



WINDSOR MOUNTAIN SCHOOL  
1944 – 1975 in Lenox Massachusetts  
[Alum@WindsorMountainSchool.com](mailto:Alum@WindsorMountainSchool.com)

## FALL ALUMNI NEWSLETTER

September 7, 2022

Dear Fellow Alumni,

After the long Covid two year isolation Betsy Ryan and Myself (Christopher Smith) have been working to renew our Windsor Mountain School (WMS) relationship with Boston University Tanglewood Institute (BUTI). We hope to restart the tradition of a yearly September WMS Reunion Picnic in Lenox as we had done 2016 to 2019. As you may know, BUTI began to operate a Music Summer Camp on our campus in 1966, then shortly after Windsor closed in 1975, purchased our campus. All Reunions beginning in 1996 were negotiated with BUTI via a contract agreement. Because of Covid, BUTI closed the camp and mothballed the campus for 2020 and 2021. When BUTI decided to reopen the camp in 2022, none of the four Boston office staff remained, including the Lenox Property Manager Mike Cunningham who Betsy had worked with. With only a new two-person department (down from four), without prior experience, the camp reopened and held several summer sessions June to August thanks in part to the return of some former teachers and new onsite staff. It was only after the camp ended that I was able to meet with the Business and Operations Manager in Lenox.



On September 3<sup>rd</sup> I met with Valerie Williams (pictured) who got her job with BUTI at the end of May. I brought lunch from Leob's and a copy of Roselle Chartock's book "Windsor Mountain School" – last copy at the Lenox Bookstore. The weather was sunny and perfect as we sat outside under the back Portico overlooking the Main House lawn. Despite being young, still in her 20's, she holds a MBA in Business, and for last five years been a manager for a Cruise Ship Company. Being from Texas "where it's flat" New England is quite a change for her, plus with our campus having been abandoned for two years, is quite the maintenance challenge on a very limited budget. First thing I noticed was yellow tape cording off the back patio/wall because roof slates are falling off – "one camper had a near miss." As we walked the campus she pointed out the invasive plants taking over, decay/mold on dorm walls, and vandalism. The gym was torn down, and the Class House is condemned and will be demolished once they abate the asbestos. Practice Cabins dot Graduation Hill between the once beautiful fountains. I told her how I had seen the fountains running for the 1968 Graduation thanks to Lary



Abrams (pointing to his picture in the book). As we approached the upper fountain and marble cove where alums spent our last day as students receiving diplomas, it was heartbreaking to see most of the marble damaged and stolen, and the trees cutting into the walls. We agreed how it was probably too late and costly to save it. But it was so nice to see how much Valerie wanted to save and restore the grounds. She has been studying the history of how Winthrop, Wharton and other “cottage”

owners would compete to out do each other with gardens and fountains. She noted many similar fountains and castings could be found between them.



She told me since there was no prominent commemoration to WMS history on campus she wanted to propose we put a nice tree along the path to the Theater with an outdoor marker. That way she said everyone, including alums visiting would see it, and that it would be the least costly memorial for us. But if we wanted to save/restore a fountain, she took me to the one in the entry roundabout (pictured), adding, while expensive, no one would miss it when they visit, and BUTI would allow an outdoor plaque on which could read something like “A Gift of WMS Alumni.”

All afternoon Valerie apologized about how it was taking so long for BU to approve our Event Insurance Policy. If it was up to her we could have a Reunion tomorrow, but she

has to follow protocol. She was clear there was no way we could have a Reunion without a contract and approved insurance. We would also need a professional cleaning contract if we want to go inside any building other than to use Main House bathrooms. So since we can't control the weather, we would need to have a cleaning service as a precaution. The estimated cost of a Lenox Reunion is over \$2000, so we would need to have at least 40 people committed who prepaid \$50 each. For the proposed September 17<sup>th</sup> Reunion we only had 13 commitments. But since BUTI does not restrict campus access, we could gather elsewhere in the area (restaurant, or park) and come over to look at where a tree might go or discuss restoring a fountain. It seems our alums show up on campus all the time anyway. One showed up just when I was ready to leave. Valerie was nice enough to let him look around ... *most people she said don't even ask.*

## **Fall Reunion Options for 2022:**

**Option #1 - Back to Windsor VT:** We'd go back to Windsor Mansion in Windsor VT, a beautifully historic restored B&B and WMS Birthplace in America, and spend the weekend of October 21-24 up there. All we need is 8 rooms/suites booked (have 7 now) and the grounds are available to us for \$10-\$20 pp for those that want to come for the day. Breakfast is included, private bath, full bar, firepit, the view is wonderful, fall colors, great restaurants nearby, lots of attractions. Let me know soon as only 5 rooms left on hold for us at a discounted rate of \$165 room / \$185 suite per night (2 nights). Go to <https://www.windsormountainschool.com/reunions/2021-reunion-vt/> to see how much fun we had last year. Need 20 alums interested.

**Option #2 - Lenox Off Campus:** Since we don't have BUTI approved insurance or know when we will, an onsite 2022 Reunion Picnic is not possible (perhaps 2023). If we want an off-site Reunion this Fall in Lenox at say Lilac Park nearby the campus we can walk over after lunch <https://www.townoflenox.com/selectmens-office/pages/lilac-park>. Bathrooms at Library. Bring a chair/blanket, a lunch or go to Leob's across the street. The only cost for this option would be for lodging/meals. Possible weekends (Saturday or Sunday if rain): Sept 24/25; Oct 1/2; Oct 8/9 – let us know which of these would work for you. If there is at least 20 alums interested, we'll select the date with most interest. Steve Dixon is researching best Lodging available for those who want to stay in area.

Email [alum@windsormountainschool.com](mailto:alum@windsormountainschool.com) your response for either option (or both) by **September 16, 2022**. *No need to tell us you can't come to either option.*

## **Plant A Tree or Restore Roundabout Fountain in Lenox:**

You are going to say, but weren't we talking about a Plaque in the Library. Yes, but as Valerie points out, who would see it if the Main House is not open most of the year, and not open to non-BUTI folks. A nice tree (say a Chinese Maple) on the Theater walkway would be available to all visitors including staff and campers as the Theater is the second most used building on Campus. The cost for a tree and marker will be around \$1000. Restoring the roundabout fountain would a grander gesture, not easily missed, and a long lasting legacy with a prominent Brass Plate mounted between the two fountains (see picture). Alums wouldn't even need to get out their cars on their way to Tanglewood or just a visit to view it. And yes it would cost a lot more, guessing +\$50k.



So why do either? Why help BUTI replace an old tree or restore a fountain? Because at this point BUTI is at least willing to consider having a formal Reunion in Lenox in the future, whereas, if they sell, the new owner likely will not. I would also suggest should either the tree or fountain not happen, consider donating to the BUTI Scholarship Fund as a WMS alum (remember many of us went to Windsor on Scholarship). And FYI, if Tanglewood/BSO hadn't put up financial support in 2022 for the Summer Music Camp, BUTI was seriously considering putting the campus on the market rather than continuing.

Email [alum@windsormountainschool.com](mailto:alum@windsormountainschool.com) if your interested in either or both of these ideas (*please don't email if your not interested, thanks*).

### *Final thoughts on this last page ...*

Now that all of us alums are over 65, many retired, many with health issues, or challenged by the idea of travel, coming to a Reunion seems less likely each year. Many say they wouldn't come to a Reunion because they wouldn't know anyone, or maybe 1 or 2 of their class, I have found that as *People of Windsor* we share what I like to call the Bondy bond as a community of unique and very fortunate people. It is so interesting talking with those who came before and after I attended the school ... after every Reunion I have made new friends – as will you. And to those who say a Reunion must be “where the deed was done” in Lenox, I would ask why if it's the *people* who made Windsor what you remember. So if we gather where the school started in VT, why isn't that a worthy Reunion?

But if the place is important, perhaps we alums should support both BUTI in Lenox and Windsor Mansion Inn in Windsor VT. Perhaps we want to do more than a tree or restore a fountain. Running a summer music camp has become ever more costly, as has an historic mansion B&B. Our Lenox campus is showing its age and needs serious repair and maintenance without which BUTI may find like Heinz did, it is not sustainable. As difficult as BUTI has been, they will at least consider our Reunion on campus (though costly and with limited access) where a new owner likely will not. Covid has also been financially hard on B&Bs like Windsor Mansion who have been much more welcoming and recognize our school roots, and at least for now, they continue to give us discount lodging and a place to have a Reunion where “the deed began” and without expensive contracts and insurance - shouldn't we give them support as well?

But perhaps the more important question is determining how many alums would come any Reunion whether in Lenox or elsewhere. So if you can't come to a Reunion this year, would you like to be on the list for 2023? Again respond only if yes.

I hope that all of you reading this are in good health, and if retired, enjoying your well earned time traveling, spending time with family, or doing not much or more (hear many say how busy they are post careers). Watch for link for our annual Zoom Assembly coming in November in your email.

*With Warm Regards ... Christopher*