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Passing the torch

James Ellis retiring after 29 years of service

By MATTHEW RUSSELL
Enterprise Staff Writer

TUPPER LAKE — One of the enduring figures in Tupper Lake education, high school principal James Ellis, is retiring after 29 years of service to the school district.

Ellis has had a broad impact on this community. Numbering among his many former students are village and town board members, including the mayor and town supervisor, County Legislator Paul Maroun, and several staff and teachers here in Tupper Lake. He has served as both an instructor and an administrator, but said he still thinks of himself as a teacher — a "principal teacher." For all educators, Ellis said, the goals and rewards are the same.

"To see young people do well, seeing them go on to college, performing public service...I taught that service is an important part of our duty as citizens of this great Republic," Ellis said.

The grandson of Lebanese immigrants who fled the economic hardships of the Middle East, James Ellis was born in Tupper Lake in 1940. His father owned a grocery store and was well-read in history, Ellis recalled. He instilled in his son a lifelong love for learning and an appre-

There is a soul and spirit here you can't define.
(James Ellis)

ciation of "knowledge for its own sake." By the end of eighth grade, young James knew he wanted to teach history.

"I wanted to teach at the high school level, while the kids are still honest and open," he reflected.

Ellis graduated from the Holy Ghost Academy in 1958 and earned a bachelor's degree in history from Sienna College in 1962. He served in the Army from then until 1967, serving in the infantry and attaining the rank of captain. After a short stint in Miami, Ellis landed a teaching job at the Tupper Lake High School in the fall of 1967. He and his wife Elaine raised a son and daughter in Tupper Lake — John Ellis is now an attorney and Jamelle is a teacher.

Ellis said it was a special quality about the community that kept him here so long. He said he saw his job as an educator was to serve as a guardian of that spirit, of "the goodness of Tupper Lake".

"There is a soul and spirit here you can't define. It's comprised of a healthy skepticism, a love for the spiritual — which is not always practiced — and a long list of loveable characters of all ages. When things are tough, there are always people there to assist," Ellis said.

Tupper Lake's want their children to do well at whatever they do, Ellis asserted, be it sports, academics or extra-curricular activities. He said he is proud of how well the kids have done over the years and of how the community supported them on the way. He pointed to a less than 2 percent drop out rate at the high school and to the fact that between 50 and 75 percent of graduates go on to college. He noted that the community provides \$62,000 in scholarship awards annually to students, noting that the board of education has allowed him to remain as chairman of the scholarship committee after he retires.

There have been difficulties along the way, mostly structural problems having to do with budgets. But a professional educator, one has to accept that there will be certain problems with funding and with students themselves, Ellis said.

"Kids are still kids, and they're capable of using poor judgement and making dumb mistakes. Our job as adults is to correct them, dust them off and send them on their way."

"We're not immune in Tupper Lake to the problems faced elsewhere...I do hope that progress has been made and that I was able to retain the successes that were handed to me by my predecessors," he said.

On July 1, Ellis will hand his successes off to Paul Alioto, a young

(Continued on Page A8)



LOOK IT UP — Jim Ellis, Tupper Lake High School principal, presents a dictionary to Adam Button, one of four recipients of the school's English department award for outstanding improvement in the field of English. This was the last of the ceremonies in which Ellis has presented awards, medals, honors, and scholarships in his 29 years as an educator; he retires on July 1.

(Enterprise Photo — Vincent Fallica)



REBELS — Civil War re-enactors, from left, Jacob Lamitie, Michael Lamitie and Nick Ouiemet, all of Malone, stand at attention at last weekend's Civil War living history encampment in Tupper Lake. About 40 re-enactors, clad in period uniforms, represented the Confederacy and the Union at the first-of-its-kind event in Tupper Lake. See Page A5 for more pictures.

(Enterprise Photo — Matthew Russell)

APA gives Whiteface improvement plan OK

By KATY ODELL WILSON
Enterprise Staff Writer

RAY BROOK — A revised Whiteface Mountain management plan for improving chairlifts, trails, and snowmaking was approved in committee Thursday and OK'd by the full board of the Adirondack Park Agency Friday.

Ted Blazer, president of the Olympic Regional Development Authority which operates the downhill ski area, explained the five-year unit management plan to commissioners on the Park Policy and Planning Committee. Updated from 1987, it calls for widening trails, drawing more water from the AuSable River for increased snowmaking capacity, and making improvements to the lodges in a five-phase plan. Also, a gondola is proposed

to replace a lift on Little Whiteface, Blazer explained. Early estimates of the project cost topped \$20 million. Funding is to come from a mix of state appropriations and ORDA revenues.

ORDA officials have met with the Department of Environmental Conservation regarding the plan to increase pumping capacity from the West Branch of the AuSable River for snowmaking and to review concerns that drawing more water from the river could result in winter kill of fish. No general restrictions on water withdrawals apply to the river, designated recreational. But after working with the DEC, ORDA has agreed to meet pumping parameters based on the daily rate of water flow. A monitoring station will be set up in the river to track daily flow rates. Constructing a

water reservoir for snowmaking has been considered, but is not definite at this time.

Another issue of concern, especially after the October rainstorm that resulted in a major washout of lower trails, is erosion control. Also, because Whiteface is located in the Forest Preserve, ORDA must adhere to certain guidelines in its development and operation of the ski area regarding such issues as ski trail width and combined length, and vegetation cutting.

After drawing up a draft environmental impact statement (EIS) on the Whiteface management plan last year and seeking public input, ORDA officials completed its final EIS in May. The document is part of the required state environmental quality review (SEQR) process.

Freemen begin court appearances

By LEN IWANSKI
Associated Press Writer

JORDAN, Mont. (AP) — The 14 jailed Freemen appeared in court today to face charges brought by a legal system they do not recognize, with one of the defendants pointing to the American flag and saying, "That's not my flag."

Steven Hance, 46, repeatedly tried to argue about the law with the judge before making the comment about the flag. U.S. Magistrate Robert Holter ended the discussion by telling Hance, "My brother died for that flag."

The court appearances in Billings for Nance and the 13 others took three hours as several defendants challenged the judge and refused to acknowledge the charges against them.

Rodney Skurdal, 43, one of the first of 14 members of the group brought to appear before Holter, objected to the proceedings,

renouncing U.S. government authority and claiming common-law rights.

At one point, Skurdal rose from his seat and pointed at the bench in voicing his objections. Five U.S. marshals surrounded and restrained him. Holter overruled his objections.

Emmett Clark, 67, did not respond when told of the charges against him but agreed to a request by prosecutors that he undergo a medical examination in his jail cell. Assistant U.S. Attorney James Seykora did not explain the request.

Clark and Skurdal will be arraigned Thursday, when they will be expected to enter pleas. Bail hearings were set for Tuesday. Both men refused court-appointed attorneys.

The remainder of the Freemen facing federal charges were expected to appear in court later today.

All of the group's 16 remaining

members surrendered to the FBI and left their ranch Thursday night, ending the longest armed siege in modern U.S. history and avoiding the bloodshed of Waco and Ruby Ridge. The siege at the remote ranch the group called Justus Township lasted 81 days.

They came out in their own vehicles, meeting the FBI at the compound entrance. Some hugged before being patted down and escorted, unhandcuffed, to transport vans. Others formed a circle holding hands and bowed their heads in prayer.

As two vans and a sedan carrying the Freemen left the 960-acre ranch for Billings and the Yellowstone County Jail, an FBI agent in a following vehicle waved an American flag out the window, an apparent gesture of triumph.

And a few minutes later, a half dozen FBI agents drove to "sentry hill," where Freemen lookouts had

peered at them for more than 11 weeks. One of the agents climbed onto the trailer parked there and hauled down a Confederate battle

(Continued on Page A8)

Inside...

A Civil War encampment photos (Page 5)

B Hungry trees eat up Ad'k fences, spikes, scythes

C Comics and Kids

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