



Barrington High School alumna, Joyce Taillon, recently donated family photos of a campaigning John F. Kennedy who visited BHS in October 1960.

Tom Leonard shares a photo from his elementary school years.

## Newfound Photos, First-grade Fears, and a Reassuring Teacher

EARLY ONE EVENING, a few weeks before Thanksgiving, I was in my office reading and answering the explosion of emails that often occur throughout the day. Everyone experiences the flood of advertisements we can delete, and the multitude we are copied on, which are easy to eliminate. Having finished those, I responded to a few that needed genuine attention. Nearly ready to don my coat and hat before leaving, for some reason I decided to check my email one last time. Two more messages had arrived: the first for a hair product I will never need; the second, more consequential message, was from a long-time Barrington resident.

Joyce (Anderson) Taillon is a 1962 Barrington High School alumna who was writing to ask if Barrington 220 would be interested in some recently discovered family photos that belonged to her brother, Rusty, who passed away a few years

earlier. Joyce explained how her brother, during the 1960 presidential election, was an ardent John F. Kennedy supporter, and had evidently kept several photos from JFK's visit to Barrington High School in October 1960, only 10 days before he was elected president. Coincidentally, Joyce had read a previous column of mine in *Quintessential Barrington*, where I talked about the many famous individuals who have visited our high school. That article included the only known photo of JFK speaking in front of BHS.

As you might imagine, I paused putting on my coat and hat and quickly replied to Joyce, stating we would love to meet with her, and were honored she would consider sharing the photos with the Barrington 220 community. A meeting was promptly arranged. As a result, her family's historic photos are now on display for our students and community to enjoy in time for the com-

memoration of 53 years since President Kennedy's inauguration on Jan. 20, 1961.

Joyce's donation reminded me of another individual's generosity in my own life many years before. Viewing the Kennedy photos transported me back to my childhood and a day when I needed help ... a day I cannot forget. Just as a younger generation will forever remember Sept. 11, 2001, those born before 1958 can recall exactly where we were upon first hearing the tragic news flashes from Dallas on Nov. 22, 1963.

That fall of 50 years ago, I was a first-grader at Niles Elementary School. It is one of the few days I vividly recall from my early grade-school experience. I can still hear the principal announcing on the school's public address system that President Kennedy had been shot. As a 6-year-old, the gravity of the message was beyond me until I saw my teacher's emotional reaction. My classmates

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### WHEN A LITTLE MEANS A LOT

Gerry and Jennifer Wondrasek loved their neighborhood, loved their home, but the family had outgrown their floor plan. They were having a difficult time finding a plan that fit their needs when they spoke to neighbors Phil & Marney Naughten, who raved about the space planning Julie from Delta Renovations had done for their kitchen and bathrooms. Julie listened, suggested the rear of the home be extended about 6' to gain the flow between the kitchen and family room. The first floor laundry became the mudroom (command center) and the laundry found a new home on the second floor. The bedrooms were reconfigured and another bathroom added. The plan fit their needs, the price fit their budget and Delta was retained. The Barrington area knows Delta's reputation as fine craftsmen and builders. Julie's design created sophisticated interior accents with timeless custom cabinetry to make the Wondrasek interior something truly exceptional and distinctive. Something truly their own.

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and I watched intently as she lost her composure, holding her desk for support, lowering her head to hide the dreadful sadness in her face. Awhile later, the principal delivered the news that President Kennedy was believed dead and we were all excused to go home early.

This was unprecedented. Something big had happened; my teacher was very, very upset and they were sending us home. The air hung heavy with grief and fear. Many questions raced through my young mind and the teacher must have sensed our collective confusion. In the minutes before we were dismissed, she offered a gesture of generosity, hugging each of us as we left the classroom, calmly telling us, "Everything will be okay."

Unfortunately, while her reassurance helped greatly, my fears weren't completely allayed. Being released so early in the afternoon, I arrived home to an empty house, as my mom had not yet left work. Unsure of what was happening, my mother recalled later finding me hiding in our garage. In my childlike attempt to make sense of the circumstances, as those of that era will understand, I was deeply afraid the Russians were coming.

Generosity, both individual and collective, can be as simple as a hug, or as lasting as a gift of remarkable photos to remain with an institution for the benefit of future generations. Our school district is grateful for the donation from Mrs. Tailon, and our students are blessed by the gifts they receive each day from our staff, just as I was fortunate to be embraced by my teacher that fateful day in the fall of 1963.

We are lucky to live in a community where big-heartedness is the norm and not the exception, as evidenced by local charities that provide a backpack with nutritious foods each weekend to children in need, Internet access to households that cannot afford online service, and mental health resources to students and families who have nowhere else to turn.

I would be remiss, in an article about giving, not to mention the mutual efforts of school Parent Teacher Organizations, the Barrington 220 Educational Foundation, and many local individuals and service organizations, whose contributions regularly enhance the learning experience for our students. The support of these vital groups rang-

es from providing technologies – such as sound systems and SmartBoards – to materials for pre-engineering and video production classes at the middle and high schools, to the successful new Business Incubator Startup class at BHS. I could go on, but the list of gifts and those responsible would fill this magazine.

To all who share so much, on behalf of Barrington 220, thank you. We could not be a world-class school system without your involvement. And thanks to my first-grade teacher, who, with one gentle act, briefly helped calm a confused 6-year-old on Nov. 22, 1963. I have no doubt our Barrington 220 teachers, and the community around them, would respond even now with the same care, compassion, and kindness.

Indeed, you do everyday. 



PHOTO: THOMAS BALSAMO  
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