

Beth Watson Drinnen: East High grad will launch site to keep classmates connected

By Beth Watson Drinnen
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2011
Special to the News Sentinel Ross Greene, and his wife, Lynne, enjoy a vacation in Florida.

When Ross Greene, a graduate of the East High School Class of 1958, attended his 50th high school reunion three years ago, he left with several email addresses, an obsession with preserving Knoxville's history and an idea for a school website.

The website, www.knoxvilleheritage.com, is expected to go live this Friday, August 5. Greene said the site contains all 17 yearbooks from each year East High was in existence. He has also scanned photos from about 20 annuals from Knoxville High School, as well as school newspapers from both East and Knoxville High, photographs from reunions, grammar school class photos and team photographs from the youth sports programs from the 1950s and '60s.

"I had a program written so people can go in, pick the year they want, see their annual and thumb through it online," he explained. "It's a very robust, content-rich site."

Greene said he obtained the photos, annuals and information from a variety of sources, but admitted the process of scanning the photos, creating the website and researching the history has cost a great deal of time and money. According to Greene, however, it's time and money well-spent.

"This has become an obsession!" he said with a laugh. "But I really enjoyed growing up in Knoxville. I guess you could say I have a lot of nostalgia, but I just feel it's important to stay connected with each other. A website like this is a great way to do it."

Long before the website was created, but shortly after the reunion, Greene began the process of keeping his classmates connected by compiling a book. The book contained photographs of the class of 1958, updates on classmates and bits of Knoxville's history. That book led to a series of emails that Greene titled "Do You Remember." As part of that series, Greene would research a former teacher or classmate, and send an update on them to everyone on his email list. As word of the series spread, his contact list grew. Eventually, the "Do You Remember" emails lead to updates of a different nature.

"People would reply and tell me what was going on with people we knew," he explained, "I began to put together a little notice about who's sick, who's in the hospital, who's dying." Greene said the emails are sent weekly, and sometimes daily, depending on the influx of information. "It's built some momentum and has really connected the people from East High," he acknowledged.

In addition to acting as the unofficial historian for East High, Greene is currently busy creating a website on World War II memorabilia and writing a book on the war.

"The impetus was finding about 750 letters that my uncle had written to his wife, my mother, and my grandmother in the 1940s, before he was killed over in Germany. I felt like it was a story that needed to be told," he said. "It's important because if we don't give to the next generation the things that we've learned, then they will be doomed to repeat the errors we made. It's a heritage."

Contact Greene at rossgreene@greeneconsults.com.

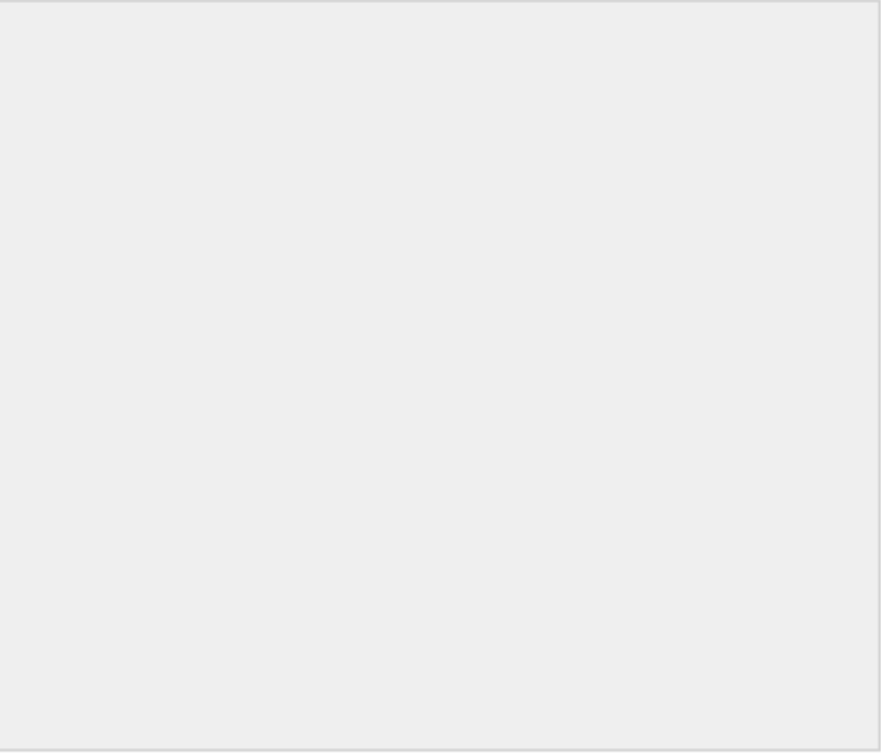
Beth Watson Drinnen is a freelance contributor to the News Sentinel.

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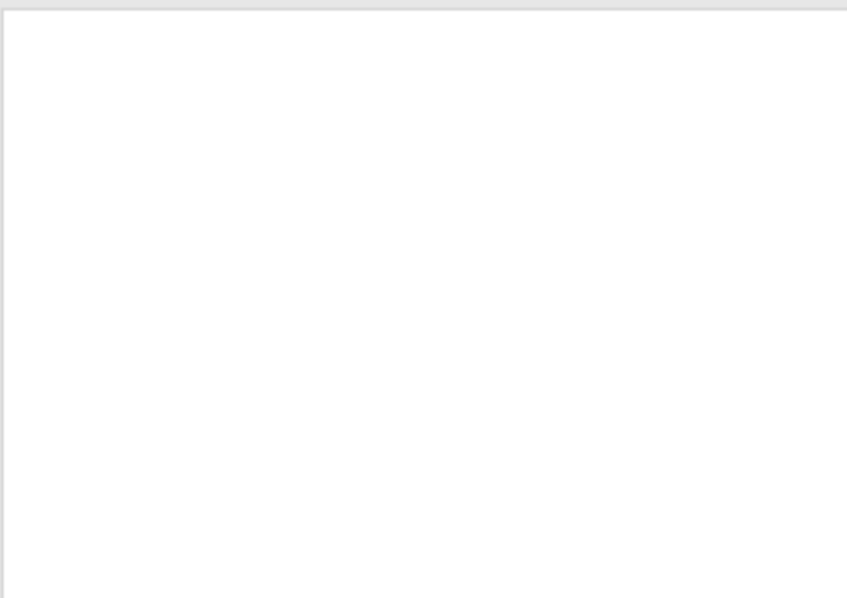
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