



## Abbie Hoisington, 28 Expected best for pupils

Abbie L. Hoisington's students say it the best.

"She taught us about honesty, confidence, kindness and respect for one another and ourselves," said one.

"She cared about us and expected the best for us and never gave up on us," said another.

Ms. Hoisington, 28, of Cranston, was a special-education teacher at Burrillville High School. Though she had been there less than a year, the talkative teacher — affectionately known as Gabby Abbie — had made many friends.

Abbie's interest in special education began in high school when her teachers encouraged her to get involved with the Special Education Club, her family said. Soon after, she volunteered to work with the Special Olympics. Then she majored in special education at the University of Southern Connecticut.

But she didn't teach just academics. She taught life skills. Abbie took her students grocery shopping and gave them cooking lessons. She took them bowling, and sailing on her parents' boat. She and her students made soap and sold it to help raise money for classroom accessories, including a refrigerator they had hoped to buy.

She was a constant advocate for her students.

"She was a pit bull for something she believed in," said her mother, Bonnie A. Hoisington, of Cranston.

Abbie wasn't a fan of Great White, the band playing at The Station the night of the fire. She went because her friend, Lisa D'Andrea, a special education teacher in Cranston, asked her to come, Mrs. Hoisington said. Lisa D'Andrea, 42, of Barrington, also died in the fire.

Abbie loved music and stepdancing. She collected everything: clothes, CDs, perfumes, and for some reason, pigs. Her family left a porcelain pig at the fire site in memory of her.

But mostly, she lived for her students, her mother said.

One of her former pupils, Samuel "Sammy" F. Muskely, 18, sang at her funeral.

Sammy said Ms. Hoisington put up with his 13-year-old bad attitude and always kept him motivated when he was in her class at Hope Middle School in Providence. When he invited her to his plays or talent shows, she would always attend.

"All the high notes that I can't hit, I was hitting them because she came out there for me," he said.

Sammy still knows her telephone number by heart.

"She was like E.F. Hutton to me. When she talked, I listened," he said. "I knew what she was telling me was the right way."

— Cathleen F. Crowley



## 'Bud' Howorth, 39 The greatest outlook

The yearbook entry for Carlton "Bud" Howorth III, Class of 1981, Cohasset High School, lists his pet peeve as "wasting time."

"He was in a hurry," says John MacLeman, a friend and former colleague. "He wanted to get it all in."

"You could tell he was just soaking it up, every minute he spent with you," MacLeman said.

Perhaps that stemmed from his abounding enthusiasm for the things he loved. And there were a lot of things he loved.

"He talked in absolutes," MacLeman said. At restaurants, Buddy would tell the waitress, "This is the best hamburger I've ever had."

He loved bacon and eggs. He loved fishing, skiing, football and hockey. He loved his two black Labradors. He loved his girlfriend, Donna Reis.

"He put me on a pedestal," she says. And he loved his blond daughter Elizabeth, now 3.

"He adored her, she adored him," says his father, Carlton Howorth II, also known as Bud. "She was his life."

Buddy, 39, was a child of the '80s. He loved heavy-metal music, the sound that characterized that decade for many, and, according to his girlfriend, he was a "computer geek."

Mr. Howorth said his only son, a technical support manager at Ciber Corp. in Woburn, found the hard-rock sound relaxing. But the fast-living image that went along with a lot of the bands didn't apply to him.

"He was a clean-cut kid," the father said. "He just happened to like that music."

At the memorial service for Buddy, the minister quoted Bruce Springsteen and Motley Crue from the pulpit of the pristine white-clapboard Second Congregational Church, in Cohasset, Mass.

Engaging. Passionate about music. Adoring. These are some of the words used by friends to describe him. Photographs from various stages of life show him as a youngster in the snow, as a teenager with the football team, and as a grown man, beaming as he holds his daughter up for the camera.

"He believed in always being happy," Donna said. He had recovered from cancer, and the experience made him live for the moment. "He had the greatest outlook on life after that."

John MacLeman says Buddy and his ex-wife, Karen, set him up on a blind date with a friend of theirs named Susan. It worked. They are getting married in October.

That Thursday night at The Station, Buddy and Donna were right next to the stage when the fire started.

When Donna fell down in the crush, Buddy pushed her to safety.

MacLeman said Buddy was like that. With any friend in danger, "it would have been them first."

— Jenny Holland



## Eric Hyer, 32 Kept family, friends united

Eric Hyer's hair was just growing back in. Friends said he'd recently cut off his long ponytail and shipped it to a charity group that uses donated hair to make wigs for children with cancer.

"It's just the kind of guy he was," says Brian Allsworth, a friend of Eric's since the two met in 1988 as sophomores at Scituate High School. "He did it and didn't make a big deal out of it."

Eric, 32, seems to have passed through many people's lives as a quiet, generous man. He was a mellow guy who got along easily with everyone, but who had no problem doing things alone.

"Sometimes he would just go out by himself," Allsworth says. "As far as I know, he went to the Great White concert by himself. He was just following a different drummer all the time."

Eric had a knack for being the channel through which relatives and old friends kept in touch.

In November, Allsworth said, Eric called a bunch of high school friends and got them to meet up in Warwick for a few games of pool. Chris Arruda, another victim of The Station fire, was one of the guys who showed up that night. This was typical behavior, Allsworth said; Eric just liked getting people together.

The youngest of five brothers, Eric led a simple life. He loved cookouts, fishing and family gatherings. He also loved kids, and could spend hours hanging out with his nieces and nephews.

"He would do anything with anybody and have fun doing it," says his brother Mark Hyer. Mark described Eric as the one who kept his four older brothers talking. He remembered birthdays and anniversaries, and he always called, just to check in.

"Once you met him, it was like everyone was part of his family," Mark Hyer said. "He brought a little bit of love and life to everybody."

Eric even managed to get Mark and their father talking again after 12 years of silence.

At Mark's home in Coventry, Eric's belongings are now in boxes, many of them full of reasons why Eric went to The Station to see the band Great White play.

"There's like seven boxes of CDs," Mark said. "He loved music, all kinds."

Eric lived in Coventry with Mark and his wife, Colleen, and their children, Mark Jr., 12, and Jake, 5, for several months when he moved back to Rhode Island last summer. Before that, Eric had lived in Texas for about eight years. He had recently moved in with relatives in Scituate.

Eric was especially close to his nephew Mark Jr. Most Sundays, the two went to Best Buy together, or to Boston Market for roast beef sandwiches. Sometimes, they would even fight like brothers.

"But that's just because we were so close," young Mark said. In fact, he added, grinning, "he called me the best nephew."

"You were all the best nephews," Mark Sr. said.

— Neil Shea

## 'A PERFECT LOVE'



## Sandy and Mike Hoogasian, 27 and 31

They met at Wal-Mart in Seekonk nine years ago. Mike Hoogasian was a gregarious young man with a big smile and easygoing way that earned him the nickname "The Mayor" from his family. He was a merchandiser for Coca-Cola and was at Wal-Mart to stock the shelves with soda.

As always, he said hello to everyone, but the shy and beautiful girl working behind the optometry counter caught his eye. He was 23. She was 19.

"The day he met her, he was like a little schoolboy," said Mike's best friend, Derek N. Knight, of Exeter. "He knew he had found the perfect woman. He sounded like he won the lottery."

Sandy Leocadio didn't say much to Mike, but she left a note on his Coca-Cola car saying she thought he was nice.

"She was quiet and young and drop-dead gorgeous," said Paula A. McLaughlin, Mike's sister, who would later be Sandy's maid of honor. "She came from a strict Portuguese family."

But Sandy also had a tattoo on her arm, a love of heavy-metal music, and a gift for fashion that fueled her professional aspirations.

Sandy had always been trendy. As a girl, she'd slip out of her home in conservative clothes and change into her own stylish creations once she was out of view.

Sandy became a visual merchandiser for Cherry & Webb, and eventually The Gap. When The Gap's fashion sense didn't suit her, Sandy altered it, like the time she slit the legs of her Gap jeans, filled the opening with red material and wore them to a Gap corporate meeting.

McLaughlin said Sandy was "head over heels" for Mike. Their interests were identical. Like her, Mike loved tattoos and '80s metal music. He freely admitted his musical preferences were stuck in a time warp.

Their wedding in 2001 was unforgettable, just the way Sandy wanted it.

Sandy unleashed all of her fash-

ion and creative skills on her wedding. She designed her own dress, a tea-stained gown with a long train. She carried an old bible and a rosary instead of flowers. She designed the jewelry worn by Mike and the wedding party. She also designed her bridesmaids' dresses, which were made of an iridescent bronze raincoat material and topped with jean coats.

The reception took place at the Great Hall, the former Central Congregational Church in Fall River, where Lizzie Borden once attended church and where Aerosmith taped a video — facts that delighted both Sandy and Mike.

"She wanted her wedding to become famous," McLaughlin said.

Sandy, who still carried photos of her nuptials, hoped to be a wedding planner someday.

Nine years after they met, they often held hands and Sandy still sat on Mike's lap. The couple were inseparable.

The evening of Feb. 20 was shaping up to be a wonderful night, combining everything the couple loved: tattoos, rock 'n' roll, and each other.

At 6 p.m., they dipped into their "tattoo fund" and went to a Warwick shop to get flames etched into Mike's upper arm. It was his birthday gift. He had about nine tattoos, including a profile of Sandy.

At the tattoo parlor, Doors of Perception, they met Jack Russell, the lead singer of Great White who was also getting a tattoo. Mike was flabbergasted to meet one of his teen idols. He called his sister and two close friends from his cell phone.

"He sounded like he was 12 years old," Knight said.

Mike knew all of Great White's songs, even the obscure ones. Russell was impressed, and he put Mike and Sandy's names on the VIP list to his show that night.

McLaughlin said she's grateful they died together.

"We picture them together, like a bright light," she said. "Together forever. A perfect love."

— Cathleen F. Crowley



## Derek Johnson, 32 Helped dreams come true

In the dreamy land of California, Derek B. Johnson once helped an ailing boy meet Shaquille O'Neal and a sick girl visit Disneyland.

A small-town New Jersey boy, Derek divided his time between two coasts, and came to Rhode Island to work for an Internet-security company with a Fortune 500 client list.

But before he moved to West Warwick last year, he helped children with life-threatening diseases live out their fantasies.

"He was a shining star," said Michelle Wells of the Make-A-Wish Foundation of Orange County, in Tustin, Calif.

In less than two years, the 32-year-old volunteer helped the charity grant eight wishes to children — a significant number, Wells said. Despite the emotional toll of working with children stricken by terrible illnesses, Derek was a tireless worker who got "down on his hands and knees to talk to children," Wells said.

He also sold tickets to the fire department's annual pancake breakfast.

"Derek wanted to help, to give and to serve," Wells said. "Derek was a man of tremendous character."

"He was born that way," says his mother, Patricia, in Anaheim, Calif. "He was the most loving person. He took everything in stride."

Derek's generosity may have been shaped by an early life in Harmony, N.J., a small town near the Pennsylvania border. His father, Robert, was an electronics repairman who eventually opened a shop in Easton.

Derek graduated from Trebas Recording Institute in Hollywood. A

movie buff, skydiver and singer, he attended North Hampton Community College in Bethlehem, Pa.

Both Derek and his brother Robert Jr. took jobs with Zoneoftrust, a California Internet-security company.

When the Waltham, Mass.-based Guardent Inc. bought Zoneoftrust, Robert Jr. stayed in California and Derek moved to West Warwick to work in Guardent's Providence office as a security-operations manager.

When Great White appeared at The Station, Derek and four other Guardent employees went to the show.

Two survived the fire. Derek, Scott Griffith and Ryan Morin did not.

"We're a very close-knit organization," said Jennifer Haas, a spokeswoman for the 140-person company, which held a memorial service for the victims. "It was like losing family members."

Derek, she said, "was one of those managers you rarely come across. He put his team first. And he always had a smile on his face."

Robert Jr., who attended the memorial, agreed.

"He was everybody's best friend. He was my best friend."

— Paul Davis



## Lisa Kelly, 27 Created stirring 'breezes'

Lisa Kelly's 6-year-old daughter will always know the story of rabbits.

The children's story, which Lisa wrote about a year ago, says that sometimes rabbits leave behind friends. They join other rabbits in a place called the Great Meadow, not seen but never far away, like a "cool breeze upon your ears."

The breezes are symbols, living memories. Lisa, 27, left many behind.

There are the five tiny vases filled with red carnations on the vanity in her Swansea home. Her mother sees them, then sees so much more.

"I can just picture her putting on her makeup, getting ready to go out," says her mother, Barbara Nagle of Attleboro. "They are still there in those little vases. They are beautiful, like she was."

Barbara can look back in time and see Lisa playing soccer and running track at Attleboro High School, in the town where she grew up.

Then she can jump to today. There is the Chinese song that Lisa's daughter, Zoe Jean, sings. She learned it at the Montessori Children's School in Providence. Lisa, a single mom, worked hard to afford it.

"She did it all by herself. Nobody helped her pay for anything," Barbara says.

There are Lisa's teas with Zoe Jean on the East Side of Providence, or the Thai food, or the rock 'n' eat atmosphere of Johnny Rockets restaurant. And the many meals at Dave and Buster's. Barbara can't forget. She is caring for one of the stuffed animals Lisa won there. She also takes care of Lisa's many pets, including two cats, Lucky and Black Sabbath — after one of the first heavy-metal bands.

Yes, breezes are blowing. But the breezes, the memories of Lisa's life, vary widely.

Some are tranquil, like yoga lessons Lisa taught at the Montessori Children's School, at a North Attleboro school and was set to teach at a Warwick karate school.

Some are adventurous, like last summer when Lisa took Zoe Jean to the Ozfest concert. Headlining the heavy-metal show was Ozzy Osbourne, once the bane of moms everywhere until he converted to a reality TV dad.

Some are simply shared experience. Barbara is grateful for the time Lisa took her to Disney World in Florida where they saw Cirque du Soleil perform impossible moves. And working together to plant that Japanese garden at Lisa's house, the one with irises and a little Japanese maple tree.

But there is also something more permanent than memories. Between yoga and heavy metal, Lisa wrote things down in journals. When Barbara, Zoe Jean and some 300 people went to Lisa's funeral and wake, they heard some of Lisa's poems. Then, like the rabbits in Lisa's story, they could hear her, feel her close.

In the story, rabbits Henry and Sara are best friends who "shared secrets and lots of laughs," Lisa wrote, under a large oak tree in the meadow where they lived. One day, Sara was too tired to play anymore and Henry found a final, special resting place for her. He cried.

"One day," Lisa wrote, "while on his way to the big oak tree, Henry felt a strange breeze across his face and whiskers. Then it circled around his ears. It felt like a big soft hug."

— Michael P. McKinney



## Tracy King, 39 A master at balancing

Tracy F. King, a 39-year-old father of three, was a big, cheerful man with a funny knack for balancing heavy objects on his chin.

People who had seen him do it called him "The Canoe Man," because a 17-foot canoe was the first thing he ever balanced on his chin for millions of late-night television viewers.

That was on The Late Show With David Letterman, in 1993, where viewers saw Mr. King prove himself the rare guest who could stand toe-to-toe with Letterman in an interview.

Balancing things was an odd talent that Mr. King acquired by accident in his youth, when a surgeon operated on his right eardrum.

"They messed around with my equilibrium and I came out of it with an acute sense of balance," he told a reporter in 1993.

At 6 feet, 2 inches tall and 300 pounds, Mr. King had a solid base for balancing refrigerators, motor scooters, desks, ladders, Christmas trees — and, on German TV once, a woman sitting cross-legged in a chair.

He enjoyed performing on television here and abroad, and at county fairs, art festivals, hospitals and schools.

He lived in Warwick with his wife, Evelyn, and their sons, and spent his free time lifting weights, cooking, boating, fishing, and building radio-controlled model boats.

Mr. King's friend and personal manager, Al Salzillo of Nightside Entertainment, said of the balancing act, "He was so into what he did. He was very, very proficient in knowing everything there was to know about equilibrium and balance, and being able to present it to kids."

"I can't recall being around him even once when he was down or dejected," Salzillo said. "Anywhere