

Sportswriter's farewell

Four quarters forged bond

By Tim Matteson

"Oh my god, what I am going to do next?"

That was a common phrase for me and many of my friends. We said it or just thought it over four years ago as our graduation from Castleton State College approached.

Like many of this year's high school seniors, I was facing uncertainty in a time of great rejoicing. Four years ago, you current high school graduates were facing the big move to high school and the not so predictable future.

I have seen other classes graduate, but this class is special for me. Through my coverage of sports at Guilderland, Voorheesville, and Berne-Knox-Westerlo, I have seen you kids grow, physically and emotionally.

I graduated from Castleton State with a degree in journalism, I was still jobless — unless you count delivering pizzas, not much of a career, huh? Then I came across an advertisement in the classified section of the *Times Union*: A small local paper was looking for a sportswriter. Since I lived in Vermont, the fact that I even got the *Times Union* was coincidental; I just happened to be in Lake George for the day and decided for the heck of it to pick one up. I found the ad on my second reading of the classified section.

As many of this year's graduates were preparing for high school by keeping a strong bond with friends while meeting new people and honing their athletic skills to make the jump to high school sports, my next journey would be a solo voyage.

My closest friends followed their dreams and moved

away — one to Virginia and one to Florida. I moved on to little old Altamont and to *The Enterprise*. The fact that I got the job was amazing, as I was an hour late for my interview. I found out later that 30 people applied for the spot. I must have really wowed them.

As we started our journey into our new worlds — this year's graduates, then freshmen, and I — storylines started to develop. We heard about a couple of young female basketball players at Berne-Knox-Westerlo who would ultimately bring success to the sport, the likes of which the school had never seen before.

We heard of how a new boys' varsity basketball coach at Guilderland, Ron Osinski, would turn around that program and develop the young talent that waited to make the deepest run in the playoffs in the school's history.

We also found out how really good the girls' basketball programs at Voorheesville and Guilderland are and I found out how much you, the students, looked up to the players.

As the years went by — they flew by didn't they? — some of you chose not to continue to

play sports and some decided to concentrate on one or two specific sports. But you found out what you could and could not do.

I watched many of you develop over the years.

I saw Guilderland's Steve Dagostino grow from a skinny little sophomore reserve guard who could shoot the basketball well from the outside to a taller, strong player who could still shoot the ball with deadly accuracy and also take the ball to the basket.

I can still remember the night in early March at the Glens Falls Civic Center when he willed his Dutchmen teammates past Schenectady High School and into the Class AA Section II finals — a game where no Dutchmen basketball team had been before.

Dagostino along with classmates Tim Vacek, Doug Gejay, and Greg Podgorski used their talent and hard work to be only the third team to win the Suburban Council with an undefeated record.

I will also never forget the day when Berne-Knox-Westerlo's most talented basketball players lost the final game they would play together.

I remember watching in sadness as seniors Sarah Domermuth, Jessie Fernandez, Lindsay Conklin, and Kim Sikule couldn't hold back their tears after losing in the Class C state semifinal game for the second year in a row.

But the way they played for the past two seasons had given the Hilltown community something to cheer about, and a sense of pride that won't be soon forgotten.

I saw a hockey team begin at Guilderland and I

documented its success as it was led by a large talented group of seniors that made two trips to the sectional semifinals.

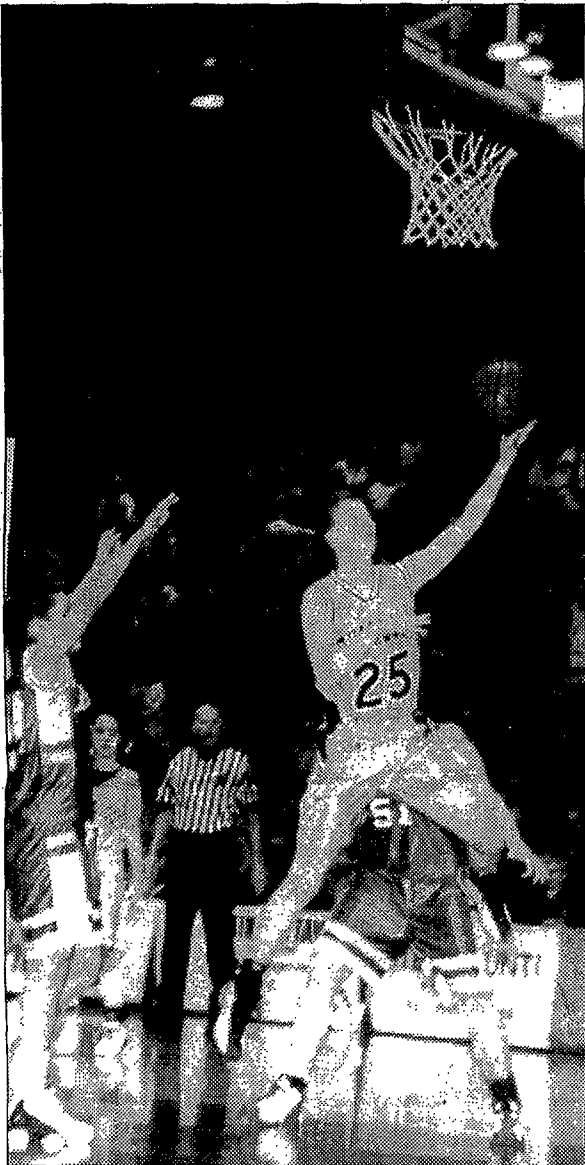
This is a unique class of athletes that enjoyed so many successes. Now you are all moving on to college — where some will continue athletic careers — or to work in your chosen professions.

But whatever you do in the future, you will be able to use what you learned from your years of high school — in the classroom and on the playing field. For me, this will be the first time after being in the same place for four years that I don't have to move on, and it's a strange feeling.

Our paths crossed four years ago and I have enjoyed every minute of getting to know you as athletes and as people. I hope I was able to bring joy to you and your families.

The athletes at Guilderland, Voorheesville, and Berne-Knox-Westerlo have enjoyed success and disappointment.

Though we are in different stages of our lives, we grew together and we found out a lot about each other and ourselves.



The Enterprise — Tim Matteson

Air Sikule: BKW's Kim Sikule drives to the basket during a New York State semifinal game at Hudson Valley Community College. The Lady Bulldogs won their second consecutive Section II and New York State Regional championships but for the second year in a row lost in the state's final four.



The Enterprise — Nicole Fay Barr

A hug from Dad: Voorheesville graduate Brittany Baron, above, hugs her father, board of education President Robert Baron, as he hands his daughter her diploma.

Marching into the future to the beat of different drummers

By Holly Grosch

VOORHEESVILLE — Every year Voorheesville recognizes its first- and second-ranked students as valedictorian and salutatorian and *The Enterprise* interviews these interesting and bright scholars to share them with the public. But what about the other graduates who fell somewhere else across the ranks? *The Enterprise* talked to some of them before they rehearsed for their graduation ceremony.

This year's Valedictorian, Anne Liu and Salutatorian, Keri Vanderwarker, said that the small-school atmosphere was one of their favorite aspects of Clayton A. Bouton High School, while Kera Pilger said, "The social structure is too close-knit; it makes it hard to fit in."

Christina Weaver chimed in, "Everyone knows everyone else's business."

Pilger has plans of moving straight into a job supervising tenants of apartments while Weaver will be going to nursing school at Albany Memorial.

"Classes here were never too easy," Pilger said, calling the advanced-placement courses "very difficult." She thought that was the way it was supposed to be and said that the advanced kids probably do get more attention from the school, "but it doesn't bother me though," said Pilger. "If you want to base your life on school, that's your choice; you get what you put into it," she said.

Over all, both Pilger and Weaver thought that Voorheesville was a good school and they each had a teacher that they thought was "cool."

Weaver said that 20 family members were going to be attending her graduation. "I'm happy that they are happy. They are a lot more excited about it than I am," she said.

While to Liu and Weaver the graduation ceremony wasn't a big deal, Tim Finnigan said, "I'm looking forward to graduation...."

I'm lucky to be here. I got through by the skin on my cheek," he said.

Finnigan plans this summer to continue working as a dishwasher at the Colonie County Club.

"One class I didn't do anything in," Finnigan said. "The teacher told us ahead of time to read in order to pass and I didn't read anything. And she was right, I just barely passed."

Brianna Burtman, one of the co-class presidents said, "I've had so much fun, I don't want to leave. I want to come back next year."

Finnigan had a decidedly different view. "Oh man, I hated high school, the whole entire thing," he said. When asked why, he answered, "The people... I really can't stand people in general though."

Pilger said that one of her favorite memories of her past four years was the pep rally in 2000 with a lot of people jumping in the pool. When asked why the other pep rallies never stacked up to the first, she shrugged her shoulders and said plainly that she didn't go to any after that.

Amanda Connors, one of the co-editors of the school's newspaper who will be attending Sage College in the fall, shared her hope that the Voorheesville district will bring back the New Visions program, which Connors refers to as advanced vocational training. She felt that she missed out on a valuable internship opportunity that other students had before her.

The rehearsal was a last concession to school requirements. As the students pulled up to the high school, some dragged their feet while others greeted friends in the parking lot cheerfully. Like a kaleidoscope they formed and re-formed into clusters. They then headed toward the graduation tent to receive their places in line, in preparation for the processional, that, the next day would march them into their future.