

**MY NAME IS JACOB TOPOREK, CLASS OF JUNE 1963, AND I AM “WEEQUAHIC-HIGH-SCHOOL-PROUD.” I AM A MEMBER OF THE HALL OF DISTINCTION, INDUCTED IN 2019.**

**LAST WEEK, I CALLED A FELLOW CLASSMATE TO FOLLOW UP ON A PERSONAL INVITE I HAD EXTENDED TO HIM AND HIS WIFE TO ATTEND THIS RECEPTION. AFTER EXCHANGING PLEASANTRIES AND CATCHING UP ON OUR LIVES, HE INFORMED ME THAT HE AND THE MRS. HAD PRIOR FAMILY PLANS AND COULD NOT ATTEND. BUT HE SAID, “JAC, IF YOU DON’T MIND, I HAVE A QUESTION.” MY RESPONSE, “SURE, GO AHEAD.”**

**HIS NEXT WORDS SORT OF CAUGHT ME BY SURPRISE, BUT HE ASKED, “WHY A HALL OF DISTINCTION? I KNOW FEW OF THE 71 HALL MEMBERS AND THEY DO NOT MEAN MUCH TO ME. WHAT IS THE CRITERIA FOR INDUCTION?”**

**THE LAST ONE IS EASY. BEFORE MAKING MY ROUND OF FOLLOW UP CALLS, I SECURED THE CRITERIA FROM MYRA LAWSON, THE WONDERFUL EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE WHS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION. I TOLD MY CLASSMATE, “THERE ARE THREE SIMPLE GUIDES, GRADUATE OF WEEQUAHIC, SIGNIFICANT/NOTABLE CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY AFTER GRADUATION AND LASTLY, BUT NOT LEAST, FACULTY MEMBERS MAY ALSO BE NOMINATED.”**

**AS FOR THE SECOND PART OF HIS STATEMENT, I RELATED THAT I, TOO, WAS NOT FAMILIAR WITH MOST OF MY FELLOW 70 INDUCTEES. BUT GIVEN MY OVER 26 YEARS OF EDITING THE WEEKLYALUMNI “WHS NOTE,” AND RECEIVING THOUSANDS OF LETTERES CONCERNING MEMORIES AND MAINTAINED CONNECTIONS WITH SCHOOL AND WEEQUAHIC NEIGHBORHOOD FRIENDS, I VERY MUCH APPRECIATED THE THINGS THAT ALWAYS BOUND US TOGETHER. THAT IS, ATTENDING THE LOCAL FEEDER SCHOOLS AND THE HIGH SCHOOL, THE STREETS AND AREA WHERE WE LIVED TOGETHER AND OUR SHARED EXPERIENCES IN THE WEEQUAHOOD, EVEN THOUGH WE MAY HAVE EXPERIENCED THEM ON DIVERSE DATES.**

**WE ARE A COMMUNITY TIED TOGETHER BY OUR DAYS AND LIVES IN THE WEEQUAHIC DISTRICT. AND, I DO NOT HAVE TO KNOW YOU PERSONALLY. WE ALL CAN SHARE A MOMENT, OR MORE, OF A CHANCE MEETING WITH A SOON TO BE IDENTIFIED ALUMNI OF WEEQUAHIC HIGH AND A WELCOMED AND FEELING GOOD ALL OVER CONVERSATION RECALLING A MOST MEMORABLE**

**LIFE IN THE PLACE WE CALLED HOME AND THE SCHOOL THAT SERVED AS A BUILDING BLOCK TO WHO WE ARE TODAY.**

**THE ANSWER TO MY CLASSMATE'S INQUIRY AS TO WHY A HALL OF DISTINCTION WAS EASIER THAN I THOUGHT. IT IS SORT OF A TWO-PARTER. THE FIRST BEGINS WITH THE CREATION OF THE WEEQUAHIC HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION. HAL BRAFF AND SHEP BROSS GETTING TOGETHER WITH THE NOBLE NOTION OF FASHIONING A MECHANISM FROM WHICH TO BE ABLE TO GIVE BACK TO THE SCHOOL THAT PLAYED A SIGNIFICANT ROLE IN THEIR LIVES, AS IT DID FOR SO MANY OTHERS.**

**NOT ONLY DID THEY SEEK TO SUPPORT THE SCHOOL FINANCIALLY, BUT ALSO TO ASSIST THE PRESENT-DAY STUDENTS IN FURTHERING THEIR STUDIES AND TO HELP THEM SMOOTH THEIR OWN PATHS TO BECOMING CONTRIBUTING MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY.**

**AND, LET'S BE HONEST, THE HALL OF DISTINCTION, ITSELF, DOESN'T PAY FOR THE FULLFILLMENT OF HAL AND SHEP'S LOFTY GOALS. ALSO HAVE TO REACH OUT FOR SUPPORT FROM OTHERS FOR WHOM THESE GOALS FOR WEEQUAHIC ARE EQUALLY MEANINGFUL. TAKE ADVANTAGE OF THE WEEQUAHIC LEGACY AND OF THE SO MANY GRADUATES WHO THROUGHOUT THE YEARS REALLY MADE, AND CONTINUE TO MAKE, A DIFFERENCE FOR FAMILY AND COMMUNITY.**

**SO, WHY NOT CREATE A RECOGNITION AWARD FOR GRADUATES WHO MADE A SIGNIFICANT/NOTABLE CONTRIBUTION TO SOCIETY AFTER GRADUATION? AND NOT ONLY FOR FUND RAISING PURPOSES. BUT ALSO TO HIGHLIGHT THE WEEQUAHIC LEGACY, MAINTAIN THE WEEQUAHIC SPIRIT, CONTINUE TO RAISE THE WEEQUAHIC BANNER HIGH AND MAKE CERTAIN THAT WEEQUAHIC WILL PROVIDE THE COMMUNITY WITH WOMEN AND MEN WHO CAN FOLLOW THE ROAD THAT OTHERS HAVE SUCCESSFULLY WALKED BEFORE THEM. AND, AT THE SAME TIME, HELPING THEM BECOME CONTRIBUTING CITIZENS OF THE COMMUNITIES IN WHICH THEY WILL LIVE AND RAISE THEIR FAMILIES.**

**PLEASE KEEP IN MIND THESE RESPONSES TO MY CLASSMATE AS I LIST FOR YOU MEMBERS OF THE HALL OF DISTINCTION. I BELIEVE, THEIR STORIES WILL GIVE YOU A TASTE OF THE DIVERSE FLAVOR OF OUR HIGH SCHOOL'S PAST. THAT PAST, IN AND OF ITSELF, IS ONE OF DISTINCTION WITH A CAPITAL "D."**

**I, FIRST, APOLOGIZE TO THE INDUCTEES NOT INCLUDED HERE, BUT IT'S NOT A SIGN OF DISRESPECT OR INTENDED OMISSION. JUST NOT ENOUGH TIME ALLOTTED ME FOR A COMPLETE LISTING.**

**DR. VICTOR PARSONNET, CLASS OF 1950, WHO CELEBRATED HIS 100TH BIRTHDAY ON AUGUST 29, REMAINS HIGHLY REGARDED AS ONE OF NEW JERSEY'S PREEMINENT CARDIAC SURGEONS. HE AND FAMILY WERE PRINCIPAL FOUNDERS OF THE NEWARK BETH ISRAEL HOSPITAL.**

**SID DORFMAN, CLASS OF JUNE 1937, IS RESPECTED FOR HIS 73 YEARS AS A JOURNALIST WITH THE STAR LEDGER AND FOR DORF FEATURE SERVICE, ONE OF THE LARGEST NEWS BUREAUS IN THE COUNTRY.**

**CARRIE JACKSON, CLASS OF 1968, A VOCALIST WHO HAS PERFORMED AT MANY TOP JAZZ VENUES IN NY AND NJ, THE USA AND ABROAD. SHE IS GIVING BACK TO HER HOME COMMUNITY BY PRODUCING AND PROMOTING MUSIC FESTIVALS IN NEWARK AND PERFORMING IN THEM, AS WELL.**

**PAUL TRACTENBERG, CLASS OF JUNE 1956, ACCEPTED A FACULTY POSITION AT RUTGERS LAW SCHOOL-NEWARK BECAUSE OF ITS SINGULAR COMMITMENT TO USING LAW TO ADVANCE SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUALITY, ESPECIALLY, EDUCATION LAW AND POLICY. HE STILL IS THE LEADING VOICE IN THE LANDMARK ABBOTT V. BURKE LITIGATION WHICH GUARANTEED A THOROUGH AND EFFICIENT EDUCATION FOR ALL NEW JERSEY STUDENTS.**

**DR. WILFREDO NIEVES, CLASS OF 1966, A MAN WITH A PASSION FOR EDUCATION, IS PRESIDENT EMERITUS OF CAPITAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE. HE HAS SERVED ON THE BOARD OF THE NATIONAL COALITION OF ADVOCATES FOR STUDENTS, AND SO MANY OTHER COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATIONS.**

**DURING HIS TENURE AT RCA, DR. HERBERT WOLKSTEIN, CLASS OF 1939, WAS AWARDED 25 PATENTS, AUTHORED 44 TECHNICAL PAPERS, AND CONTRIBUTED TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF NUMEROUS COMMUNICATIONS SATELLITES**

**THE RESUME OF ANTHONY TIMMONS, CLASS OF 1980, INCLUDES BUSINESS AND TECHNOLOGY TEACHER AT WEEQUAHIC, SHABAZZ, AND WEST SIDE HIGH SCHOOLS. HE SERVED AS PRESIDENT OF THE WEEQUAHIC HIGH SCHOOL PTA AND HAS BEEN RECOGNIZED BY THE STATE OF NEW JERSEY, COUNTY OF ESSEX, AND THE CITY OF NEWARK FOR HIS LEADERSHIP**

**AND ACTIVISM, AS WELL AS FOR COACHING GRAMMAR SCHOOL AND HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH. HE IS ALSO A MEMBER OF THE CITY OF NEWARK PLANNING BOARD AND THE NEWARK ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSION AND WAS THE FIRST MUSLIM CHAPLAIN AT NEWARK BETH ISRAEL HOSPITAL.**

**MIRIAM SPAN, CLASS OF 1960, SERVED AS A NJ SUPERIOR COURT JUDGE FOR 29 YEARS.**

**LES FEIN, FACULTY, WAS THE LEGENDARY BASKETBALL COACH OF WEEQUAHIC'S 1967 NATIONALLY RANKED #1.**

**ALVIN ATTLES, CLASS OF 55, WHOSE RECENT PASSING WE ALL MOURNED, WAS A HIGHLY RESPECTED PROFESSIONAL BASKETBALL PLAYER, CHAMPIONSHIP COACH AND TEAM ADMINISTRATOR. HE OFTEN RETURNED TO HIS ROOTS IN SUPPORT OF COMMUNITY AND WEEQUAHIC.**

**PHILIP ROTH, CLASS OF 1950, PULITZER PRIZE WINNING AUTHOR.**

**HILDA LUTZKE, BELOVED ENGLISH FACULTY MEMBER FOR MANY YEARS.**

**THE LATE ELEANOR LUTZKE LEWIS (59), HER DAUGHTER, WHO WAS THE FIRST EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF RALPH NADER'S NJ PUBLIC RESEARCH INTEREST GROUP AND LATER ASSISTANT COMMISSIONER OF THE NJ DEPARTMENT OF INSURANCE.**

**RON STONE, CLASS OF 2007, EDUCATOR AND HERALDED PRINCIPAL OF WEEQUAHIC HIGH SCHOOL.**

**HAL BRAFF, 1952 GRADUATE, SUCCESSFUL ATTORNEY WHO HAD THE VISION AND THE PASSION TO CREATE AND SHEPHERD THE SUCCESS OF THE WEEQUAHIC HIGH SCHOOL ALUMNI ASSOCIATION.**

**SHEILA OLIVER, CLASS OF 1970, SPEAKER OF THE NJ GENERAL ASSEMBLY AND NEW JERSEY LT. GOVERNOR, WHO WILL BE HONORED LATER IN THIS PROGRAM.**

**STEVEN DINETZ, CLASS OF 1965, OWNER AND OPERATOR OF MEDIA, RADIO AND OUTDOOR ASSETS THROUGHOUT THE UNITED STATES AND PARTS OF EUROPE.**

**DR. HAROLD WEINTRAUB, CLASS OF 1963, A LEADER IN THE FIELD OF SCIENCE AND MEDICINE, AUTHORED MORE THAN 130 RESEARCH ARTICLES MAKING SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS IN THE FIELD OF BIOLOGICAL SCIENCE.**

**IN HIS BUSINESS CAREER, MILTON PERLMUTTER, CLASS OF 1945, WENT ON TO BECOME PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER OF SUPERMARKETS GENERAL, THE PARENT COMPANY FOR PATHMARK AND SHOPRITE SUPERMARKETS AND RICKEL HOME CENTERS.**

**THE LATE STANLEY HERR, CLASS OF 1963, WAS AN ATTORNEY AND ADVOCATE FOR CHILDREN, AND THE ELDERLY, MENTALLY DISABLED AND HOMELESS. DURING THE CLINTON ADMINISTRATION, HE WAS A KENNEDY PUBLIC POLICY FELLOW AT THE WHITE HOUSE, ADVISING ON DISABILITY AND HOMELESSNESS ISSUES.**

**LYNDA ARNOLD-DAVIS, CLASS OF 1971, STARTED OUT AS A NURSE AND TODAY IS DIRECTOR OF FAMILY HEALTH SERVICES OF UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL.**

**AT THE TIME OF HER HALL INDUCTION IN 2019, ANTOINETTE (GRAUER) BASKERVILLE-RICHARDSON, CLASS OF 1970, HELD THE POSITION OF CHIEF EDUCATION OFFICER FOR THE CITY OF NEWARK, NJ.**

**I LEAVE FOR LAST DR. NAOMI ADJEI, CLASS OF 2007, WHOSE STORY PROVIDES THE PERFECT EXAMPLE OF MY RESPONSE TO MY CLASSMATE. SHE IS A PUBLIC-SCHOOL EDUCATOR, PHYSICIAN, AND WHS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION SCHOLARSHIP RECIPIENT.**

**DR. ADJEI WAS BORN AND RAISED IN TEMA, GHANA. SHE MOVED TO THE UNITED STATES IN 2005 JOINING WEEQUAHIC HIGH SCHOOL AS A SOPHOMORE AND LATER GRADUATING AS THE VALEDICTORIAN. AFTER GRADUATION FROM CORNELL IN 2011, NAOMI MOVED TO BALTIMORE WHERE SHE TAUGHT 7TH AND 8TH GRADE SCIENCE AND HEALTH AS PART OF TEACH FOR AMERICA.**

**AFTER HER COMMITMENT TO TEACH FOR AMERICA, NAOMI PURSUED MEDICINE DEVELOPING A PASSION FOR ADDRESSING HEALTH EQUITY AND IMPROVING HEALTH OUTCOMES FOR VULNERABLE POPULATIONS, PARTICULARLY CHILDREN AND WOMEN. SPECIALIZING IN OBSTETRICS AND GYNECOLOGY, SHE CARES FOR WOMEN WITH REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH**

**DISORDERS. AT HER HALL INDUCTION, NAOMI CREDITED HER SUCCESS AT WEEQUAHIC TO THE SUPPORT AND GENEROSITY OF MANY OF HER TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS.**

**IT WAS MY HONOR TO SHARE WITH YOU THE STORIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF SOME OF OUR HALL OF DISTINCTION MEMEBERS. IT IS WITH GREAT WEEQUAHIC PRIDE THAT I NOTE THAT A GOOD NUMBER HAVE INDICATED THAT THEIR SUCCESS HAS A BASIS IN THEIR WEEQUAHIC EDUCATION.**

**CERTAINLY, WEEQUAHIC CAN BOAST OF A LEGION OF GRADUATES WHO MADE A DIFFERENCE AND WHOSE TALENTS AND PASSION BENEFITED SO MANY. YET, THEY ARE ALSO DESERVING OF RECOGNITION BECAUSE, IN ADDITION, THEY WERE PREPARED TO GIVE BACK.**

**I LIKE TO THINK THAT THEIR GOOD WILL IN GIVING BACK HAD MUCH TO DO WITH THEIR EDUCATION AT WEEQUAHIC HIGH SCHOOL, THE TEACHERS, THEIR FRIENDS AND ASSOCIATES AT WEEQUAHIC, AND THE FAMILY VALUES LEARNED WHILE LIVING IN THE WEEQUAHIC DISTRICT. INDUCTION INTO THE HALL OF DISTINCTION IS A RECOGNITION OF THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENTS, THEIR CONNECTION TO SO MANY THINGS WEEQUAHIC AND THEIR WILLINGNESS TO CONTINUE TO, AS OUR OLD FIGHT SONG STATES, LIFT THE WEEQUAHIC BANNER "OH SO HIGH."**