Ed Rechterovic is Retiring



It's truly the end of an era. Ed Rechterovic has chosen to retire after 39 successful years as an elementary and middle school teacher and multi-sport coach.

Raised in Piermont, Rockland County, Ed attended Tennessee's Tusculum College where he got his education degree and was elected to the Basketball Hall of Fame. He married his high school sweetheart, Ellen. Their son, Edward, also a teacher is married to Valley Central's Jean Quinn and Ed and Ellen are the proud grandparents of Daniel, Kevin and Emma Rose.



Through Ed's connection to Dr. Moran, his high school coach, he was hired by Valley Central and he began his long career as a physical education teacher in East Coldenham. He later got his K-6 degree and moved to the 6th grade classroom. Ed has coached basketball at all levels in addition to helping run successful programs in softball (numerous varsity titles,) golf (bringing students to state competition every year), football, and cross country. He was the modified basketball and modified cross-country coach this year, and is currently the varsity golf coach. Active in the school community, Ed has been a member of the PTA and VCTA since day one.

An outstanding classroom teacher, Ed is universally remembered and his enduring sense of humor have made him a favorite among kids and colleagues alike. Ed has coached every year at VC and he remains one of the most respected teachers and coaches in Orange County and Section IX.

Ed is an active and positive contributor to his friends and teammates

on the sixth grade Gold Team,

and we, as well as the rest of the staff and students, will have a hard time imagining Valley Central life without him. What's in his future? Anyone who know Ed knows it will include relaxation, golf and travel. Next year he and Ellen will visit Key West, Mardi Gras, and Myrtle Beach and that's just the start.

We'll miss the uplifting atmosphere and spirit Ed brings to work everyday and we wish him a long and happy retirement.

*~ Roger Flaum,
Middle School*

**The VCTA extends
congratulations to
Theresa Concors
from East Coldenham
who will be retiring
in January 2006.**

What with VCMS do without Marc Sperry?

Marc Sperry—it just won't be the same around here without you. What can we say about Marc: he is a dinosaur here at Valley Central. Marc attended Valley Central from kindergarten through grade 10. He then attended prep school at The Gunnery. Marc is also a graduate of Boston University and earned his two masters degrees from SUNY Albany. Marc taught social studies at the middle school for 20 years. His notorious lines include calling students "turkeys" and using the phrases, "don't bug it" or "you know me." Yes, we all know Marc because he was once the mayor of Walden! Marc enjoys refereeing football games, gardening, working out at the gym, boating, fishing, playing tennis and traveling. One may find him on the beach in Port St. Lucie with his wife, Toni (also a VC teacher), on Golden Pond or visiting his son, Christopher and his family in New Hampshire or

fixing up the house with his son, David. Marc is the proud grandfather of David, Griffin, Alice and Maggie. Did we mention the latest Sperry addition? Chad—their dog—he is so small that he looks like a Beanie Baby with lungs.

While Toni continues working, Marc plans to brush up on his cooking and laundry skills in between traveling in their Florida villa. Marc is sure to miss coordinating middle school testing and scheduling the great-grandchildren of those he once taught. Believe it or not, Marc continually insists that he is going to miss his job. Actually, there are MANY of us who really believe Marc will miss VC. The district will, in turn, miss Marc and his devotion and loyalty



to his students. If a question arises, many will say, "Ask Marc Sperry, he'll have the answer." Most notable is Marc's many years of service on the Executive Council of the VCTA and the Board of the VC Federal Credit Union. Last, but not least, we feel the need to mention the time someone took his parking spot. Yes, he put a note on the car asking them not park there. Yes, the car belonged to the superintendent, but "don't bug it." Marc—we all will miss you. Enjoy a happy and healthy retirement!

~ The Middle School
Guidance Department

Merylyn Tyson has taught at all of VC's Elementary Schools!

Merylyn Tyson has said that her 30 years at Valley Central have gone by very, very quickly. That is no small wonder because Merylyn has not stayed in any one building or any one job for too terribly long in her career at VC. Merylyn started out in 1975 as a student teacher at East Coldenham and then was hired as a special education teacher at Berea the following fall. A year later, her class was moved to Montgomery and there she stayed for, as Merylyn says, 12 of her "formative" years. Merylyn then took on a new teaching challenge - that being taking the job of elementary health teacher. She had the opportunity to teach in every elementary building and loved every minute of those three years. Next, Merylyn moved into a regular education position in the 3rd grade at Maybrook for 5 years. Then, she did another stint in the health field for a spell and finally landed in Walden teaching 3rd grade once more. (Even in Walden, she didn't stay put - her classroom has been moved practically every year she's been there.) In

addition to all of that, Merylyn has served on umpteen committees, directed all kinds of programs and is currently an Odyssey of the Mind regional judge. Phew - that is quite a career. The upside of all that moving around is that Merylyn has touched so many of Valley Central's children and colleagues with her kind and gentle ways and with her oh-so-funky brand of humor. When asked about what's next for Merylyn, she answered "Retirement, what a concept!" She thinks it will be fun to wear one hat for a bit, that of a housewife. She plans on playing lots of golf, with her friends and her husband, Marion. She also would love to get back into hiking in the 'Gunks. Merylyn also has a very cool idea for keeping her hand in the business that she did so well for so many years. Merylyn would like to become a storyteller and incorporate story-related crafts. This would keep her in touch with her very favorite part of school - working with kids. Merylyn believes that her retirement will be great, and can't wait to spend lots more time with her family

(especially her grandbabies), but she will truly miss the camaraderie of her large and loving Valley Central school family.



Best wishes for a wonderful and well-deserved retirement!

~ Sharon Satkowski,
Walden Elementary School

Maureen Radl Retires from Berea

Maureen Radl is leaving Valley Central after 28 years of dedicated service of our children. She has spent her time educating children and improving their reading skills. Maureen is a role model for all of us at Berea. She shows excellence in all that she does.

Maureen used her quiet way to help the children first in Title One and later with Reading Recovery. She teaches with patience and understanding inspiring the children to be the best they can be. She is always tactful, and knows just the right say to say, whether she is speaking to parents, administrators, other teachers or the students.

Maureen will be also known for her work towards world peace. She has presented a peace

pole to Berea. This will serve as a reminder, for those now here and for those still to come, toward peace in the world. May Peace Prevail on Earth.

Maureen—Thank you of all that you have given to the Berea Elementary Community. We appreciate your love, guidance and the devotion you have shown. May your retirement be all that you hoped for, filled with health, happiness and peace. We will miss you!

~ Carol DeMicco,
Berea



Robin Briand leaving Home and Career Skills

Robin Ann Oonk was raised in Klymer, a small town in southwestern New York. Her parents, Alberta and Harvey, owned and operated a dairy farm, and live there still. Robin has two brothers and two sisters, as well as a number of nieces and nephews, who live in western New York.

The biggest event in Klymer, which has a large Dutch population, is the annual Tulip Festival, where the citizenry dons traditional Dutch clothing, as well as the famous wooden shoes, and sweeps the streets in preparation for the big parade. Leading the parade is Robin's father, on one of his antique John Deere tractors.

Robin graduated from Klymer Central HS in 1983 and went to Oneonta State University where she earned her degree in Home Economics Education in 1987. Her long involvement in 4-H, as well as her mother's love of crafts, had inspired her. At the time, she had planned to work with 4-Hers as a Cooperative Extension agent.

Plans change, as they often do at that age, and upon graduation, Robin accepted a job at Valley Central Middle School, for the 1987-1988 school year.

Over the years she has taught 7th graders and 8th graders, for whole years, half year, and quarters. Robin has taught Foods and Nutrition, Textiles, and Parenting and Careers. She has seen many changes in her curriculum (as we all have). One of the changes has been the renaming of her profession. No longer a Home Economics teacher, she is a Family and Consumer Science Educator.

In addition to her teaching, for many years Robin coached girls volleyball, at the modified, jv, and varsity levels. Robin belonged to the Orange County Home Economics Teachers' Association as well as Beta Sigma Phi sorority. She attends Walden Methodist Church. Her hobbies include photography, poetry, scrap booking, quilting, travel, and adding to her collections of cows, Delftware, humming-

birds, and butterflies.

Perhaps Robin's greatest adventure occurred when she met Mark Briand, a transplanted French Canadian who works at IBM. They fell in love, and Mark passed the "parent test" by successfully charming Alberta and then impressing Harvey with his natural ability to drive a tractor! Robin and mark were married on May 27, 2000 and had a wonderful honeymoon traveling to Australia. Their most precious gift to other has been their little boy, Tommy, who has born on February 11, 2002.

Robin describes her years here at Valley Central as "fun and challenging, with something different every year." I believe she speaks for all of us! Good luck, Robin, we will miss you in the building and in our department.

~ Kathy Phillips
VCMS

Joan Bernardini: A Real Superhero!



Joan Bernardini came to the Valley Central School District in September of 1984. She had been teaching in Long Island, when her husband accepted a position at SUNY New Paltz. This move to the Hudson Valley was Long Island's loss by definitely our gain!

In the nineteen years that I have known Joan, I have watched her give her heart and soul to her students. Her goal has always been to not only have the student learn the math, but to make them LIKE it as well. That is not an easy task and she has gone to great lengths to accomplish her goal. She continually, even in her last year of teaching came up with new and fresh ways to get the material across to the students. She will "sing" or "chant" or use visuals— all as a means of helping the students feel good about the math and good about themselves. Her passion for teaching Mathematics is matched only by the compassion she has for each and every student who comes through her doorway. There is nothing that she will not do for a student to try to help them. With great patience, she will explain something over and over again, and perhaps add yet another method to her "bag of tricks" along the way. Joan has taken a lot of teasing about being late to school

and yet she can be seen in her room until 5 PM on a daily basis. She will gladly wait around for the BOCES student who needs help and can't get there until after 3:30 PM. I have watched her, even after a long, stress-filled day, sit with a student as if they were the only thing that mattered at that moment.

Joan has taught every level class from the lowest to the highest and has a way of making each student feel equally important. She has gone "above and beyond" to be the best teacher possible. She is a master teacher and yet has never stopped trying to become better. Each year is a new opportunity for her to improve on the year before. That is the mark of a truly exceptional teacher!

Personally, I have learned so much from Joan Bernardini. My first encounter with her was during my first year of teaching when I had to teach logarithms and was feeling very insecure. She gently encouraged me and told me not to worry because all I needed was a "Bernardini lesson". She proceeded to teach me and then sent me off to instruct my students with a smile and a look that made me believe that I could do it. Over the years, I have received many "Bernardini lessons" and they have helped me beyond what words could ever convey. I proudly admit that Joan has had the greatest influence on helping me to become the teacher that I am today. She has been my mentor in every sense of the word and I have learned a great deal from her. Last year, I had the privilege of sitting in on her Calculus class in preparation for teaching it once she retires. I was able to see first hand the passion that she brings to each and every lesson. I learned so much and had a great time too! I guess her goal was accomplished even in me!

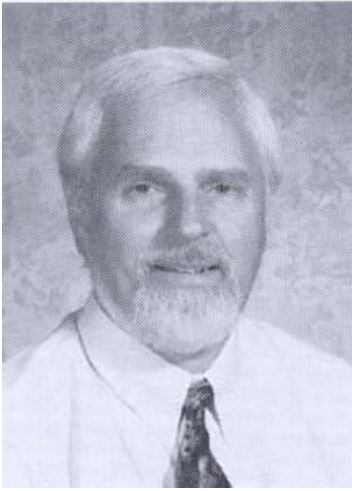
Joan Bernardini is truly an



exceptional teacher person and friend. I am so excited for her that after 33 years of a job well done she will have time to relax. I know that I will miss her greatly as she has been my mentor and my dear friend. I have learned from her both in and out of the classroom. She has taught me about math, husbands, raising children and a whole lot more. She has the heart of a teacher and it comes across in everything she does. I am very blessed to have spent the past nineteen years with her and I now that our friendship will continue even after she leaves VC. I know that I will need her advice and wisdom right up until the day that I retire! I pray God's blessing upon Joan and her family and her retirement. She has given her all, and many lives have been touched. Now may she be blessed with a well-deserved rest. She may laugh and herself "crazy Bernardini," but my life has been touched deeply by this exceptional woman. Joan, I thank you and I love you.

~ Gail Quitoni,
High School

Bob Mooney Retires from HS English



I met Mr. Mooney in 1981. It was my first year at Valley Central High School and he was my ninth grade English teacher. He was approachable, demanding, engaging, and funny. In a day filled with teachers force feeding facts or making us copy endless notes, Mooney offered a respite, a place of renewal. English class was the one class where students could write how they felt and express who they were. It was the one class where you came to know your classmates through projects and discussions. He never made me feel intimidated or inadequate. Instead, his easy going and low-key manner nurtured my love of literature and cemented my long-term plan to become a teacher.

Fast-forward 23 years. I am now an English teacher at Valley Central. I will always be indebted to Mr. Mooney for helping that to happen. It was this year, my first year teaching high school, that I came to know Bob as a teaching professional and person.

First, I was very surprised to learn that Bob never meant to be a teacher. He told me “it just worked out that way.” His mother, who was an English and Social Studies teacher, suffered from MS and became a paraplegic as a result. Bob

actually took her back and forth to her job, driving the family car at the ripe young age of 14. He said the Wallkill Police overlooked the situation because they knew Bob was doing this for his family. His father had died and it was up to him to help his mother and younger brother.

I was also shocked to find out that Bob’s first love is science not literature. “I hated English in high school and I wasn’t very good at it.” He worked as a lab technician after college, but when the company moved, he was forced to go back to school to train for another profession. He ended up taking literature courses at New Paltz College and found them fascinating. “I found myself having more interesting and in depth conversations with my professors than my classmates who were English majors.” After having experienced the rigors of scientific lab work, Bob found English to be easy and enjoyable.

In 1968, Bob student taught with Bob “Zeke” Ciganek, a high school English teacher at Valley Central. He then took his first teaching job at Wappingers Falls School District where he stayed half a year before beginning his career at Valley Central in September of 1969. He worked across the hall from Ciganek and the two began a friendship that is strong to this day. In fact, Bob says Ciganek was the person who mentored him for many years. “What I learned from Zeke is the power of humor to transport the message.” After Ciganek retired in 1995, Bob became English Department Chairperson. He has held the job since.

Bob’s goals for his students have always been the same and each starts with the word enjoy. “Enjoy and appreciate literature, enjoy being creative, and enjoy reading. I make ‘em love it.” And they do.

Katherine Denisi, a sophomore now, recalls Mr. Mooney fondly. She says, “I remember him lecturing our class on the Trojan War and drawing diagrams on the board. It was the way he told the story. It was humorous and entertaining and I felt like a little kid again.” She smiles and adds, “I thought he’d be really cool to have as a grandpa.”

And Zachery Feasel, a junior, recalls, “We were trapped in his room for three hours because there was a power outage and in those three hours he did whole Trojan War- a unit that should have taken two weeks – and no one was bored.” Feasel went on to say, “There are some teachers that feed off us, Mooney fed us and we loved it.”

I asked Mooney what he is most proud of as he looks back over his 36-year long stretch as an English teacher. He pauses and says he does not want to sound like an ego maniac. (I am taken aback, because in my mind, he has every right to be an egomaniac.) He says, “I believe I’ve made a difference and know I have, because former students, years later, tell me I have. And when you get rewarded like that it’s like an addiction, and you can’t stop doing what you do.”

But now that he has chosen to stop, Bob says he will find other things to fill up his world. He describes himself as a multi-dimensional person. And while he will miss teaching, he says he has a myriad of hobbies, from gardening to beekeeping, from writing to traveling that he looks forward to pursuing.

For those of you who have known him a long time, you are very fortunate. For I, who have only known him a year, I am grateful that I have his phone number.

~ Kristine Thorn, HS

Cecilia Cornwell says “Adieu” to VCHS

This June, Valley Central High School and the Foreign Language Department will say adieu to one of Valley Central’s finest, Cecilia Cornwell. Cecilia was a graduate of New Utrecht High School in Brooklyn, NY in 1966 and then came to the area and attended and graduated from SUNY New Paltz.

Her first teaching experience was at the Poughkeepsie High School. Then after teaching in Wallkill, she came to Valley Central in 1979. She has been teaching the French language and culture to her students ever since. As an au pair, Cecilia lived in the south of France, so she has brought to her

classroom her love of the French language and a first hand experience of the culture. During her career she has served as French Honor Society Advisor, and has taken more than ten trips to France and other parts of Europe with her students; an experience that she knows will broaden their horizons and is essential for a well rounded education. She has shared her expertise, knowledge and experiences with her



classes and others. Her teaching style is demanding, yet her students admit that they learn “beaucoup” and learn to love a foreign language. Cecilia will continue to travel, since it is her passion; read, relax, hike, garden, and settle

into a retirement that she has certainly earned. We wish her the very best of luck and many healthy years ahead.

~ June Voegelin,

VCHS



Chris Verlezza about to start a “new beginning”



joke with.

Chris grew up in Maybrook, N.Y. and has always been part of the Valley Central family. She attended Maybrook Elementary School and started 7th grade in the “new” Valley Central High School. After graduation, she attended O.C.C.C. and received her teaching degree at SUNY

Oswego.

She began her teaching career in her hometown at Maybrook Elementary where she took a part-time 4th grade teaching position. She soon moved to a full-time 2nd grade teaching position at East Coldenham Elementary School and eventually transferred to a 2nd grade position at Walden Elementary School and remained there for 30 years.

Chris married Tony Verlezza in 1973 and has one son, Chad, who lives and works in the

area. Although Chris’ husband will be retiring this year too, she says they have no definite retirement plans. She’s looking forward to enjoying what each new day brings and brushing up on her bowling score (maybe, even, bowling a perfect game).

Chris is grateful for the years of professional and personal growth she’s had at Valley Central. We at Walden Elementary are grateful to have had the opportunity to work side by side with such a caring, thoughtful individual who always dedicated herself to putting “children first”. We wish her a happy, healthy wonderful “new beginning” she is so deserving of.

~ Gina Gesso-Klepis

Walden Elementary School

June 24 will be the last day that Chris Verlezza will walk through the Walden Elementary School doors as a second grade teacher. Chris has decided that after 33 years of teaching it is time for a “new beginning”. She has been one of Walden’s finest for 30 years. It’s hard to imagine what the second grade floor will be like without her (and her bird clock chirping every hour). She has always been there for all of us; as a colleague to ask for advice or guidance and as a friend to laugh and



Retiree Class of 2005

May the Road rise to Meet You.

May the Wind be Always at your Back.

May the Sun shine Warm upon your Face.

The Rains Fall Soft upon your Fields.

And until We Meet again...

May God hold you in the Palm of His Hand.

Godspeed, Friends

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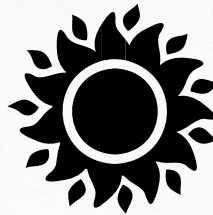
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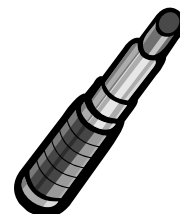
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VCTA Web page.*



23rd Annual VC Retiree Luncheon

Wednesday, September 7th
12:00 PM

*Look for information in this
summer's Mac's Musings.*

On Retirement: A Reflection

Ignatius Loyola, soldier—scholar—spiritual father—saint, then reminded his followers that they were to be “contemplatives in the midst of action.” He meant it to be their approach to mission, to life. It has stuck me in the past decade or so that retirement allows this contemplation and action to beautifully co-exist.

After years of active teaching, the retiring teacher is gifted with time and space to look back on the classroom years, to contemplate the many and varied little victories of the teaching time: turning on the light of learning, showing how understanding

can lead to wisdom, helping to save kids from helplessness to hopelessness.

And in the glow of these reflections, there is the realization that new action, a new dawn of awareness is about to begin: the reward for “fighting the good fight;”, for “finishing the course”, for “keeping the faith”.

Welcome to the ranks of the retirees!

~ Kevin McFadden

