

## In Memory of Laura Simpson Lawless

By Joyce Woodruff, Class of 1960

Laura Margaret Simpson Lawless was a 1979 graduate of Poteau High School. She was born in Tennessee and moved to Poteau in 1971, entering the Poteau School system. Laura was active in band, playing the clarinet, and had several band directors over the years – Mr. Lusk, Mr. Huckabee, Mr. Grass, Mr. Fezekas, and Mr. Brence. She was active in the Katty Club, journalism and was Editor of the Potonian staff. A member of the Student Council and Honor Society, Laura graduated in 1979 as Co-Valedictorian of her class. She was a member of Poteau First Baptist Church while living in Poteau and sang in a group called “In Jesus Name”.

After graduation, she went to NSU and received a BS in Math Education, then a Masters in Education. Laura married Jeff Lawless in 1981. She taught math at Bartlesville Mid High, Owasso Schools, Dove Science Academy, ending her career teaching at Broken Arrow Schools in 2023 after a distinguished teaching career spanning 38 years. Her passion was teaching students they could do anything they put their mind to, caring genuinely for each and every student!

*Celebrating the Life of*



*Laura Lawless*  
1961 - 2023

She was named Teacher of the Year at the Early College High School in Broken Arrow, for the 2021-22 school year.

Laura attended many PHS reunions and always loved seeing her Poteau High School “family”. She was loved by her classmates and kept track of them long after graduation. Laura was a faithful “Potonian”.

When Laura was diagnosed with pancreatic cancer, she fought the good fight, inspiring many with her faith in God and her courage in the face of adversity. She passed away on December 6, 2023, after a 20-month battle with cancer.

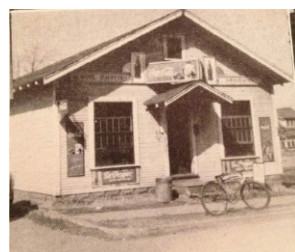
## FRITO CHILI PIES!!

By Mandy (Rogers) Fellman, Class of 1980

- Turn the Frito bag sideways.
- Slice the bag open.
- Dump some chili on top.
- Add cheese and Chow Down!!



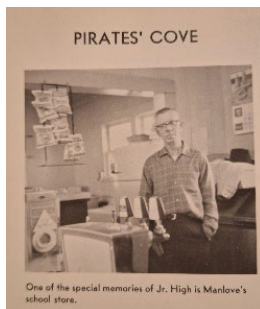
Now that's a recipe we all remember! Having that for lunch with classmates at The School Store, Pirate's Cove, or Raider's Den (whatever name you remember) – that's a recipe for a good time!!



You may remember when it was owned by the Manlove

family, the Plummer family, Paul & Mae Nichols, or Mr. & Mrs. Kemp.

Regardless of the era, our stories are similar, and love of this place seems to transcend time.



Some of us had our first job there. Maybe you got out of class early, so you weren't late for your shift. Perhaps you listened to "Louie, Louie" on the juke box .... over, and over, and over until you knew every word!! Each of the owners were there because they loved kids and wanted to serve our community – often with sage advice, instilling a sound work ethic, or helping a student further their education.

When we were little, we went there for our big crayons, fat pencils and Big Chief tablets. As we got older, we had our first romance, enjoyed friendships, and shared the latest gossip on those stools and chairs. If you were blessed to have been a student AND a teacher at Pansy Kidd, you reassured the newbies that the little house across the street was perfectly fine and safe for students (and teachers!!). And let's don't forget the glass candy case (Zots, Lik-m-Ade, Red Hots, and licorice), and the games (Foosball, Warheads and Mrs. Pac-Man). Before school and during lunch, you'd find so many of us crammed in that store, today's fire marshal might just shut it down for a safety violation!!



Whatever the memories you have of this place, or the name you remember it by, one thing is for certain. It may be closed, but OUR School Store will not be forgotten. I think we can all agree, it's one of the many things that makes our hometown so special!



## Alumni Spotlight – Tony Riley

By Terry Joe Wiles, Class of 1970

It’s not common to see 3 generations (plus) of PHS Alumni in one family. The first generation starts with his grandfather, Tony Kerbow, Class of 1951. He was an insurance agent for years and was also very civic minded in his efforts in our town. He has passed down that legacy. Tony’s mother, Trayce, Class of 1983, was one of the best photographers and reporters for Poteau Daily News for several years. Tony, Class of 2006, graduated while working as an apprentice in a local plumbing company. After marriage, he and high school sweetheart, Misty, Class of 2005, started a family and made Poteau home. And when I wrote 3 generations plus, I mean that they have two kids in the Poteau School system, Kainan, future Class of 2027 and Kandi, future Class of 2029.



*Alumni Spotlight continued on page 4*

## Alumni Financial News by Linda Holton, Class of 1956

Since the reunion we have received, and are grateful for, several donations. **Carolyn Becker** donated \$1,000 in memory of her Class of 1959. **Leta Wann** donated \$25. The **Class of 1960** donated \$157. A member of the Class of 1985 is making a **monthly** \$100 donation. Thanks to **Willie Morris**, the **Poteau DAV Chapter** is donating \$300 for caps and gowns.

Speaking of finances, or the lack of them. The report shows we have a lot of money, but most of that is not for general Association expenses. We spent over \$5,000 for the 2023 reunion. The biggest expense was the meal. A lot of people registered but were unable to attend. The meal expense was based on the number of registrations. So, it was a fixed expense for 300 people registered, yet only 174 meals were served, and 126 meals were purchased but not served.

All revenue received is either donations or dues to become an active alumni member. (Yes, you can be an alumnus without being an active alumnus.) Both of those sources of revenue have all but stopped. To pay for the reunion in 2025, we will either need additional funds (if we want to cover the full cost) or charge a fee to attend. The Association has expenses just like you do. We sponsor caps & gowns for a few graduating seniors, post office box rental, hosting the website, and the reunion – to name just a few. If we don’t have enough revenue to cover our expenses, we may have to discontinue some of them.

Please consider donating or becoming an active alumni member. Dues are \$40 (one-time only) for a lifetime membership. Or donate any amount that you prefer.

Mail checks to PHS Alumni Association, P.O. Box 803, Poteau, OK 74953.

### Treasurer’s Report, January 2024

#### January 9, 2024 bank statement

Association Account:	\$ (699.29)
Static Account:	\$ 9,500.45
Scholarship Account:	\$ 2,479.06
Total:	\$11,280.22

**Alumni Spotlight**, *continued from page 3*

I first got acquainted with Tony through my church, Faith Community, in our Upward with Sports basketball program. Both kids played every Saturday for 7 weeks. After a couple of hours and games, they were headed to play a soccer game and a baseball game. Today, this family's busy with PHS activities and supporting high school sports. When Tony has time, he keeps his plumbing company in line and serves the Poteau area.

Now, Tony could have started his career in plumbing, planning his future while learning a trade. But rumor has it that he had fallen in love with his boss' daughter, and the rest just fell into place. Tony's Plumbing has grown into a multi truck business. This Winter, which is always lucrative in his trade, LeFlore County suffered the worst week of a single digit freeze that caused lots of plumbing problems. Tony was on a cruise to the Bahamas. Smart timing for a plumbing contractors' vacation if ya ask me!

In the civic minded department, Tony has been on the Poteau Fire Department for the last 8 years. He is a member of the Poteau City Planning Board. He uses his smart, successful business sense and experience of owning/operating Tony's Plumbing to positively impact our community.

He is focused and will work hard at any civic ventures. And, just a side note, Tony is in the run-off election for a seat on the Poteau Board of Education, position 4. The election will take place on April 2<sup>nd</sup>. Good luck! Tony Riley would certainly get my vote!

In my honest opinion, Poteau could use more families like the Riley's. They are a blessing. That's why they are my choice for Alumni Spotlight.

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**Have you Moved?**

Each time we mail the Static, several issues are returned with a corrected address or are undeliverable. Due to the cost of postage, we will not re-mail the issues that are returned. Address corrections will be made for the next issue. If you prefer, we can email the Static, which will be an additional savings for the Association. In a few years, we will probably convert to an all email or e-version of the Static, due to rising printing and postage costs. But, if you'd like to continue receiving hard copies, we must have your correct address. If you move, please send us the corrected address. When you update your address at the post office, or your phone or email, consider sending that information to us as well.

PHS Alumni Association, P.O. Box 803, Poteau, OK 74953

## The Potonian & Pirate Log by Joe Harwell, Class of 1972

Did you work on the Potonian yearbook or Pirate Log newsletter in high school? Why were you interested or motivated to participate? I suppose the writing, publishing, and journalism bug bit me early. What I didn't count on was also being bitten by the advertising bug.

Our teacher sponsor, Mrs. Janell Darneal, was a major reason we wanted to be in the class. She was popular because students appreciated her teaching style and personality, a real bright light of the PHS faculty. My official designation in the class was a photographer. Mrs. Darneal allowed me, and the rest of the students, to be involved in every aspect of writing, layout, production, and advertising sponsor sales. Being a floater, involved in multiple tasks, defined my career choices for decades.

My fellow students on the Potonian and Pirate Log for the 71/72 school year were another reason I enjoyed being part of it. I was not one of the "cool or brainy kids" back in the day. The group was made up of both.

Although we attended the same school, I didn't know the others on the Potonian staff very well. For advertising sponsor sales, we were paired with other students to call on businesses with ads in previous Potonians and contact other businesses for new ads. This was a good opportunity to get to know our classmates better. Plus, my early experience cold-calling businesses for advertising shaped and benefitted my career choices.

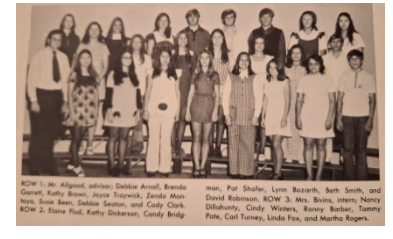
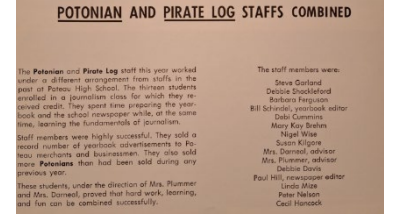
I don't remember the cost of yearbooks in the late 1960s and early 70s. It couldn't have been more than \$20. Parents and grandparents of current middle school and high school students tell me yearbooks cost north of \$50.

I'm lucky to still have the 1968 through 1973 Potonians. Sometimes I go years without looking at them and other times one or more is on the corner of my desk, too often due to a death. I don't go to Poteau often but do what I can to support the Alumni Association.

If you're reading this, get out your yearbook and look up friends. Get in touch with someone you haven't seen in years. Post a photo of fellow students on social media. It'll make their day!

Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1652606995001114>

Website [www.poteauhsalumni.com](http://www.poteauhsalumni.com)





## Poteau High School Alumni Obituaries

The alumni Association received word of the following deaths, but no other information was given.

**Bill Hughes** passed away July 7, 2022. He was a member of the Class of 1956.

**Lynda Fox** passed away in 2023. She was a member of the Class of 1973.

**Loretta Sue Steele** passed away on March 28, 2023. She was the Art Teacher at Pansy Kidd Middle School for several years.

**Bob Worley** passed away in 2023.

**Sonya (Klinger) Langley** died in September 2023. She was a member of the Class of 1985.

**Robert Holt**, Class of 1989 passed away September 7, 2023.

**Frank Rabourn**, Class of 1948, died in 2023.

**Michael Wayne Whitehead**, Class of 1966, passed away on September 4, 2023.

**Coy Smedley** passed away November 6, 2021.

**Daisy Mae (Marler) Adcock** passed away.

**Scotty Bratton** died May 16, 2023. He is survived by a son, Gary and Diana Bratton, several nieces, and nephews. He was a member of the Class of 1948.

**Margaret "Kathy" Wilson** died June 4, 2023. Survived by husband F.L. "Flip", sons Paul Wilson, Tim and Kim Wilson, grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

**Erma Lee (Tucker) Sulivant** passed away June 8, 2023. She is survived by her husband Leo; daughters Gayle Hall, Sandra and Glenn Thompson; sons Michael and Beatriz Sulivant; sister Edith Bomar; brother Herbert Tucker and several grandchildren. She was a member of the class of 1956.

**Aimee Lynn** passed away on July 8, 2023. She is survived by her parents Bob and Wanda Dorey; sister Dana and Greg Welton; brothers Kyle and Mitzy Lynn, Kelly and Molly Lynn; sister-in-law, Gwen Lynn. She was a Poteau Pirate Class of 1987.

**Terry Don Couch** passed away July 26, 2023. Survived by wife Starla, daughter Tiffany and Chris, sisters Peggy Bell, Linda Thompson, and Tamm y Duncan.



Once a Pirate, Always a Pirate

**Shirley (Boyd) Collins** died August 8, 2023. She was a 1964 Poteau graduate. She is survived by her husband Larry, daughters Shirlena and Chris Anderson, Davina Jean and David Reynolds, brothers David and Fran Boyd, Jim "Baldy" and wife Gloria, John and Tere Boyd.

**Judy (Mabry) Foster** Class of 1956 passed away September 9, 2023. She is survived by her children Kenneth and Elaine Foster, Nancy and Paul Thompson, Ted Foster, Janey and Bruce Adams, sisters Beverly Davis, Hazel Mabry and brother John. Judy attended the reunion on September 5, 2023. She danced and had a good time.

**Brad Randall** died September 9, 2023. Survivors include his wife Jana (Dunn) Randall, sons Bradford & Nicole, and Zachary & Malynn, and 3 grandchildren.

**Deanna Manis** died September 14, 2023. She is survived by her daughter Dena L. Manis, brother John Roy, and niece Cate Roy. She was a member of the Class of 1965.

*Obituaries continued on page 7*

**PHS Alumni Obituaries**, *continued from page 6*

**Kenneth Didway** died September 9, 2023. Survivors include sons Alan and Karen Didway, Rodney and Joannette Didway. He was a member of the Class of 1956.

**Lloyd Summers**, Class of 1950, died September 10, 2023. He was preceded in death by his wife, Betty (Jenson) Summers, also Class of 1950. He is survived by his sons Bruce and Gary Summers; daughter Mandy (Rogers) Fellman, Class of 1980; 4 grandchildren and 3 great grandchildren.

**Ed Abernathy** passed away September 19, 2023. He is survived by a son Dr. Bryan Abernathy, and a daughter Shawna and Brent Sterling all of Fayetteville, Arkansas.

**Tracy (McCoy) Freeman** passed away September 25, 2023. Survivors include her husband Ray of the home, daughter Farron Crouch, sister Sherry and Jim Hilderbrand, brother Joshua McCoy.

**Christal (McCormick) Pippin** died September 26, 2023. She was a PHS Alumni, and she played in the band. Survivors include husband Henry, daughter Angel and Sam Parker, stepsons Ray Pippin, Nathaniel Pippin, parents Jim and Christa McCormick, brother Mike and Angela McCormick, sister Sylvia and Tony Atkins.

**Patricia Nell Donathan** died October 16, 2023. Survivors include her husband Neil, son David and April Donathan, daughter Shannon and Jarrod Lee, brother Robert and Linda James, sisters Mona Reed and Ruth Burrows, several grandchildren, and great grandchildren.

**Bill Sutterfield**, Class of 1956, died October 18, 2023. Survivors include his wife Janie, sons Dr. Chris and Melissa Sutterfield, Mike, and Cindy Sutterfield and 8 grandchildren.

**William Pickle, Jr.** died October 25, 2023. Survivors are his wife Tara Lynn, daughter Susanna Lynn Pickle, son William Pickle III, sister Saray and Robert Connatser, brothers Paul and Marilyn Pickle, David and Marilyn Pickle, and granddaughter Dakota Pickle.

**Brent Alan Hemphill** passed away November 4, 2023. He is survived by his parents Debra (Cavins) Stroup, son Joe Hemphill Jr. and wife Kay, sisters Nikki Weaver-Aguero, Natalie Weaver and Beverly Fanning.

**Lundy Kiger** passed away November 13, 2023 in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He is survived by his wife, Samantha, son Joe Kiger and wife Katie, daughters Miranda and H Palmer, Hailey and Bobby Geren, and Mya Hess and fiancé Jared Jones, and grandchildren Havyn, Hudsyn, Samuel and Kade.

**Brenda Jackson** passed away on November 17, 2023. She is survived by three daughters, Susan and Nick Armor, Marla Clark and Crystal and Tony Patro, 5 grandchildren and 7 great grandchildren. She was a 1975 PHS graduate.

**Laura (Simpson) Lawless** passed away December 6, 2023 after a battle with pancreatic cancer. She was Co-Valedictorian of the PHS Class of 1979. Survivors include her husband Jeff, children Jenny and Josh Gaylord, Adam Lawless, sisters Phyllis Renfro, Becky Frost, and brother Mark Simpson. She had 3 grandchildren.

**Nancy Hiler** passed away on December 6, 2023. She is survived by daughter Samantha Pinnell, daughter-in-law April Hiler, sister Shirley and Gary Holt, brother Tim and Garyl. She was a 1975 graduate.

**Marjorie Powers-Shoup** passed away December 7, 2023. Survivors include her husband Dewey Shoup, daughters Julie (Wood) Salgado and husband Mike, son Phillip Wood, sisters Mary Chronister and Wanda Roden, brother Joe Powers.

**Bill Bowlin** passed away December 8, 2022. He is survived by his wife Jan, daughter Kristie and Sean Savage, son Scott and Rexanne McCraay, several grandchildren and other family members. He was a 1960 PHS graduate.

**Jacob Waymire** passed away December 12, 2023 at the age of 32. He is survived by his parents Rodney and Cindy Waymire, brother Joe and Meagan Waymire and many other relatives and friends.

**Kathy Robertson** passed away December 14, 2023. Survivors are husband David, daughter Karri Jo Robertson, son D.P. and Tara Robertson, 1 sister and 1 brother and several grandchildren and 1 great grandchild.

**Robert "Rob" Ellis** passed away December 27, 2023. He is survived by his wife Nancy and daughters Andrea and Ronny Newby, Tara and Tommy Smith, and Whitney Ellis, several grandchildren and many more family and friends.

**PHS Alumni Obituaries**, *continued from page 7*

**Michael Fay (Davis) Jackson** died December 29, 2023. She is survived by her son Walter and Christina Jackson, several grandchildren and great grandchildren, brothers Lester Davis and Leonard Davis.

**Jackie Leonard Neal** passed away December 30, 2023 in Poteau. He is survived by his wife Kim, his mother Lois Neal, his children Kaila Neal, Kensy Neal, and Josh Neal, several grandchildren, relatives, and friends.

**Mary Lou Callaway** passed away on January 7, 2024. Survivors include sons Jeff and Jo Ellen Callaway, David Callaway, and Daryl and Delanna Callaway. She had 6 grandchildren and 5 great grandchildren, brothers Jimmy Cooper, Jackie Cooper, and sister Joanna and Donald Garrett. She was a 1956 graduate of PHS.

**Dr. Jack Gedosh** passed away January 20, 2024 in Ft. Smith Arkansas. He is survived by his wife JoAnn and children Pam Ray, Andrea Gedosh, David Gedosh, Michael Gedosh, and their mother Loretta Gedosh, 8 grandchildren. He was a member of the Class of 1949.

**Gary Billings** passed away January 21, 2024 in Poteau. He is survived by his wife Nancy (Vickers) and 2 daughters Kendra Bailey and husband Tommy, and Rayven Billings, one grandson Cooper Bailey, 3 brothers Dennis and Diane Billings, Glen and Annie Billings, and Bobby Billings, and sister Judy Sweeten.

**Treca Balentine** died January 23, 2024. She is survived by her husband Aud, and son Bob and Nina Balentine, 5 grandchildren, sisters Cathryn Howard and Jean Rowland, brother Ernie and Kaye Cauthron.

**Steve Watson**, 71, passed away February 9, 2024 at home. He is survived by his wife Vanda, daughters Deedra and Brad McMillin, Ashby Watson, 2 sons Hudson and Shelby Turley, and Stanton Turley, 4 grandchildren and 1 great grandchild. His sisters Margy and Randy Tucker, Alice and Phil Woodrum, Sue and Danny Turnage, Tami and Gary Robbins.

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Poteau High School Alumni Association  
P.O. Box 803  
Poteau, OK 74953

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