

Memories of A Historical Period of the Rumney Memorial School, Middlesex, Vermont  
Follow-up provided by Peter Smith, Design for Education Committee Member, 1970s  
Comments are related to the Original Interview with Barbara Buckley and Tim Hayward,  
Interviewed by Leah Erlbaum, with Harold O.W. Domanski, on October 5, 2013

I recently contacted Peter Smith, the missing third committee member in our October, 2013, interview with Barbara Buckley and Tim Hayward. I asked Peter if he would like to comment on the years of educational turnaround in Middlesex, back in the early 1970s (it seems that we may have gone from possibly the *worst* of the U-32 sending schools to one of the *best*, today). I found Peter through his son, Dan, who attended Rumney School and is currently President of VTC (Vermont Technical College) in Randolph, VT. It seems that education runs in the family, as Peter also continues today, in Santa Fe, NM, with innovative higher education for working and marginalized adults. Peter was enthusiastic after reading the October, 2013, interview, thankful for the wash of fond memories of the people of Middlesex it provoked, and praising his fellow committee members for their open and personal gift of history to the town. The three were on the town's *Design for Education Committee*, which was part of Middlesex's compliance with Vermont Education Commissioner Harvey Scribner's *State Goals for Education*. Peter was the first president of CCV (Community College of Vermont) in 1970, Lieutenant Governor of the State of Vermont in the 1980s, and is a former member of the U.S. Congress from Vermont. Peter graciously responded to my request for his side of and his part in the story, as one more perspective on a complicated time, from someone who worked in the midst of it. His piece also serves as a conclusion, in a sense, of the interview, he being the third committee member. So, in his own words, here it is (thank you, Peter!):

**Comments by Peter Smith,**  
**the third member of the Middlesex 1970s' Design for Education Committee**

I had an opportunity to read the wonderful interview with Barbara Buckley and Tim Hayward regarding the Demonstration project at Rumney School in the early 1970's. My thanks to O.W. Domanski for getting it to me via my son Dan, another Rumney graduate.

Reading the interview stirred some deep memories and I thought I might try to add a little additional color through the looking glass of history.

I moved to Middlesex in the Fall of 1970. The Buckley's and the Hayward's were already there. I had just left an internship at the Department of Education in Montpelier where I worked for and reported to Harvey Scribner, the Commissioner who got the Demonstration legislation passed in the legislature. So, I was up to speed on that resource.

At the time, Middlesex's two schools were performing very poorly; the worst, in fact, of all the sending schools to Montpelier high and subsequently U-32. I actually had people tell me not to move to Middlesex because of the schools. Our thought was to improve the schools, not live somewhere else.

Tim and Barbara got it right in terms of the whole sequence of events over the next few years. It was a tale of the good, the bad, and the ugly. So I won't reiterate that material. A guy named Mel Chafetz was hired to come run the school and it was, to put it mildly, a turbulent few years. However, as they also noted, nobody's child appeared to get hurt during the process.

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What I remember vividly, however, because I was involved, was the school board election of 1976 (I think). This was a watershed moment where the town would either retreat from the aspirations of the demonstration school or commit to seeing it through. Three new members were elected to the Rumney board that year, constituting a voting majority: myself, Alice Bussino, and Marlene Fielder. We were all parents and under 35 (at least).

This was the moment when all the incredible work that Tim, Barbara, and others had done earlier in the decade began to come to fruition. Although the sequence of events is blurry for me, Allen Freund was hired as principal and he began the task of assembling an extraordinary team of teachers, many of whom stayed at the school for years, building a culture of quality and openness for Middlesex's children. Scotty Brower, Ann Morrisette, Adrian ...Maribeth Domanski,... are some the names that come to mind. The board protected them with good policies and oversight. But it was these teachers, led by Allen Freund for more than ten years, who actually made the school what it has become over the years.

One last thought. This was not a newcomers vs. old timers kind of a struggle. We never could have carried the day with that line up. From the beginning, there were members of the community who had lived there for years, the Bussinos, the Picards, the Frenches, the Barclays, the Barbour, the Storys and many others who fought in their own ways to build a school that would serve their children and grandchildren fairly and well. In short, prior to this, there was a small group who ran the town and controlled most of the political discourse and activity. There were many of us who felt that attitude and posture did not serve the town or the people of Middlesex well. And that coalition fought for the demonstration school and elected the new school board, setting the stage for what you all have today: the finest elementary school in the county.

### The Interview Gallery



**Leah Erlbaum & Barbara Buckley, enthusiastically engaged in mid-interview, October 5, 2013**

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**Tim Hayward, interviewee, responding to a humorous anecdote by Barbara Buckley**



**Barbara Buckley, interviewee, enjoying the memories, tough work as it was**

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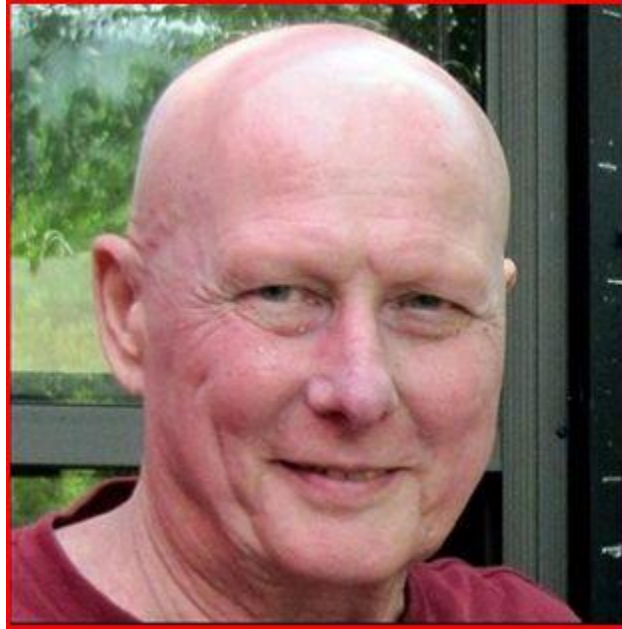


**Leah Erlbaum, “Interviewer Par Excellence”**



**An “old” photo of a “young” Peter Smith, now living in Santa Fe but still enjoying fond memories of Middlesex, the place that still “runs in his blood”**

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**Harold O.W. Domanski, interview facilitator, "I am thankful for everyone's enthusiastic participation, all of us understanding that education *enhances and saves lives*, so *let's all share it.*"**

**Note: For a video of the Interview itself, click (or Ctrl-Click) on the following link:**

<http://youtu.be/W638a5LGw-o>