

The Lowell Ledger

Volume 23, Issue 36

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Wednesday, June 5, 2002



Character & Courage define Class of 2002

By Thaddeus J. Kraus Lowell Ledger Editor

Lowell Schools' vision speaks of knowledge, skills and character. The class of the 124th Lowell High School Commencement "is testimony that through their work, we have been successful," said Lowell High School principal, Scott Vashaw. "Collectively and individually, this class has exhibited good character."

Along with knowledge, skills and character, the graduation ceremony celebrated "hip and fresh"; saluted strength, courage and fortitude; delivered laughter and gratitude, helping to shed a tear or two.

In his last address to a Lowell graduating class, superintendent, Bert Bleke reminded graduates, "The future is yours to dream; and yours to determine," he explained.

In a special presentation, Vashaw recognized Tyler Duckett, Philip Moerdyke and Ryan Markel for their embodiment of strength, courage and fortitude.

Moerdyke and Duckett are both cancer survivors.

Markel, battling with inoperable cancer, was showered with a heartwarming standing ovation initiated by his classmates. "It was incredible. My classmates have been very supportive," he said afterwards.

Added Vashaw, "It was great to see just how much it meant to the class that Ryan was there."

Class valedictorian Melissa Schloop thanked her family, friends and church for their support and reminded her classmates to keep their old friends while they embrace the friends their future brings.

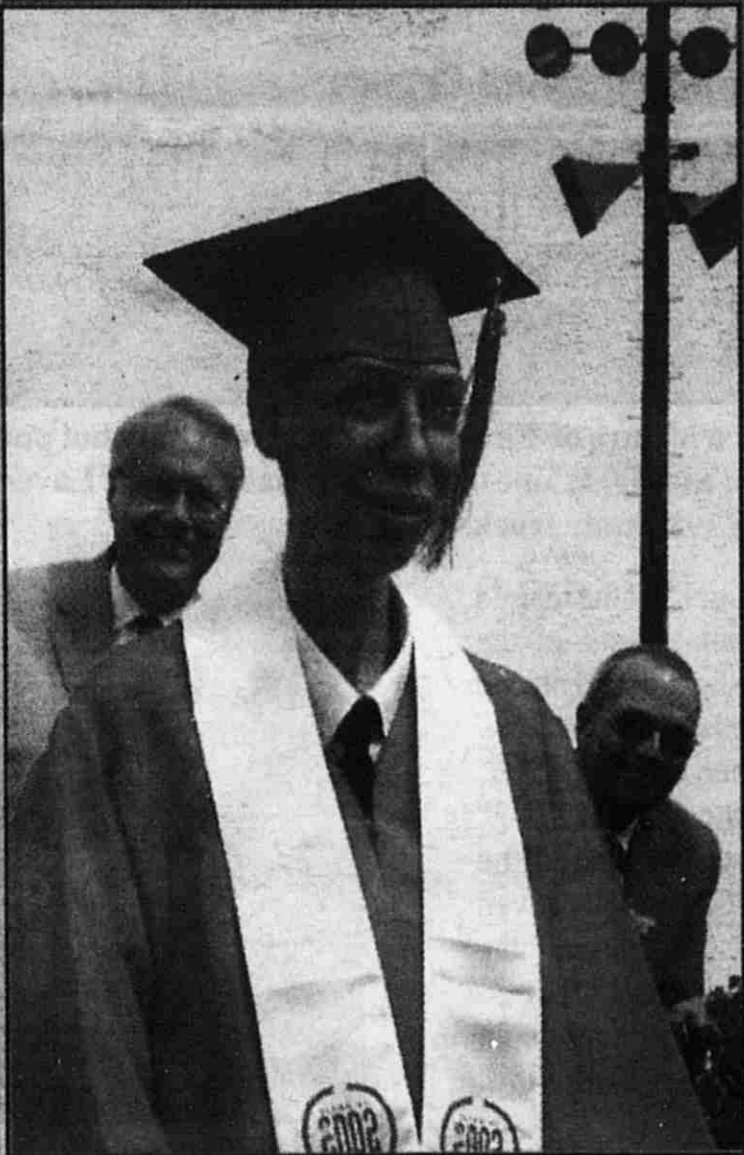
Shelby Tomczak, class salutatorian, encouraged fellow graduates to try their hardest and to be happy in their pursuits. "High school is the fastest four years of our life and the beginning of the rest," she said.

In addition to Schloop and Tomczak, other members of the Top 10 to be recognized were Kelsey Scheider, Erin Weber, David Johnson, Zachary Stauffer, Jennifer Wagner, Michael Kinney, Daniel Thaler and Shanda Yonker.

In the ceremony's lighter moment, class president, Ben Vaught and student council president, Jason Craig spoofed Vaught's attempt to write a song about graduation day. With Craig's encouragement, Vaught offered a rap version, which involved class participation. "Your song was too old-fashioned, we needed something hip and fresh," he said.

Sunday's 124th commencement released 243 fresh-faced graduates eager to make a mark on the beginning of the rest of their life.

More Graduation Pictures, Page 12



Ryan Markel



Melissa Schloop

Lowell School Board election Monday

••• Incumbent and two challengers
vie for two full terms.

By Thaddeus J. Kraus
Lowell Ledger Editor

An incumbent and two challengers will vie for two, four-year terms on the Lowell School Board at Monday, June 10th's Lowell Area Schools regular election.

The two board seats up for election are currently held by board secretary, Pat Nugent (four years) and board president, Pete Gustafson.

Nugent will seek re-election while Gustafson will not, after serving eight years on the school board.

Challenging Nugent for one of the two seats will be Peter Haefner and James Van Buren.

The polls will open at 7 a.m. and will close at 8 p.m. Precinct I is at Runciman Elementary; Precinct II, Old Bowne Township Hall (8240 Alden Nash Rd.); and Precinct III, Vergennes Township Hall (corner of Bailey Drive and Parnell).



Election, cont'd. pg. 8

Cooper Woodland Preserve dedication, Thursday

By Thaddeus J. Kraus Lowell Ledger Editor

The Cooper Woodland Preserve will provide yet another natural area to be used by the Lowell Area Schools and community.

Lowell Area Schools Education Foundation on Thursday, June 6, will hold a dedication and ribbon-cutting ceremony at the preserve from 5:30 until 6 p.m.

Dick and Shirley Cooper donated 34.7 acres of land at the northeast corner of Alden Nash and Foreman to the foundation for the purpose of preserving it in its present state. The foundation will lease the property to the school for wildlife education opportunities.

The preserve is flat with sharp drop-offs to the north and east. "It is a fine wooded area for walking and viewing nature. It's a mature wooded area with full-grown mature trees that shade out the underbrush," said foundation president, Marsha Wilcox.

Cooper noted that the school owns property to the southeast of his and that he would eventually like to see a walking/bike trail extend from the Wittenbach Center across his property to the school property. From there it would extend through the park to the Grand River and along the river to Lowell Charter Township's Grand River Riverfront Park.

The dedication ceremony will include comments from speakers, Peter Wege, Dick Cooper, Mari Stone and Pete Gustafson. Refreshments will be served.



OBITUARIES

BLANDING - Gilbert C. "Mike" Blanding, aged 72, of Bradenton, Fla., passed away May 27, 2002 in Bradenton. He was born January 27, 1930 in Greenville. "Mike" was a graduate of Lowell High School Class of 1948. He retired in 1992 from Belco Industries, Belding. Mr. Blanding served in the

U.S. Air Force during the Korean War. He was a member of the American Legion and a past worshipful master of Masonic Lodge 96 of Greenville; Moose Lodge of Bradenton and Greenville, and Braden River United Methodist Church, Bradenton. He is survived by his wife Eula of Bradenton;

one daughter Lori and Steve Simard of Auburn, Maine; one son Larry and Rose Blanding of Greenville; one sister Carolyn and Jim Brown of Benton, Ky; two brothers John and Alice Blanding of Lowell and Tom and Katie Blanding of Englewood, Fla; three grandsons and one great-grandson. Memorial services were held at Manasota Chapel, Griffith-Cline Funeral Home in Bradenton with the Rev. Guy Weatherly officiating. Cremation has taken place. A memorial service will be held

in Greenville at a later date, with committal at Rest Haven Memorial Gardens. Memorial contributions may be made to River Isle Golf Association, 1014 Baytree Rd., Bradenton, Fla. 34208 or Braden River United Methodist Church, 5858 44th Ave. E. Bradenton, Fla., 34203.

LOCKE - Wayne A. Locke, aged 56, of Grand Rapids, passed away Friday, May 31, 2002 at the Metropolitan Hospital under the Hospice of Michigan care following a lin-

gering illness. He was born on August 26, 1945, in Lakeview to Wayne A. and Dorothy Jean (Sedore) Locke and graduated from White Cloud High School in 1963. Wayne moved to the Grand Rapids area in 1964 and had been a Die Cast Maker. He is survived by his sisters Judith A. (Charles) Sprick of Sparta, Candace J. (Howard) Keith of White Cloud; his brother Robert E. (Nancy) Williams of Lowell; seven nieces and nephews; eight great-nieces and nephews; his many friends at Adam's Park Apartments in Grand Rapids. He was preceded in death by his father Wayne A. Locke on Feb. 7, 1945; his mother Dorothy Jean Williams on Feb. 5, 1995; his step-father Robert G. Williams on Aug. 13, 1990. Graveside memorial services will be held Saturday, June 8, at 2 p.m. from the Big Prairie Everett Township Cemetery in White Cloud. Friends may consider Hospice of Michigan Grand Rapids for memorial contributions.

Early 20th century Lowell High School athletic star dies

By Thaddeus J. Kraus
Lowell Ledger Editor

From 1927-30, Lowell's Elmer Layer dominated the local athletic scene like few who came before or after him.

He was not only a four-sport athlete... Layer was a

four-sport star. While his accomplishments spoke loudly of his talent, Layer shied away from the subject. "You can save the stories about me until I'm gone," was his common refrain.

Layer, one of Lowell's greatest athletes, died Sun-

day, May 26, 2002 at Cumberland Manor. He was 90 years old.

The sports clippings from the late 20's were many, and most of them featured Layer.

As a senior, he led Lowell to a 10-0 record and Kent

County "C" football championship.

As a sophomore center, he averaged 17 points a game for Lowell's basketball team.

Elmer, playing third base for Lowell's baseball team, hit .421 as a junior. During his baseball tenure, Lowell

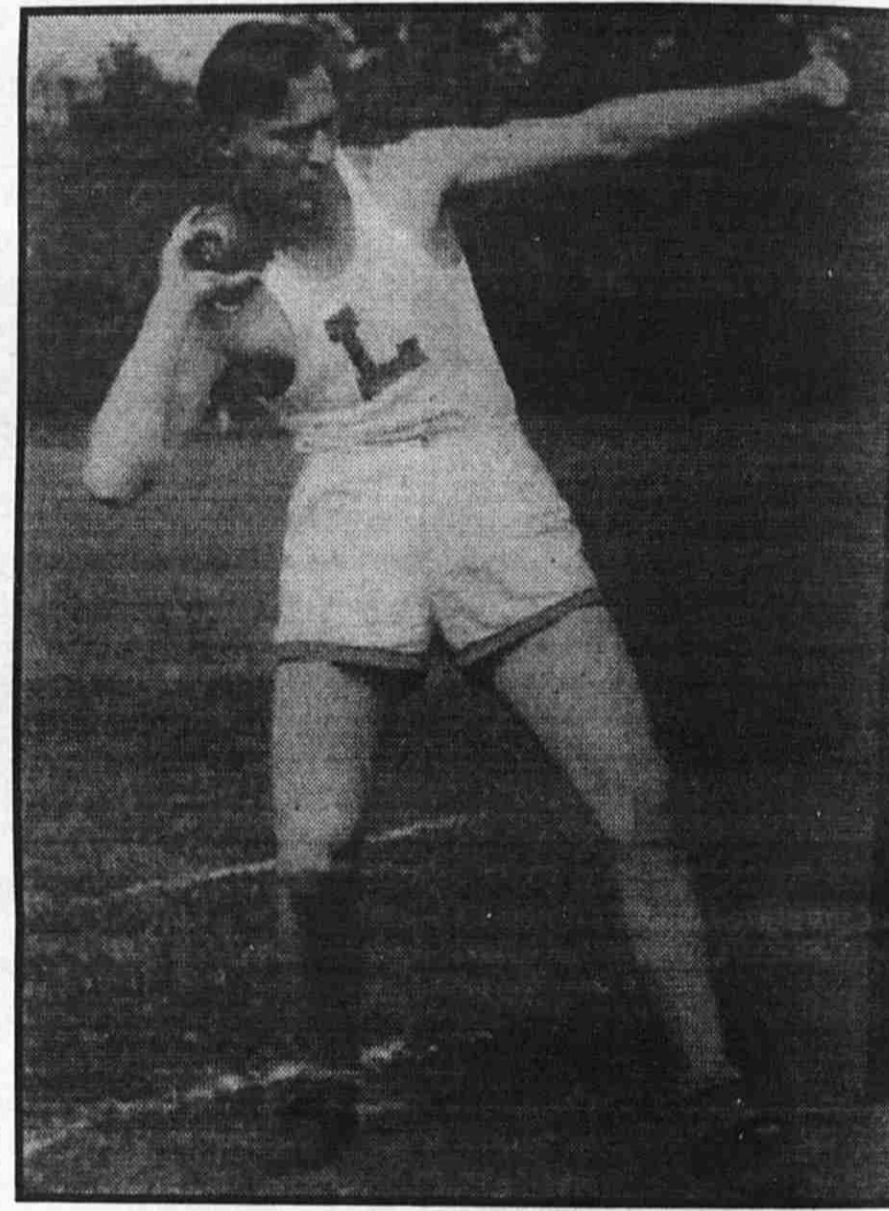
lost just two games.

Layer's most brilliant numbers, though, arguably came in track and field.

He literally carried Lowell to a state championship in

gave generously," Doyle said.

"Years ago he began collecting afghans. He'd wash them up and then donate them to area churches. He probably gave away 200-500 afghans."



Above: a picture of Elmer Layer throwing the shot put in 1928. To the right: one of two first-place medals Layer won in the 1928 state track meet.

1928, scoring 15 of the team's 15 1/2 points: firsts in the discus and shot put and placed third in the javelin.

He tossed the shot 45' 6" and threw the discus 127' 2" which not only bettered the state Class C record by seven feet but also surpassed the Class A mark of 127 feet.

"Elmer was a heck of an athlete," remembered Norm Borgerson.

What Borgerson remembered most about Layer was the great childhood memory he provided for him and a handful of other boys.

"When I was about 14-15 years old, Elmer used to load up five or six of us boys in his Ford and take us to Michigan State home football games," Borgerson explained. "Back then, ticket takers were more liberal, so when we got there at halftime, we'd get in for free. It was a great introduction to big time college football for us. I'll always be grateful to him for that memory. It's something I'll never forget."

Friend and lunch partner, Charlie Doyle recalls "that '36 Ford" burning as much oil as it did gas.

"Some thought Elmer was gruff. He wasn't that at all. He was a nice man who



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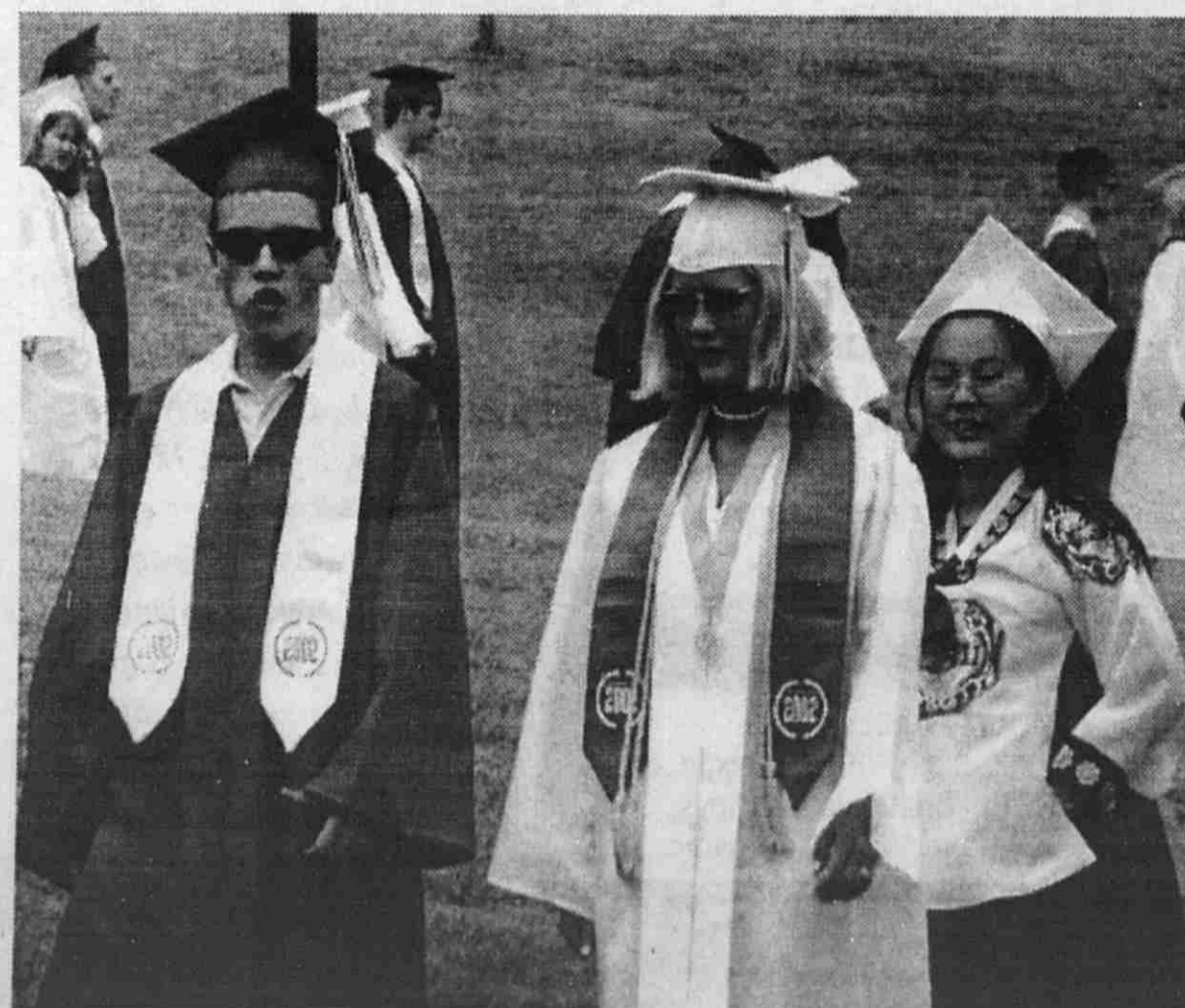
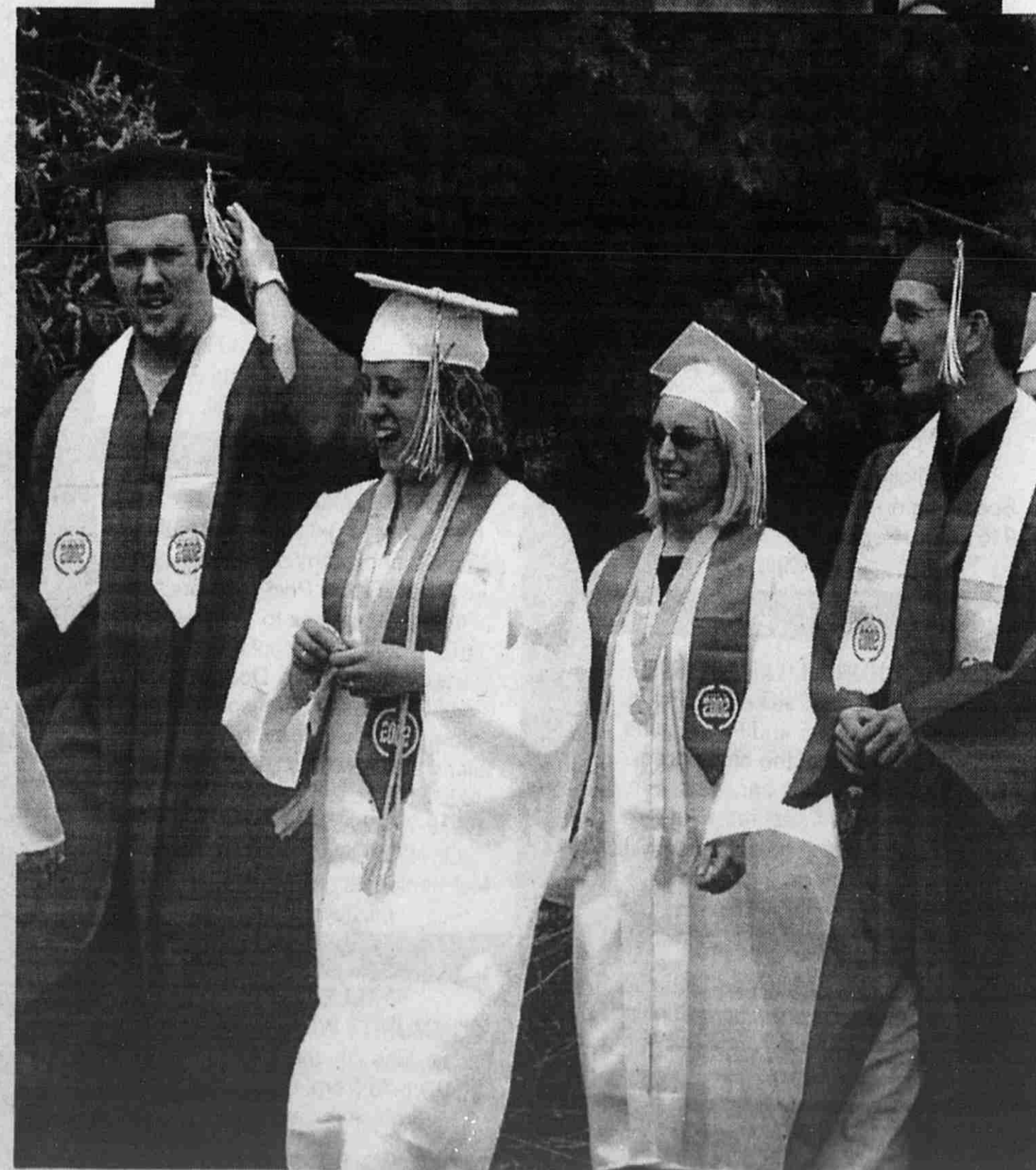
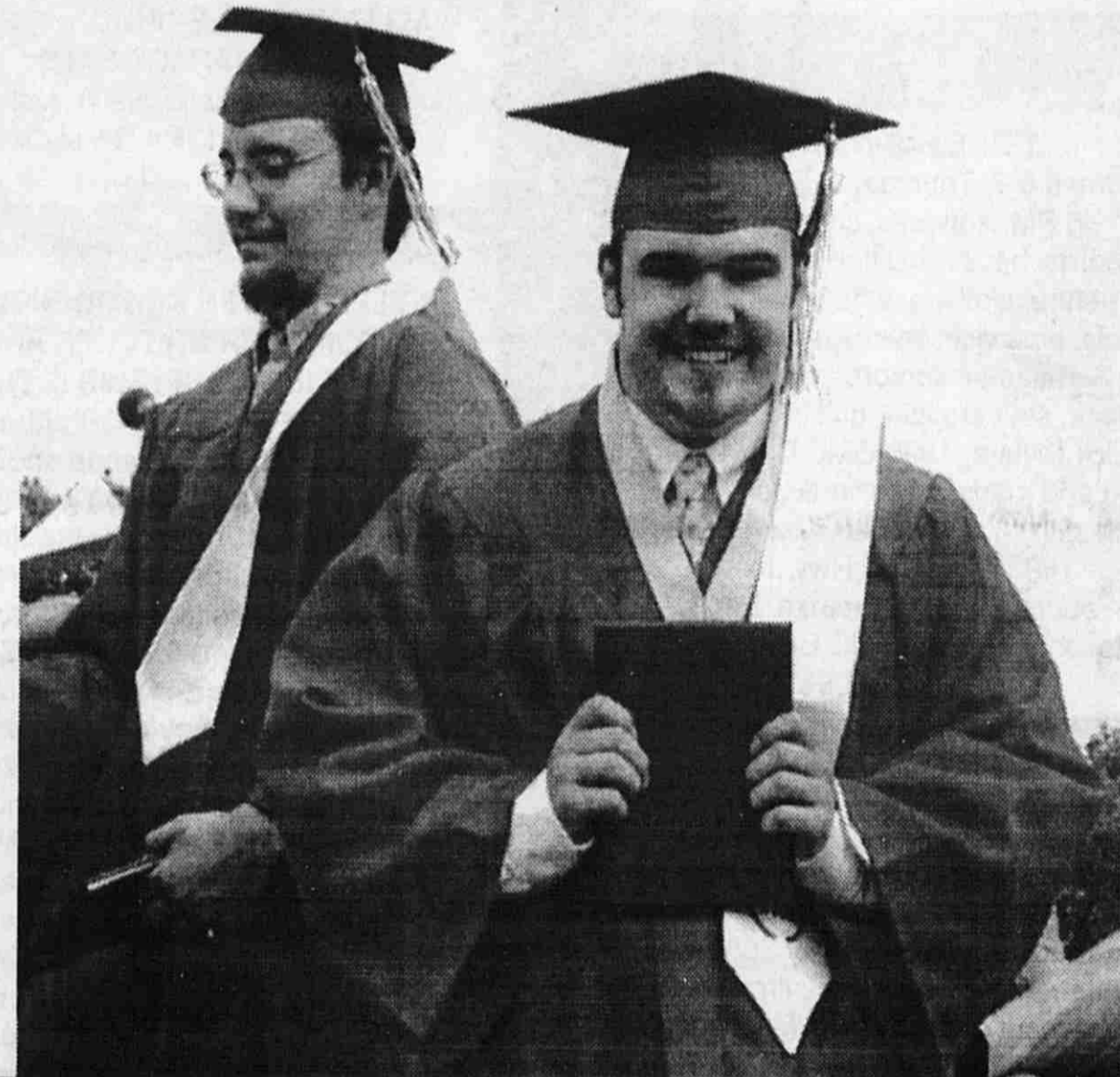
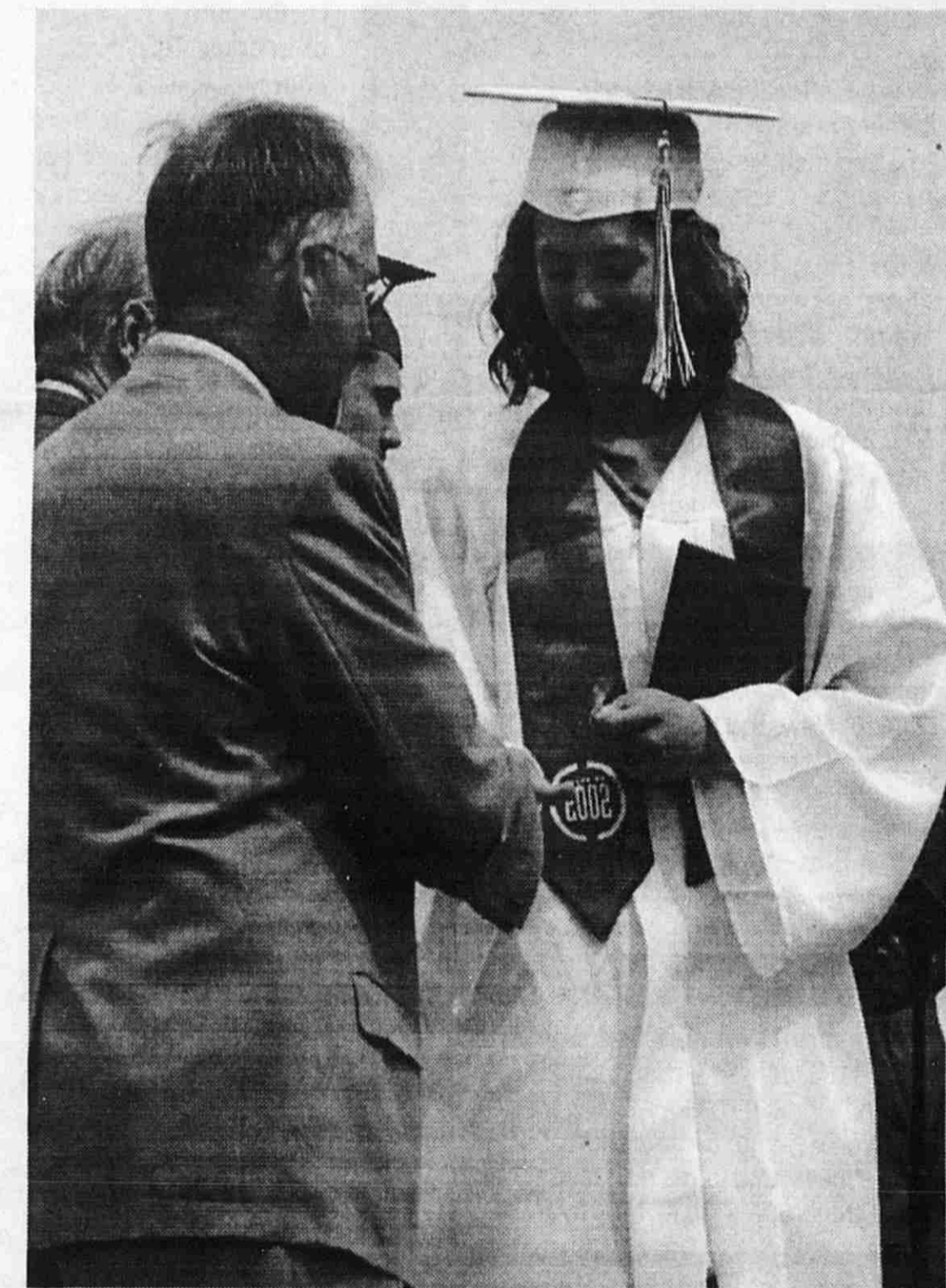


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COMING EVENTS

LOWELL AREA ARTS COUNCIL: Open Tues., Wed. & Fri.: noon - 5 p.m.; Thurs.: noon - 7 p.m.; Sat., 1-4 p.m. 149 S. Hudson.

WED., JUNE 5: Athletic physicals for girls grades 10-12 from 6:30 - 8 p.m. in high school locker rooms. Bring completed physical card signed by a parent.

THURS., JUNE 6: Vergennes Cooperative Club meeting at 1 p.m. at Schneider Manor. Program by Jody Haybarker from Flat River Outreach Ministries; bring items for Food Pantry.

THURS., JUNE 6: TOTS annual picnic and bus ride from 11:30 - 1 p.m. in playground behind Runciman Bldg. Call 897-1232 to register for this free event. Bring sandwich for you and your child. In case of rain, held in the gym.

THURS., JUNE 6: Workshop/lunch at noon at Chamber of Commerce office on Health Insurance/Long-term Care issues. Call Speerstra Insurance at 897-9259 to register.

THURS., JUNE 13: Edward Jones Investments: stock market info. 6-7 p.m. at 2050 W. Main. Call 987-9515 to register.

EVERY THURS. - St. Mary's Pregnancy Crisis Center, 402 Amity St., non-denominational help for pregnant women and adolescents at the school: 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.; Mondays: 5:30 - 8 p.m. 897-9393.

FIRST THURS.: 4-H drama club meetings at Lowell Middle School choir room. 897-1502 after 5 p.m.

FIRST AND THIRD THURS.: The Alto Lions Club meets at Bowne Center Fellowship Hall, corner of 84th & M-50 (Alden Nash) at 7 p.m.

EVERY 2ND THURS.: N.A.R.F.E. meets 1:30 p.m. at Trinity Lutheran Church, 2700 E. Fulton.

EVERY THURS.: Saranac Community and Area Music Makers at Saranac High School. Choir: 6:30 - 7:30 p.m.; Band: 7:30 - 8:15 p.m. Call Kathy at 642-6316/897-5981 for info.

EVERY 2ND THURS.: VFW #8303 Ladies Auxiliary meets at 3 p.m. at VFW Clubroom, 307 E. Main. No Bingo.

EVERY THIRD THURS.: Parents Supporting Parents-support group at Franciscan Life Process Center offers topics and discussion for parents of children all ages. Call 897-7842 for time.

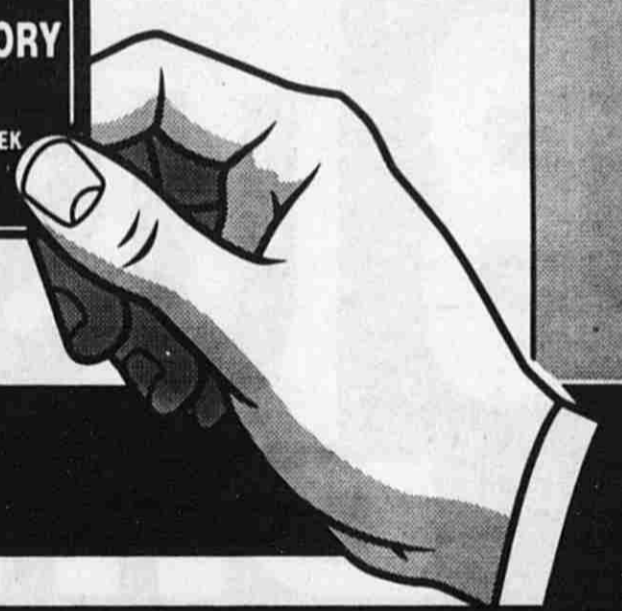
EVERY THIRD THURS.: Royal Arch Masons regular meeting at 7:30 p.m. at the Lowell Masonic Center, 119 Lincoln Lake, Lowell. Dinner at 6:30 p.m.

EVERY THIRD THURS.: LaLeche League of Ada, Cascade & Lowell 6:30 p.m. for socializing; meeting 7 p.m. Mother to mother support for pregnant & breastfeeding women. Nursing children welcome. Ada church. Call 752-8300.

THIRD FRI.: All players & listeners: Join Nick & Patti at The New Riverview, M-21 E. of Lowell, for a "Folk Music" session, 7:30 p.m. - ? Call 897-0099 Nick or 897-9948 Lyle.

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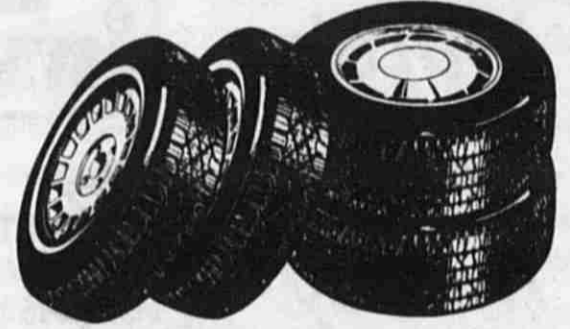
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