

## The Bethel Journals—Prominent Men in Bethel History

### Edmund J. Vachon



Mr. Vachon was my French teacher at Gould Academy in 1949-1950 and 1950-1951.

Edmund Vachon (1909-2001) was born in Rochester , N.H. , Nov. 20 , 1909 , the son of Joseph R. and Rose E. Lessard Vachon. He received his early education in Rochester schools. He earned his bachelor's degree from the University of New Hampshire in 1930 and a master's degree from the School of Foreign Languages of Middlebury College in 1936.

He started teaching as an instructor in the Cabot ( Vt. ) High School in the fall of 1930 and the following year was appointed principal of the Consolidated High and Elementary schools of that town , a position he held for nine years. During this time , he was also a member of the faculty for several summers at the University of Vermont Summer School. In 1940 , he came to Gould Academy as instructor of French and the following year was designated Assistant Headmaster. He left in 1943 when called for Army duty in World War II through the selective service system. He graduated from the Army Administrative School at Washington and Jefferson College in Pennsylvania and was later commissioned a second lieutenant from the Corps of Engineers School , Fort Belvoir , Va. After short tours of duty in Arkansas and Texas , he was assigned to the European Theater as a military intelligence officer in Headquarters , U.S. Forces European Theater for the duration of the war.

At the conclusion of the conflict , he was reassigned from Germany to England with a detail of German prisoners of war to establish the Army University Center No. 1. This institution provided an opportunity for American and Allied service-

men and women to earn college credits while awaiting transportation facilities to return home. He was a member of the Foreign Language Faculty during the period of the schools operation. With the reduction of service personnel by returning stateside , the university was forced to close in late December of 1945 , and he was reassigned to the University Center No. 2 in Biarritz , France , as a civilian personnel officer in supervisory capacity of French nationals.

When , again , the reduction of military personnel returning home forced the closing of this center , he was sent to Germany in the spring of 1946 to help in the assimilation of evidence for the prosecution of the German war criminals in the upcoming Nuremberg trials.

On return from the service in the summer of 1946 , he resumed his duties as assistant headmaster at Gould Academy , became associate headmaster in 1956 , and headmaster in 1959 , remaining in that capacity until retirement on June 30 , 1967 , when he was named headmaster-emeritus by the Board of Trustees.

While headmaster , he was selected one of 20 educators throughout the United States by the Department of State to participate in seminars in Comparative Education throughout the United Kingdom and the Scandinavian countries under sponsorship of a Fulbright Fellowship. During his tenure as headmaster of Gould , he enjoyed membership on the Board of Trustees , the only headmaster ever to serve in that capacity in the history of the school. During his years at Gould , he served several military tours of duty as a foreign liaison officer , Office of the Assistant Chief of Staff , Intelligence , Pentagon , during the summer months until he retired as a lieutenant colonel.

On July 1 , 1967 , he entered a totally different second career as chief executive officer of the Bethel Savings Bank with which he had been associated as a corporator and trustee since 1952. He later served as treasurer , executive vice president , and president until retiring in 1975 when he became chairman of the board. He officially retired from the bank Nov. 12 , 1997. While in banking , he was for several years on the Board of Trustees of the Maine-New Hampshire Savings Bank School and on the Education Committee of the National Association of Mutual Savings Bank.

He was active in community affairs , including membership on the boards of the Riverside Cemetery Association , Bethel Area Development Corp. , Bethel Health Council , Sunday River Skiway , Planning Committee for the Crescent Park School , Chamber of Commerce , president of the Bethel Library Association , Town Budget Committee , Cub Scout Committee , life member of the Bethel Historical Society and its Finance Committee. During the time he was in education , he was a member of the Vermont and Maine Teachers' associations , the

Maine , Northern New England and National Secondary School Principals' associations , the Maine and National Retired Teachers associations. He received the Henry H. Hastings Award for Community Service from the Greater Bethel Area Chamber of Commerce in 1973.

The Gould Academy Alumni Association presented him an award for devoted service to the School , its students and to education in 1975 , and further recognized him in 1982 , with the presentation of the Nathaniel Tuckerman True Award for outstanding achievements and many years of service to Maine and the World Community.

In 2001 he died at the Maine Veterans Home in South Paris at the age of 91. He was survived by his widow , the former Sudie L. Gunter , with whom he celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary in June of this year ; a son , Paul E. and his wife , Arlene , of Turner ; two grandsons , Ryan of Laurel , Md. , and Jason of Malden , Mass. ; and several nieces and nephews .He was predeceased by three brothers , Raymond , Joseph and Robert.

This report was taken from Mr. Vachon's obituary that was published on-line.