

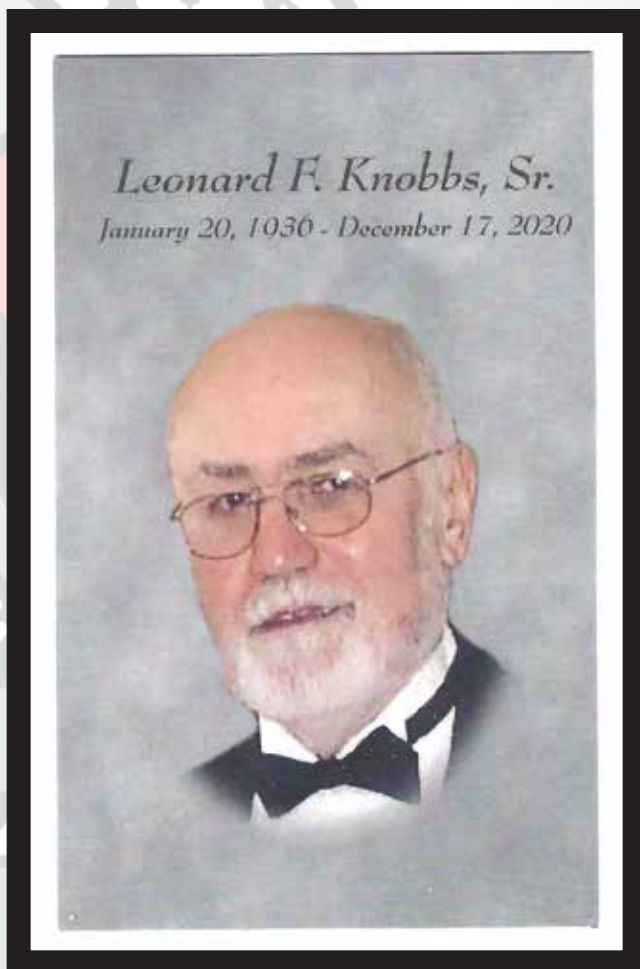


# FALCONER

Vol.83 No 3

Northeast Catholic Alumni Ass'n., Inc.

## IN MEMORIAM



Leonard F. Knobbs, age 84, passed away on December 17, 2020 after a brief battle with COVID. Born in Philadelphia, Len was the son of the late Leonard D. Knobbs and the late Mabel Hood Knobbs, the devoted husband of Barbara J. Zegarski Knobbs for sixty-five years, the loving father of Leonard F. Knobbs, Jr. (Mary), Raymond “Bear” Knobbs (Lauren), Barbara Macready (Andrew), Stephen “Cubby” Knobbs (Cindi), the late Robert Knobbs, Kathleen Coleman (Steven), and Michael Knobbs (Angel), the proud grandfather of 23 grandchildren, 42 great grandchildren, and one great-great grandchild, and the beloved brother of Margaret Mudrick (Walter) and the late Sister Catherine Knobbs, SSJ.

Born on January 20, 1936, Len was raised in the Port Richmond section of Philadelphia. He was a proud graduate of St. Anne Grade School (Class of 1949) and Northeast Catholic High School (Class of 1953). In 1955, he married the love of his life, Barbara. They resided in St. Martin of Tours Parish and raised their seven children there. He enjoyed traveling with his “bride”, taking photographs of his large family, and sharing memories with his loved ones.

In 1956, Len entered the Philadelphia Fire Department and quickly moved up the ranks. In 1982, he retired as a Battalion Chief after 26 years of service. The next twenty years, he spent with Police & Fire Medical Enterprises, Inc. where he served as Executive Vice President and CFO prior to his retirement. He attended Penn’s Wharton Evening School; subsequently, he attended courses sponsored by the International Foundation of Employee Benefit Programs and the American Management Association and was a member of both organizations.

He was a charter member of the Chief Financial Officers’ Association and a past president of the Eastern Pennsylvania Administrators Association.

Len was a proud and devoted member of Northeast Catholic Alumni Association. He was elected to the Board of Governors in 1956 and since has chaired or served on every committee of the Association.

At the 2007 Communion Breakfast, he was presented with a plaque for fifty years of service to the Association. In 1978, Len was named an Outstanding Alumnus, and in 1979, was one of fifty men honored by the Association on the occasion of the Association’s fiftieth anniversary celebration.

In 1991, Len was inducted into the NECHS Hall of Fame.

*by Emily Coleman, Granddaughter*



FALCONER

PUBLISHED BY

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LONGTIME FALCON RETIRES

This is sort of a “Dear John” letter, not the type a soldier dreads receiving, no, it will be a letter of praise to one for one of our Brothers. To refresh my memory on St. Patrick and his upcoming feast day, I am reading a book about his life written by Richard ‘Cardinal’ Cushing and in the pages Cardinal Cushing refers to some of the great leaders in the Church during the 4th and 5th centuries. He described them like this, “The Papacy was graced with pontiffs of scholarship and renown holy men, able men, men of action such as the sagacious and fearless Pope Leo the Great”. Great attributes for those men, but in our midst we had a man that had those same qualities and some extras. I am talking about John Hanejko of the class of 1965.

Dear John,  
‘North’ is a place we all have come to know as a friend and ‘North’ does not have many friends as good as you to the school, the students and the Oblate priests. Thank you for your tireless devotion to the Alumni Association. You naturally stepped up when the need arose to temporarily “help out” our Executive Secretary when he was nursing a broken collarbone, That temporary status started in 1994 and continued until 2021.



John R. Hanejko, ‘65 started out on the Board of Governors, participating on or was the head of many different committees and then achieved the lofty post of President in 1986 until 1989 and once again in 2009 to 2012. That is 6 terms as President. If I’m not mistaken, John has devoted 5 decades plus of his life to the Northeast Catholic family. John, unfortunately, was our leader when the Archdiocese closed down our beloved school. Rest assured folks the broken hearted President worked tirelessly to find an alternative to closing North 10 years ago, but unfortunately the people downtown had their minds made up to shutter our doors. BUT..... John immediately went to work, along with his office mate Len and our Class Representatives, to shape our Association into the envy of every high school alumni association that ever was, including most colleges and universities. I receive letters and compliments on our camaraderie, our uniqueness, our faithfulness to God and the Catholic Church and the Oblates, and most especially our generosity. Yes, John was and is a big part of us receiving these accolades. He was not home watching Seinfeld reruns or Jeopardy at night. No, he was over at the “Office” when it was down at Erie and Torresdale, or 2700 Rhawn Street at least 4 nights a week. And if we were doing mailings John would be there lending support likely 6 days a week.

John’s humble beginnings in the Port Richmond neighborhood included his education at Our Lady Help of Christians grade school for 8 years and then to Northeast Catholic graduating in 1965. After graduating from North Catholic John joined the Philadelphia Police Department where he rose to the rank of Chief Inspector. John retired from the Police Department after 40 years of dedicated service. I can not tell you how many Philly Cops I run into that tell me what a good guy John was and how he is still very respected.

John also was lucky to have found an extremely nice and understanding bride, Joyce, and they have a very close extended family of children and grandchildren who accepted John’s dedication to his family, work and the Alumni Association. Knowing that John will continue to support the alumni efforts moving forward I am sure he will also begin to find the time to study the literary works of Roger Bacon aka “Dr. Mirabilis” the Franciscan philosopher. He has been meaning to do a 21st century interpretation of the 1267 classic “Opus Tertium” and get the schools to adopt the good doctors teachings. We will be glad to report on Mr. Hanejko’s progress in future publications.

John, it is the little things you did for us that mean so much.

THANK YOU from the bottom of our hearts! Please enjoy a Happy, Healthy, Safe and Fun retirement!

Tenui Nec Dimittam,

Robert Kensil, Jr. and the entire Northeast Catholic Alumni Association

President’s Message

By Robert J. Kensil, Jr. ‘74

Dear Brother Falcons, I have news to report in this President’s Message. I am talking about the passing of the person responsible for doing more for this Association and our school than arguably anyone. I am writing about my friend Len Knobbs, ‘53. Over the years I’ve read some of Len’s Falconer headlines when we would lose one of our Brothers. Usually the headline would start out “Association loses a Stalwart. I grabbed a September 1998 issue and saw that we lost Rev. Fernan J. Brennan, OSFS, ‘32 and J. William “Bill” Arnoldy, ‘38 and Len would give them a glowing write up, that I am sure would have made them proud.

I am going to tell you about Len’s career with North, not his career as a Battalion Chief in the PFD or as the Executive Vice President and CFO of the Police and Fire Medical Association. Maybe in another issue we will tackle those careers, hope it makes Len Proud.

I don’t know how Len was raised by his parents or how the Sisters taught him at Port Richmond’s St. Anne’s parish. What I do know, pretty much, is how the Oblates of St. Francis de Sales educated him at his beloved Northeast Catholic. I know that they taught him to love God, enjoy learning and lead a civic minded give back to the community type of life. No communities were as lucky to have a Len Knobbs in their life as anyone in need of rescue during a fire emergency and the Northeast Catholic Alumni Association and the North Catholic society in general.

Len was able to, with a lot of help from his wife Barbara, raise a large family. Barbara and Len’s children referred to Northeast Catholic Alumni Association as Len’s “8th” child. Some folks say that they believe Len was born with the ability to walk and talk, which developed into a “walk and yell” ability when necessary. I’ve heard it said that human nature is to ask why and how, Len had this trait and maxed it out. He was always interested in learning whether there was a better way to raise funds for the scholarship program or getting the best postage rates or better prices for ink cartridges. His eye was always looking to help increase the alumni membership. I’ve witnessed Len in an agitated state and found that he was in this condition because a deposit or checking account was out of balance by a small amount, maybe 10 cents or \$5.00. Len didn’t have the regular phobias that 10% of us have like he wasn’t suffering from Ailurophobia (fear of cats) or Peladophobia (fear of bald people). His phobia was making a calculation or misstep that would hurt the Association. St Francis’s famous line that a lot of us use as a motto, “Be who you are and be that well” was one that Len took to the tenth degree. I heard a line from a song and it goes like this, “just because you’re going forward doesn’t mean I’m going backwards”. This is a line Len would have loved to use. I always wanted the chance to use it in his presence when he was explaining to me the subtleties of one of our programs and I needed extra tutoring. I know he would have loved to lay it on me.

As proof of Len’s insatiable yearning for learning, I once said to him something we’ve all heard, “Sooner or later even a blind squirrel finds a nut”. Then I added “wonder who paid for the scientific study to find this out?” Len laughed and immediately told me who.

Len was always fond and hungry for a challenge whether it was a problem with something personal or an injustice towards NC or a new plan for the Alumni Association. The past would flare up or the demands of a future issue would be tackled and bested by him. Len was fearless and he was a part of the Association for 60 years, outstanding years. He served as President on numerous occasions in different decades. He was also our longtime Executive Secretary and Treasurer since 1970. Now these are just titles, Len was, to put it simply, our “chief cook and bottle washer”. He gladly and sometimes not so happily took every task that presented itself to us and made it work. Len lent his talents, dedication and hard work to 19 Presidents of the Association and sad to say only a year and a half of my reign. I always looked to certain past presidents for guidance but especially Len. He always gave it to you straight, whether you liked it or not. He was a walking historian and could remember every Brother that became a Priest or who paid their dues or who did this or that, for or against North, or what year someone graduated. He knew about every athletic championship or loss. Len was a part of the Lucky 12 program, the Memorial Scholarships Program, the Sports Raffle, Editor of the Falconer newsletter, the Communion Breakfast, the Board Dinner Meetings, Memorial Day Event and these are just the latest activities. Back in the past the Association was involved in Basketball Tournaments, Dances, Black Tie Balls, picnics and Christmas parties and a bunch of things I don’t even know about.

Funny I can remember being taught about “Manifest Destiny” but I cannot remember by who, The Sisters of St. Joseph or the Oblates at North, or probably both, but I remember it meaning the special virtues of the American people and this mission of the US to redeem and remake the West in the image of the agrarian East and the irresistible duty to accomplish this. Len suffered the “Manifest Destiny” of Northeast Catholic High School for all of the North Catholic community and we owe him our gratitude, thanks and prayers for this mission he undertook in his life.

I am going to miss my friend! God Bless You!

Vestigia nulla retrosum. Never a backward step.

Support the Lucky 12's Club



Chaplain's  
Corner

By Rev. Neil F. Kilty, OSFS, '59



During the past Christmas season the angel of death was busy visiting our Oblate - North Catholic - communities.

At Childs, we lost Fr. Leon Bonikowski before Christmas. Leon was a Bridesburg boy - St John Cantius - who graduated from North in 1954. With a brief stay at Salesian, the Oblate high school in Detroit, Leon spent most of this teaching years at Fr. Judge in Philadelphia. His real dedication was to our missions. Leon spent 20 years in our missions in Brazil. When he returned to the states, he became our assistant Mission Procurator. For many years he visited parishes and schools throughout the USA preaching and collecting money for our missions in South Africa and South America. He was a man who never spoke an unkind word to anyone.

The Oblates lost Brother Fred Chiappone who lived to be 101 years old. Brother taught Chemistry at North from 1955-60 and again from 1961 to 1964. When the Oblates separated into two provinces, Fred went to the Toledo-Detroit province and taught at Bishop Duffy in Niagara Falls New York. Niagara Falls was Fred's birthplace. For years he worked at a summer camp for mentally challenged children. He was simply a fine, gentle man.

We also gave back to the Lord, our grand "Wizard", Bob Fitzsimmons. Bob graduated from NC in 1953 and came back to his alma mater in 1959 to teach in the Business Department. Fitz's career spanned 50+ years at North. What a great Falcon he was - whether teaching Business or coordinating our annual Career Day or cutting grass and taking care of the property around the school. Fitz was truly a Salesian gentleman - making little things truly great for the Lord!

Many of us will remember Mrs. Figaniak. Jackie, as I called her, worked in the Discipline office for Mr. Koschineg. She came to North in 1987 and fell in love with the place and she stayed with us until 2010 when the archdiocese decided to close and sell the school. What a wonderful lady! She loved all her NC boys, especially those who got into trouble.

You've heard of the expression "Dutch Uncle". Well, she would be our "Dutch Aunt"!

Len Knobbs got involved with the Alumni Association upon his graduation from North in 1953. Ever since then he had been an active and dedicated member of the association. Len passed away this past December 17<sup>th</sup>, a day after his son, Robert, also passed away. What a hard burden for their family!

Thinking of Len brings to my mind the words of a song the Irish composer James Coulter wrote on the death of this father. One of the lines goes like this: "We'd thought he'd live forever. He seemed so alive and strong. But the minutes fly and the years go bye". Isn't that the truth! The name Len Knobbs and the North Catholic Alumni Association were so closely connected for almost 70 years! Len was our faithful Falcon.

Being faithful and committed to a group or a task is not an easy thing to do. If a person wishes to be faithful, one must be ready to put aside one's time and comforts and interests. This was Len's gift to the Association - his faithfulness! And this fidelity went beyond the Association - to his family, his church and his country.

Well, he's gone from us. And, as I said, we'd thought he'd be around forever. I'll miss him. I'll miss his bi-monthly phone calls now that I'm retired at Childs. I'll miss his and his wife, Barbara's visits. I'll never forget my surprise Golden Jubilee Dinner which the members gave me, and, which I know, he had a hand in.

The words of Coulter's song have a special meaning for me: "And tho' he may be gone, memories will linger on. And I'll miss him - the old man".

To Len and the other North Catholic faithful who have passed away, I offer this beautiful insight of St. Francis de Sales found in The Introduction to the Devout Life (Part 1, 17).

"From the heights of Heaven, Jesus mercifully looks down upon you and graciously invites you there. He says: "Come, dear soul, find everlasting rest in my bountiful arms where I have prepared undying happiness for you in the abundance of My love".

Your Prayers are Requested for the Following Deceased

We apologize for any missing names not included in this list at the time of this publication

Rev. Joseph B. Jung '42  
Rev. John J. Bradley '46  
Thomas Francis Ciasullo, '47  
William F. Stapleton '47  
Francis J. Domzalski '49  
Robert (Mr. Fitz) Fitzsimmons  
John "Jack" Junod, '53  
Leonard F. Knobbs, '53  
Robert Knobbs

Son of Leonard F., '53

Joseph Zazyczny, '53  
John F. Kurdziel, '54  
Thomas Perkinson, '54  
Agnes Casey

Mother of Michael, '67, Raymond, '68

Joseph Barron, '57  
Joseph Gillespie, '59  
Hon. Terrence Michael McStravick, '60  
Edward O'Hanlon, '63  
John Renye, '66  
John E. DeLuisi, '68  
Gilbert J. Dougherty Jr., '68  
Hugh Becker, '74  
Stephen Cola, '75  
Fr. Robert T. Feeney '75  
Edward Newman, '78  
Francis Fiorino, '87  
Michael Hagstotz, '87  
Mike McKee, '91

Son of Michael McKee, '65

Donald Keen, Sr.

Father of Donald Keen, '90

Ronald Swanson, '98  
Mary Wolstenholme

Mother of Owen Wolstenholme, '04

Joseph Butler,

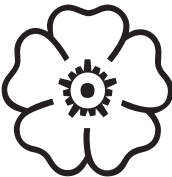
Grandfather of Sean Butler, '05

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

FALCONWAY XXXIII  
A NEW YEAR!

Despite the on-going obstacles of the virus, shutdowns, cancellation and rescheduling of all alumni activities, including our regularly scheduled monthly board meetings, despite all of these challenges, the North Catholic alumni continues to support Falconway once again this year. This year's appeal began in November, 2020. Currently the Scholarship Fund has benefited by \$50,000 year to date and the Oblates \$24,000 thus far. Again, our reporting is not completely up to date due to the death of our Executive Secretary. More detail information will appear in the next issue of the Falconer. Your alumni association thanks you for your continued support and your generosity through these trying times.

LOOK FOR LUCKY 12  
COMING SOON!



ALUMNI STORE  
ONCE AGAIN OPEN

Check out the complete items available and visit our website@ [www.necathalumni.org](http://www.necathalumni.org)



PRESIDENT'S INNER CIRCLE

PLATINUM - \$5001 AND OVER; GOLD - \$1001 TO \$5000; SILVER - \$501 TO \$1000

FRIENDS OF FALCONWAY

FALCON'S ROOST - \$101 TO \$500; RED & WHITE - \$26 TO \$100; FALCON BOOSTER - UP TO \$25

CHECK ONE: ☐ PLATINUM ☐ GOLD ☐ SILVER

☐ FALCON'S ROOST ☐ RED & WHITE ☐ FALCON BOOSTER

My contribution to FALCONWAY is \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please distribute as follows:

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Northeast Catholic Alumni Memorial

Scholarship Fund, Inc. to help underwrite college/high school/ grade school tuition for sons/daughters, grandsons/granddaughters of dues paying alumni.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ to the Oblates of St. Francis deSales to perpetuate Salesian ideals for future generations.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class ID# \_\_\_\_\_

MAKE CHECKS PAYABLE TO FALCONWAY

Mail to: FALCONWAY do N.E.C. Alumni Ass'n., Inc.  
P.O. Box 7005, Philadelphia, PA 19149-0005



# COMMUNION BREAKFAST CANCELED ONCE AGAIN

Due to the continued outbreak of the Coronavirus the 91st Anniversary Memorial Mass and Communion Breakfast scheduled for Sunday, March 14th, has once again been canceled for 2021. Although we attempted to reschedule this event several times last year in 2020, it would seem that the circumstances will not significantly change in time for this spring, which is the normal time for this celebration. We will, however, notify our fellow Falcons if anything changes.

The Communion Breakfast and Mass is the single most important event in the calendar year for the Alumni Association. Among other things, it complies with our bylaws for the nomination and election of all open seats to the Board of Governors of the Alumni Association. Currently the Alumni Association is operating under emergency status due to the pandemic and the restrictions limiting any gatherings or meetings. President Bob Kensil is ably managing the association with the support of the executive board members which communicates by email, conference calls or text. We are looking forward to once again operating and functioning under normal circumstances as soon as permitted.

The untimely passing of our longtime Executive Secretary, Len Knobbs, has compounded the limitations of the board and the alumni office. As we move forward each and every day your alumni board and trustees are ensuring that the Northeast Catholic Alumni Association will continue to meet all of the challenges of the day and resume all of the activities that have been greatly supported by our fellow Falcons throughout the years.



# KEEPING FINGERS CROSSED 31<sup>ST</sup> GOLF CLASSIC

Hard to imagine at this time but it might still be possible to pull off another miracle by playing golf at North Hills Country Club on Tuesday, September 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 joined by our sister school Little Flower High School for Girls. It was certainly a minor miracle last year that we managed to actually get to safely play golf and had a very successful tournament with the added support of the Little Flower community.

As previously stated in our last Falconer, the 30<sup>th</sup> Golf Classic was well attended and high marks to the staff at North Hills Country Club for providing a beautiful day of golf under the safety and security meeting all of the required protocols and above. Prayers from Sister Joan of Little Flower certainly contributed to this minor miracle. We thank Sister Joan.

Keep a lookout for the Golf Tournament brochure and announcement coming in the spring.

We will be looking for golf sponsors and auction items once again this year as well as event sponsorships and hole sponsors. There is no denying that this year will be the biggest challenge that we have ever had in the past for golfers and sponsorships. We look to all of the past NC supporters who have been so generous to the Golf Classic and the Memorial Scholarship Fund to once again show their support.

It has been this support that will further keep the spirit and traditions of what North Catholic is alive and well for many more years to come. The legacy of North Catholic continues to grow despite the passing of alumni greats and legends. Those of us who remain are left with the duty and responsibility to make sure all of the good works and deeds continue.

Believing in a good Catholic education as the cornerstone of a full and productive life helps build a better world for everyone.



**SAVE THE DATE CLASS OF 1966!!**  
It is official - **Our 55th is On!!** October 10, 2021.. Sunday afternoon event at Brookside Manor, 50 Bustleton Pike, Feasterville, PA. (County Line Road where Somerton Springs Swim Club is located.) **Spread the word. Invite your classmates.** You may reserve a table for 10. Look for the reunion notice to be mailed in the spring 2021. In the meantime, you can contact **Ray Rysak, '66** by email [rerysak@verizon.net](mailto:rerysak@verizon.net) or text: 215-530-2729.

**The class of 1970's Golden Anniversary 50th Reunion**, which was scheduled for September 26th, 2020, was postponed due the coronavirus. We are looking to the fall of 2021 to reschedule so look for further information in the coming Falconer editions. In the meantime you can contact **Jim Kelly at 215-355-0967** or **John Peteraf at 215-342-7335**.

The class of 1972 will start to plan for the celebration of their **50th Anniversary Reunion** to take place in **2022**. If interested to work on the reunion please contact Steve Cardullo, [scardullo@comcast.net](mailto:scardullo@comcast.net), or John Garson, [gronski45@verizon.net](mailto:gronski45@verizon.net).

THE PRESIDENT'S INNER CIRCLE WILL BE UPDATED IN THE  
NEXT ISSUE OF THE FALCONER.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT

### ADOPT A SENIOR OBLATE

Oblates of St. Francis de Sales  
North American Province

You are invited to support Oblates in retirement by enrolling in the **Adopt a Senior Oblate** Program. Participants choose or are assigned an Oblate. The Oblate prays, privately and at daily mass, for them and the participants are invited to connect with the Oblates through email or letters. This connection to the outside world is invaluable to men in retirement many of whom have been in quarantine for months. Enroll today at [www.oblates.org](http://www.oblates.org)



I have wanted to write this article for over ten years. I guess now is as good a time as any! Over the years since our beloved Alma Mater closed, the Alumni has kept our legacy and its entities going strong. The phrase I have seen printed on many NC shirts, **“Gone But Not Forgotten”**, really is true. However, let me explain why the green shrub in the photo at the top means the same for me.

The bush on the left of the photo is the last of 27 bushes I removed from the North Catholic property at Erie and Torresdale Avenues. I labeled and tagged each bush like a piece for a puzzle. My hope was to re-plant these bushes at the new location of the Alumni office at Rhawn and Fairfield Streets.

During the summer of 2010 the transplanted bushes struggled due to the excessive heat and lack of rain. Well, all of the bushes died except one. Several years ago I decided to jazz up the area and added red and white rose bushes.

Every time I cut the grass or come to an Alumni meeting, or just drive by, I think, **“Gone But Not Forgotten”**. Recently, Len Knobbs, ‘53 passed away. I thought this was as good a time as any to finally let our Alumni know the significance of that lone bush at the corner of our lawn and now Len Knobbs, ‘53,

**“Gone But Not Forgotten”.**

by Jeff Rzepczynski, ‘88

### Active Membership Application

Remit to: Northeast Catholic Alumni Association, Inc.  
P.O. Box 7005, Philadelphia, PA 19149

I am enclosing \$10.00 to cover my alumni membership dues for the fiscal year July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Class ID # \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone # \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_