



St. Mary's Colgan

Alumni & Friends Newsletter

Volume 1, 2020



St. Mary's



Colgan



St. Mary's Colgan

FAITH EXCELLENCE TRADITION

Herb Krumsick believes in giving back. Herb recently became a donor to help *Bridge the Gap*, an initiative within the SMC Annual Appeal. In donating to *Bridge the Gap*, he has made a significant donation to the school. Herb is a Senior VP for JP Weigand and Sons Real Estate Agency in Wichita where he deals mainly in industrial properties. Herb has been blessed with six children, five who live in the Wichita area, and three work with him. He also has 10 grandchildren. When Herb was a young man, he was the recipient of a very humble man's generosity. Herb graduated from St. Mary's High School in 1961, and received an offer to play football with a full ride scholarship to St. Benedict's in Atchison, Kansas. Unfortunately, after three semesters, St. Benedict's dropped the football program. At that time, Herb's football coach told him that his tuition had been paid by John Towner, Sr. Herb said, "Mr. Towner was a humble man who told no one he was doing this." Mr. Towner's generosity made a lifelong impact on Herb. Herb was able to continue his education at Wichita State University where he was co-captain of the 1964 football team.

HOW IS BRIDGE THE GAP DIFFERENT THAN THE ANNUAL APPEAL?

The SMC Alumni and Friends Annual Appeal is a tremendous source of funding for our schools. Donations have been used to update facilities, such as replacing the roof on the high school, and helping to make payroll for our amazing teachers. For this we say THANK YOU! By simply mailing out the Annual Appeal and asking for your donation, we have received an average of over \$300,000 each year for the past six years. However, *Bridge the Gap* is focused on donors who have the means to make a larger than average donation with a possible multi-year commitment.

WHY IS THERE A GAP?

Providing a Catholic education to every family who desires it for their children is expensive. Just as in the entire Diocese of Wichita, there is no tuition at St. Mary's Colgan Schools. Each family is asked to tithe as their means allow. This amazing model of stewardship creates an environment where all students, regardless of their financial status, have available to them all that we offer at SMC. Since the start of St. Mary's Schools in the early 1900's, there have been extraordinary donors who had the financial ability to help provide for future generations. All SMC Alumni have benefitted from these generous donors. If you can help *Bridge the Gap*, please contact Dennis Burke at burked@OLLsmc.com or 620.231.2135.

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IMPORTANT Announcement

The St. Mary's Colgan Reunion scheduled for June of 2020 has been postponed.
Please mark your calendars and plan to attend the next
ST. MARY'S COLGAN ALL SCHOOL REUNION JUNE 25-27, 2021

ALUMNI ANNOUNCEMENTS

Alumni Wedding & Anniversary Announcements

And Two Shall Become One

Kaleb Hamilton ('15) and Brooke Main ('14)

January 11, 2020



Happy 50th Wedding Anniversary

Mike ('66) and Kay (Schieffelbein '67) Payne December 27, 2019

Ken and Vickie (Herbeck '67) Waltrip April 11, 2020

Happy 25th Wedding Anniversary

Shane and Amy (Askins '89) Kannarr December 30, 2019

Alumni Birth Announcements: *Welcome to the Baby Panthers*

Brandon and Grace (Miller '08) Tucker

Announce the birth of a daughter, **Claire Olivia**, August 19, 2019

Jurij ('97) and Melissa Lomshek

Announce the birth of a daughter, **Emilija Ming Yin**, January 19, 2019

Paul ('02) and Meagan (Bolinger '03) Gill

Announce the birth of a son, **Jefferson Paul**,
February 14, 2020



Brian ('99) and Tara Wilbert

Announce the birth of a daughter, **Edie Lynn**, February 17, 2020

PJ ('86) and Stephanie (Waltrip '91) Forbes

Announce the birth of a daughter, **Sutton Strong**, February 24, 2020

Barry ('85) and Jennifer Dean

Announce the birth of a son, **Theodore "Teddy" Griffin**, April 2, 2020

✝ **Recently Deceased Alumni**
*May their souls and the souls of
all the faithfully departed rest in peace.*

Art Scavezze ('53)

December 21, 2019

Barbara (Davied) Unrein ('45)

December 27, 2019

Kathy (Orender) Hadley ('81)

December 30, 2019

Mary Del (Esch) Sparks ('44)

January 10, 2020

Mickey Manfre ('53)

January 20, 2020

Greg Mattivi ('69)

March 13, 2020

SISTER AGNES JOSEPH WACHTER

Sister Agnes Joseph Wachter, 94, entered eternal life February 6, 2020. She was born June 10, 1925 in Mt. Carmel Hospital, Pittsburg, KS and given the name of Teresa Marie. Sister AJ, as she was known by family and friends, attended St. Mary's elementary and high school, leaving after her junior year to enter the Sisters of St. Joseph at Mt. St. Mary's Convent in Wichita, September 4, 1942. She received the habit March 19, 1943 and made first profession of vows August 15, 1945 and final vows July 29, 1948. Sister received a BS in Education from St. Mary College in Leavenworth and MS in Education from Creighton University in Omaha. Her ministries were varied, teaching and serving as principal in both elementary and high schools of the Wichita diocese, and College Registrar for 36 years. Mass of Christian Burial was held on February 22, 2020, followed by interment in Mt. St. Mary's Cemetery.



Alumni

NEWSBlasts



2020 Basketball Homecoming

Homecoming Court: Marta Cazzaniga, Anna Guilfoyle, Millie Stockard, Emma Brill, Aubri Hoffman, and Jamie Johnson. Congratulations to Marta Cazzaniga, St. Mary's Colgan 2020 Basketball Homecoming Queen, escorted by Blaise Dawson. Marta was a foreign exchange student from Italy, who spent the first semester at SMC.

Diocesan Teaching Awards

Congratulations to SMC Teachers Julie Cedeño ('85) and Clint Heffern for receiving Diocesan Teaching Awards. Mrs. Cedeño received the 2020 Diocesan St. John Neumann K-8 Distinguished Teacher Award. Mr. Heffern received the 2020 Diocesan St. Phillipine Duchesne Outstanding New Teacher Award.



Youth Art Month Exhibit

Two SMC student's artwork were chosen to represent our school in the Youth Art Month Exhibit at the Alice Sabatini Gallery in the Topeka Shawnee County Public Library. The Art exhibit celebrates Youth Art Month and features artwork from students throughout the state of Kansas.

Isabella Piccini - St. Mary's Colgan Jr. High
Thomas Spachek - St. Mary's Colgan High School

Queens Reunion

Thank you to our St. Mary's Colgan homecoming queens who were able to make it back for the Queen Reunion.



Pictured are: (right to left and the year they were queen)
Karen Reed George-1967
Patty Dayton Harbour- 1972
Maresa Monsour-1977
Audrey Van Becelaere Dickey-1981
Lisa Forbes Paterni-1982
Brigid Farrell Dawson-1988
Amy Askins Kannarr-1989
Beth Huerter Stockard-1991
Morgen Huerter-1994
Jasna Lomshek Kalan-1995
Emily Waltrip Hamilton-1997
Cresentia Van Becelaere-1999
Tracy Cichon Evans-2000
Jessica Smith Simpson-2004
Lisa Elmer-2009
Anna Drenick-2012
Megan VanWey Brown-2014
Katelyn Radell-2019

March for Life

Thank you to our 35 SMC students and 7 sponsors who traveled via charter bus to Washington, DC for the March for Life. On their first night in DC, the busload prayed a rosary in front of the DC Planned Parenthood.



Looking Back... compiled by Chris Flood

...10 Years

REAGAN KAYS

Ten years after graduation from St. Mary's Colgan Schools, Reagan Kays ('10) is practicing law in Kansas City, Missouri at Husch Blackwell LLP. Through his practice in corporate, mergers, and acquisitions law, Reagan enjoys advising businesses about their legal rights and obligations. Immediately after high school, Reagan attended Kansas State University where he studied Agribusiness and received minors in Animal Science and Leadership. He became very involved in campus leadership activities, eventually serving as Student Body President. After a victory lap year at Kansas State, Reagan moved to our nation's capital to study law at another Catholic educational institution: Georgetown University Law School. After three years in Washington, D.C., the Midwest was calling Reagan home. He passed the Missouri Bar Exam and started practicing law in 2018. Reagan and his fiancée, Erin Clopine, met while undergraduate

students at Kansas State. They now both live in Mission, Kansas. They enjoy watching K-State sports, playing tennis, and traveling the world. In 2018, they traveled for four weeks throughout Europe including visits to the Czech Republic, Croatia, Montenegro, and Italy. Erin joined the Catholic Church in 2017, and they are getting married at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Wichita in June of this year. After their wedding, Reagan and Erin hope to begin a family and continue their extensive involvement in the Kansas City community. Recently, many of Reagan's friends and he were at a classmate's wedding and they reminisced about their football playing days. Without a doubt, playing football for Kansas Sports Hall of Fame Coach Chuck Smith is one of his favorite memories of his time at St. Mary's Colgan.

...20 Years

MELISSA (NIEGSCH) METCALF

Melissa (Niegsch) Metcalf graduated from St. Mary's Colgan in 2000. She then attended Pittsburg State University where she earned her Bachelor's degree in Commercial Graphics in 2005. Melissa moved to St. Louis where she lived for the next four years while working for the marketing firm Group360. She started out working in packaging, then transitioned to the photography studio. While Melissa was at Pitt State, she met Jake Metcalf from Ft. Scott, but at graduation they went their separate ways. About four year later, they reconnected through a mutual friend. After a year in New Orleans, Melissa and Jake moved to South Carolina. They got married in Chicopee on July 21, 2012. Jake works for

CSX Transportation as the Director of Bridges and Structures. After working in customer service for a while, Melissa went back to school and graduated from the Florence Darlington Technical College. Since 2016, she has been a CAT scan technician at UF Health Trauma Center in Jacksonville. Melissa and Jake have been blessed with their two-year-old son Jack. One of Melissa's favorite high school memories was hearing her name announced over the school intercom when she was chosen football homecoming queen. She was very honored to be chosen by her peers. Melissa says that she and her classmates still remain in contact with each other.

...30 Years

PAUL PICCINI

Paul Piccini graduated from St. Mary's Colgan with the class of 1990. He graduated from Pittsburg State University with a BSET (Plastics Engineering Technology major) in 1995 and moved to Greensboro, North Carolina, for his first job out of college. A few years later he married Kathi DeLange (Girard class of 1992) at Our Lady of Lourdes and moved Kathi to North Carolina as well. They were in North Carolina for nearly eight years before moving to Edmond, Oklahoma, for three years to be closer to family. It wasn't close enough so they decided to move back to Pittsburg. Paul and Kathi were blessed with two of their three children - Sophia (now 19, born in North Carolina) and Gianni (now 17, born in Oklahoma) before Isabella (now 13, born in Kansas) came along. All three of their children attended or currently attend SMC Schools K-12. Sophia is a Microbiology major at the University of Kansas, Gianni is a junior and Isabella

is in the 8th grade at SMC. Paul works as a Sales Engineer for a custom plastics manufacturer, Forte Products, and Kathi is a Sales Manager for Natco Home Products. Both work out of the home and travel for work. "When we moved away we had no intentions of coming back home permanently, but all that changed once we started our own family. Our experience away from Pittsburg made us grateful for our families and friends we've known our whole lives. We wanted our kids to have the opportunity for a Catholic education and with the new school being built at that time, we jumped at the chance to move back home and raise our children at St. Mary's Colgan. It has been a true blessing and a home for our kids. I'm hoping that all three of them can do that someday as well. We'll see."

...40 Years

MIKE COLLAR

Mike Collar graduated from Colgan High School with the class of 1980. He attended Pittsburg State University where he majored in marketing and was very involved with the Sigma Chi Fraternity, serving two terms as president. Mike worked for National Pizza Company shortly after college and opened a new store in Joplin and helped open a Webb City store. Today, Mike is the president of Winco Fireworks International. "Forty years after high school, I am still playing with fireworks," Mike wrote. Winco was started by Mike's brothers, John ('64) and David, while they were still in high school. Winco is one of the United States largest importers of consumer fireworks. For the fourth time, Mike is currently

serving as the president of the American Pyrotechnics Association. He is also on the executive committee of the American Fireworks Standards Laboratory, of which he has twice served as president. In 2009, Mike was awarded the Lifetime Achievement award by the Fireworks Industry. Mike and Theresa Alonge were married in 2010 and they love spending time with their two grandsons. Mike has lived in Lake Winnebago, Missouri since 1999 and he is currently running for mayor. Ironically, classmate Steve Compton also lives there. Mike has many great memories from high school, but his favorite is of the football team walking over to Hutchinson Field prior to football games.

...50 Years

TIM MCNALLY

Tim McNally began St. Mary's in Mrs. Delaney's kindergarten class, and graduated from Colgan in 1970. He spent the first two years of high school at Missouri Military Academy, then came back to Colgan. Tim said, "There is a rumor about a student that rode a motorcycle in the front door and out the back, and I guess it is time that I confess to the deed!" They were known to be a class full of "rowdy" boys. After high school, Tim continued his drag racing habit and went to work to support it. He chose not to go to college, for a while. As the Vietnam War raged on, Tim eventually enrolled at Pittsburg State University. While in college, Tim and his wife Christy were married at Our Lady of Lourdes. A year later, they welcomed their first son, Edward, and when he was six weeks old, they moved to England where Tim studied Economics at the London School of Economics. The family then moved to Illinois where Tim worked on a coal mining project. They returned to Pittsburg for five years and their oldest son enrolled in kindergarten, they had three more children, Matthew, Stuart and Megan, and Christy started a Gifted Education program at St. Mary's. Soon they moved to Danville, Pennsylvania. It was there that they realized how important a parish family is when away from home. After six years, they returned to Pittsburg, for

good. All four of their children graduated from SMC: Edward ('94), Matthew ('96), Stuart ('97) and Megan ('99). While their kids were in school, Tim and Christy enjoyed State Basketball, State Track, and State Debate and Christy once again taught at SMC. Tim wrote, "My children received excellent academic educations as well as a solid foundation in their faith. One attended Benedictine then Washburn Law, one at Kansas State, one went to Creighton and then also taught there, and our youngest went to University of Missouri - KC to medical school and then on to Ohio State for a Fellowship in Surgical Oncology. I will forever be thankful that my children were afforded an excellent education in which excellence was demanded. It has served them well." In 2002, tragedy struck and Tim was in an accident that left him in a coma for 111 days at St. John's hospital. "Once again the parish family wrapped their loving arms around our family," Tim wrote. Fr. McElwee was there to support the family. Students called from the bus on their way to a football game so Christy could hear the rosary offered for them and the volleyball team just showed up one morning. Tim concluded by saying, "Fifty years have passed - it has been a fast paced and most wonderful journey of Faith and Family."

...60 Years

LENORE (KAVANAGH) KNEEBONE

Lenore (Kavanagh) Kneebone graduated from St. Mary's High School in 1960, the last class to graduate from the old building. She married her high school sweetheart, PHS graduate Jerry Kneebone in March of 1961. Monseigneur Alex Stremel officiated the wedding ceremony at Our Lady of Lourdes Church. Within the next seven years, they had four children: Tracie, Christine, Diana and Greg. Jerry worked as a police officer in Pittsburg and also worked as a carpenter. In 1970, when Greg was two years old, the young family moved to Olathe, where they would stay. Lenore and Jerry both worked for the Olathe school district. She was the Secretary for the Director of Health Services for over 35 years. Jerry was the Manager of Facilities for the school district. Their children all went to Olathe North and between all their activities and jobs, Lenore and Jerry kept busy. After her retirement in 2008, Lenore has continued to keep busy with her social schedule. She is a member of Beta Sigma Phi, Bunco and Book Club, Red Hats,

THROBS - The Happy Retired old Broads Society, YaYa's, plays Canasta with three different groups and is also a member of the Girls' Night Out, which became the Girls' Day Out after none of the women could drive after dark! Lenore and Jerry feel very blessed that all their family lives within 30 miles of them. This includes their children, five grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. Lenore and her classmates have stayed in touch over the years and she has great memories of them. Her favorite teacher was Sister Ferdinand, who although very strict, was an excellent teacher. Lenore still remembers some of the lessons Sister taught them in her Chemistry class. She recalled that at their 50th class reunion, they shared some of their great times and Bishop Ron Gilmore was able to join them. Lenore said, "I loved going to school at St. Mary's where I received an amazing education and made lifelong friends."

...70 Years

PAT (SCHWEITZER) HOFFMAN

Pat (Schweitzer) Hoffman graduated from St. Mary's High School with the class of 1950, having attended since kindergarten. Her brother, Leo, graduated in 1944, and sister, Helen Marie, in 1946. Pat married her high school sweetheart from PHS, Bob Hoffman, on September 1, 1951. Bob worked for Prudential until his retirement. Pat and Bob were blessed with three children, Andy, Marsha, and Jeff. In 1970, Pat began her career when she went to work for Dr. Gellender and worked for 37 years before retiring. Unfortunately, Bob passed away on May 15, 2014, just a few months shy of their 63rd wedding anniversary. Their oldest son, Andy, is a 1970 graduate of Colgan High School and lives in Lawrence, Kansas.

His son, Nick, lives in Kansas City. Marsha and her husband Mark Gonzales live in Kansas City. Bob and Pat's youngest, Jeff, lives in Pittsburg with his wife Janis and their son, Tucker, a 2014 SMC graduate, and daughter, Aubri, currently a senior at SMC. Over the years, Pat and Bob could be found in the bleachers cheering on Tucker and Aubri. Pat is very proud of Janis for joining the Catholic Church last Easter. When asked about a favorite memory from school, Pat recalled, "Our class of boys and girls was a great class and everyone had a great time. I loved going to St. Mary's!" There are only a few members of the class of 1950 remaining, but Pat and classmate Norma Holland Ridgeway remain in touch.

WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER!!

The SMC Alumni Newsletter is mailed to our SMC Family, alumni and friends, all over the country. As different parts of the country are in various stages of this pandemic and being handled differently in each region, here is an update on what is happening at St. Mary's Colgan and in Pittsburg, Kansas (as of April 3, 2020). By order of Governor Laura Kelly, school buildings are closed for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. All schools in Kansas were closed starting March 16, a week before SMC's scheduled spring break. SMC President of Schools, Dennis Burke, high school principal, Wes Streeter and elementary principal, Nancy Hicks, have worked non-stop ever since. Our amazing teachers have been working in conjunction with the principals to develop our Continuous Learning Plan (CLP). The CLP has been developed to provide distance learning for our K-12 students as appropriate at each level. The implementation of the CLP began April 6th and will continue until the end of the 2020 school year. KSHSAA has cancelled all spring sports and practices.

With great sadness, Bishop Kemme has suspended all public Masses. Our priests, Fr. Jerome Spexarth, Fr. Andrew Labenz and Fr. Jorge Lopez are celebrating Mass in private and making a video available of Sunday Mass on both Facebook and YouTube.

As of Monday, March 30th, Governor Kelly has placed the entire of Kansas on a "Stay at Home Order". For updated information on SMC go to OLLsmc.com

St. Michael the Archangel, defend us in battle, be our protection against the wickedness and snares of the devil. May God rebuke him we humbly pray; and do thou, O Prince of the Heavenly host, by the power of God, cast into hell Satan and all the evil spirits who prowl about the world seeking the ruin of souls. Amen.

FROM THE CHAPLAIN: FR. LABENZ



In his Gospel, St. John the Apostle recounts the story of how the disciples of Jesus encountered Him for the very first time. After St. John the Baptist had baptized Jesus and then pointed the Messiah out to his own disciples, these men immediately left the Baptist and went after Jesus. Jesus then turned to them and said to them one of the most heart-piercing questions in all of Sacred Scripture, "What are you looking for?" (John 1:38).

Jesus asks you and me that same exact question: "What are you looking for?" The blessing of a Catholic School is that we are able to pose this decisive question to our students on a daily basis. It is the question that is at the heart of every single lesson in every single classroom, it the question that is at the center of our school's mission and purpose, and it is the question that allows us to know our truest identity as human persons.

What is our answer here at St. Mary's Colgan Catholic Schools? Our answer is this: We are not looking for worldly success, we are not looking for trite pleasures, and we are not looking for extreme fame and popularity. No rather, we are looking for Jesus Christ! We are looking for the answer to our heart's greatest longing. We are searching for the perfect love that Christ offers to us. We are looking for the happiness and the peace that comes from belonging to Him alone.

And so, I end by asking you this same poignant question: "What are you looking for?" My friends, what is your answer?

CONGRATULATIONS DEREK!

Mr. Derek J. Hooper ('01), of Our Lady of Lourdes parish and currently a seminarian at Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois will be ordained to the Transitional Diaconate in the Cathedral of St. Joseph on Saturday, May 30, 2020 at 10am (pending public health regulations) by the Most Reverend W. Shawn McKnight, Bishop of Jefferson City.



FAITH IS THE KEY

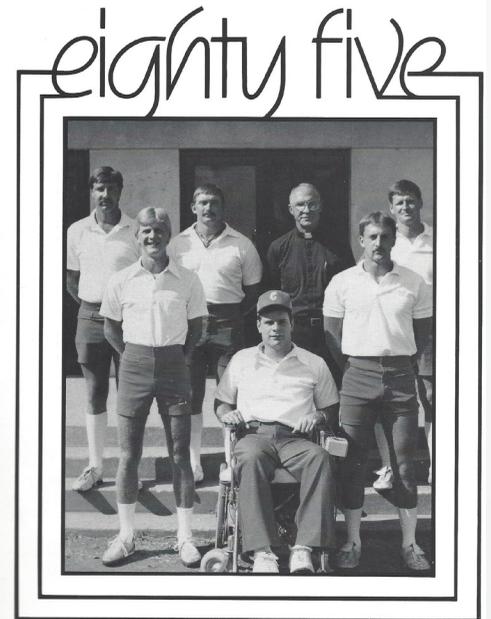
Tom Dayton ('75) was attending a friend's wedding in Burlington, Iowa, in June of 1976, when tragedy struck. He and some friends were at the hotel pool, horsing around, like typical 19 year-olds, when Tom lost his balance and fell head first into the pool. It was a clover-shaped pool with shallow and deep water right next to each other. Tom landed in about a foot of water. He hit his head on the bottom and was instantly paralyzed from the shoulders down. "I felt a shock from the top of my head down to my toes, then I couldn't move anything," Tom recalled. As he floated at the bottom of the pool, he was afraid his friends would think he was just messing around. Luckily, another man at the pool recognized that Tom was not coming up and alerted his friends. Seeing that Tom was seriously hurt, and having been trained as a Boy Scout Leader, the stranger helped Tom's friends get him out of the pool without causing more damage. Tom was taken to the Burlington hospital where he was diagnosed with a broken neck. Burlington hospital was not equipped to provide the care Tom needed, so they prepared to transfer him to the Iowa City hospital. As Tom listened to the doctors and nurses making plans for his transfer, he felt like he had heard this conversation before. Almost exactly a year before Tom's accident, Dennis Russian, a member of the Colgan baseball team, had broken his neck in a hotel accident at Emporia during the State baseball tournament. Tom was in the emergency room at the Emporia hospital when they were discussing transferring Dennis to a Kansas City hospital. Because Tom had his car at Emporia, he was asked to drive Dennis' brother to Kansas City. Perhaps God had put Tom there to prepare him for his own accident. It felt like déjà vu to Tom as they were preparing to transfer him to Iowa City. Tragically, Dennis did not survive his injuries. When the hospital called Tom's family, his Mom told them about Dennis, knowing that Tom would be thinking about him. At one point the future looked grim as Tom's lungs began to fill with fluid. "I told God that I put it in His hands," Tom said. "From that point on, God took care of everything." Tom spent two months in the Iowa City hospital with the first several weeks in the ICU. It was then time for a rehabilitation hospital.

The Dayton family was told that the best rehab hospital was Craig in Denver, Colorado, where they could accomplish in six months what it would take two years in most places. Unfortunately, the waiting list was extremely long and it was expensive. So, they looked into facilities closer to home. About this time, a relative sent them a three day novena to St. Theresa Lisieux, the Little Flower. Once again, they prayed. As they were making preparations for rehab in Kansas City, on the third day of the novena, the phone rang. It was a New York lawyer representing the hotel where the accident had occurred. He said that prior to Tom's accident the hotel had other complaints about the pool being unsafe. As a result of Tom's accident, the hotel tore out the pool and replaced it. The lawyer told Tom that the hotel was paying for his rehab at Craig. Tom was taken by jet ambulance from Iowa City to Denver. The hotel covered all of his expenses, as well as providing an adaptive van, wheel chair and equipment. The head doctor, physical therapist and occupational therapist were all assigned to Tom. "I could see God's hand in it all. I didn't realize it until later, but things had changed in other people's lives. God was using my accident to reach other people," Tom said. Tom spent four intense months at Craig. "When you first get there, you think, I am going to be the one to beat this. But they help bring it to reality." The doctors and therapists evaluated and set realistic goals. When Tom arrived at Craig, he could not lift his arms. He only has a functioning bicep in each arm. They worked to overdevelop his neck muscles to help compensate. The entire day at Craig, from 6:30am to 5pm, was spent in therapy and working on becoming as independent as possible. "But," Tom said, "I didn't have to look too far to stop feeling sorry for myself. There were young kids who were paralyzed and on a respirator." Because of the intensity of rehab work, family is not allowed at Craig. Tom's family would fly in once a month to see him and get an update on his progress.

As Tom's time at Craig was winding down, his family came for intense training on how to help take care of him and learn what modifications were needed to their house. Not only did Tom's family come for training, but Tom's roommates and priest from Benedictine College also came. The semester prior to Tom's accident he had been a student at Benedictine. Like most colleges in the 1970's, Benedictine was not very handicapped accessible. But, they went the extra mile to be trained in how to help Tom and by making modifications to campus. An old laundry room was modified to become a wheelchair accessible shower and all of his classes were moved to buildings with elevators. Tom was released from Craig in December and returned to Benedictine in January. He completed the semester and was ready to return in the fall, but was not able to continue due to complications from chronic bladder infections.

In order to accommodate his wheelchair, Tom's family had made adaptations to the house, but it was not enough. Members of Our Lady of Lourdes parish stepped in to help. Several builders in the parish built an addition to the house that was completely handicapped accessible. "They donated their time and all of the materials. It was amazing." As Tom was looking for the next chapter in his life, another parishioner, Chuck Smith, stepped in and asked Tom to help coach football at Colgan. Tom was an assistant coach for several years including when his younger brother Putzer ('85) was playing. Tom was part of the coaching staff for Coach Smith's 1984 State Championship, which was Putzer's senior year.

In 1985, Tom and Putzer's dad, Gene, passed away. Tom decided to go into the family business, Pitt Craft, and brought on Tim Collar ('75) as a partner. Tom has worn several hats in the business, but primarily does the purchasing and cost estimating. "It takes me longer to get things done, but I do." Tom writes by wedging a pen into his hand brace. Tom's mom, Shirley ('49), lived with him for many years, until her Alzheimer's made it necessary to go to a care facility. Shirley passed away in January 2017. "I have been blessed every day to have a supportive family and faith. The key to the whole thing is faith. I have seen miracles that have happened over the years. That is what keeps you going, is seeing God's hand." After nearly 44 years of being in a wheelchair, Tom continues to be able to live on his own. Help comes in the morning to get ready for the day and at night to help him get to bed. Tom calls them his guardian angels who help him retain much of his independence. "The Lord has surrounded me with special people. There is nothing bad, God can't bring good out of it."



1984 Football Coaching Staff
Back: Wayne Cichon, Mick Tener, Fr. Ivan Eck, Chuck Smith
middle: Scott Currier, Mike Main
Front: Tom Dayton

ALUMNI & FRIENDS

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INTERESTED IN TEACHING AT ST. MARY'S COLGAN CATHOLIC SCHOOLS?

Job Openings at St. Mary's Colgan Catholic Schools may be found on the Diocesan website at www.catholicdioceseofwichita.org/careers/



Keep your fellow alumni updated on your life. Send in announcements of births, weddings, career changes and advancements or other life updates. We will publish them in our next SMC Alumni Newsletter.

Mail this form to: SMC Alumni, PO BOX 214, Pittsburg KS 66762 or email the information to: alumni@OLLsmc.com

Name: _____ Class of: _____

Address: _____

Email Address: _____

Announcement: _____

Editor Chris (Wilbert) Flood ('85)

Pastor Fr. Jerome Spexarth

President of Schools Dennis Burke

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