



THE SUN

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TODAY'S QUESTION

Who is the New England Patriots' MVP so far?

- ▶ Tom Brady
- ▶ Troy Brown
- ▶ Laurence Maroney
- ▶ Mike Vrabel

Log on to lowellsun.com to record your answer

YESTERDAY'S QUESTION RESULTS

Should the Red Sox spend \$80 million to \$100 million to sign Japanese pitcher Daisuke Matsuzaka?

Yes **31%**
No **69%**

Total responses: 272
Have a suggestion for a question? E-mail cstamand@lowellsun.com

INSIDE



Santa claws

Santa Claus carved some time out of his busy schedule to sit for photos with local residents' pets at the Lowell Humane Society.
LOCAL NEWS, Page 3



Building blocks

Simple toys rank best at fostering child development.
HEALTH, Page 9

School days



A recent visit to read to students at the Murkland School in Lowell — and a chance meeting with a former principal — have columnist Dan Phelps thinking about his dear, old golden-rule days.
LOCAL NEWS, Page 3

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TOMORROW'S WEATHER
Sunny and cold;
high of 47°
DETAILS ON
PAGE 12



LIVE WITH REGIS ... AND BOB READY?



Bob Ready, left, a former Lowell High School and Notre Dame University football standout, greets old college buddy and current talk-show host Regis Philbin, backstage at Lowell Memorial Auditorium. The two chatted about their lives since Notre Dame, other common friends and, of course, football.

Lowell native renews bond with fellow Notre Dame alum Philbin

By NANCY TUTTLE
Sun Staff

LOWELL — It had been more than 50 years since Regis Philbin and Bob Ready had last seen each other. But the years slipped away yesterday afternoon, when the popular talk-show host and the former Lowell High School and Notre Dame University football star embraced warmly backstage at Lowell Memorial Auditorium.

"Bob, it's great to see you," said the exuberant Philbin, hugging Ready, with whom he had been friendly when both attended Notre Dame in the early 1950s.

Ready, towering over his old friend, returned the warm gesture, then the two started to reminisce over old times.

The reunion between the college pals came about after Marion Brousseau of Lowell read an interview with Philbin in *The Sun* late last week. In the article, Philbin, who was

promoting yesterday's concert, mentioned how he'd hung out with many Notre Dame football players when he was a student there and specifically mentioned Ready's name to the reporter. Brousseau, Ready's stepsister, got in touch with Ready, who lives in Medway, and the wheels were put in motion for the reunion.

Philbin, ever jovial and congenial, shared a few moments with Brousseau

Please see **REGIS/20**

Plan ends user fees

Schools wonder if Patrick proposal will help or hurt

By MATT MURPHY
Sun Staff

LOWELL — Call it a targeted tax. Every year, school districts throughout the Merrimack Valley become more and more reliant on student user fees to plug holes in their municipal budgets. Constrained by limited state aid and soaring fixed costs for transportation, utilities and health care, school administrators have increasingly turned toward fees for everything from parking and busing to participation in athletics and student clubs. Families are charged hundreds of dollars for services once considered fundamental parts of a public education.

Nobody likes student fees

Please see **FEES/7**



She hopes grandkids have merry Christmas

Medical expenses and her inability to work will make it a difficult Christmas this year for Maureen, who is raising her two grandchildren by herself. One of her grandsons has health problems that have caused her to take a leave of absence from work. She started a job earlier this year but had to leave after being there only seven weeks.

"My boss told me to

Please see **SUN SANTA/7**

'Nothing reduces the magnitude of their sacrifice'

Chelmsford dedicates Vietnam Memorial

By HIROKO SATO
Sun Staff

CHELMSFORD — The bullets always came flying at him from behind bushes just yards away, but David McAllister rarely saw those who fired them. When he saw his enemies, they didn't know he was there. Only jungle leaves hid him.

Thirteen of the 40 men he first served with during the Vietnam War weren't as lucky as he was. In the first six months, they were dead. And they are a big part of the reason McAllister still thinks about the war many times each day.

"It's been 37 years since coming home. It's important to me," McAllister said of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the first memorial in Chelmsford dedicated solely to Vietnam veterans.

The memorial was dedicated yesterday in Vinal Square, North Chelmsford.

Local veterans and town officials came together to honor those who risked their lives in the Vietnam War in yesterday's dedication ceremony. The 6 1/2-foot-tall granite monument bears the names of four local fallen soldiers: John Francis Bettencourt, Kenneth Rockwell Hughes, Peter Vincent Blazonis and James Alden Doughty.

Please see **MEMORIAL/20**



Chelmsford residents dedicate the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Vinal Square.

SUN/INA BETTENCOURT

Regis renews bond with fellow Notre Dame alum

REGIS/From Page 1

and Ready's friend, Violet Dupuis. Then the women left Philbin's dressing room, so the men could catch up on old times and old friends.

"He was just wonderful — so outgoing and friendly," said Dupuis. "I think Regis looks wonderful for his age, too."

"Regis was wondering how it had begun, and I told him it was the article in the *Lowell Sun*," said Brousseau.

Ready, who played left tackle at Lowell High for Ray Riddick in 1948 and 1949, attended Notre Dame on a football scholarship and recalled that Philbin always loved hanging around with the football players.

"He's a rabid fan," Ready said of Philbin during an interview Saturday afternoon. "There were a number of us from Massachusetts, and Regis enjoyed chumming around with the football players."

After Philbin and Ready chatted privately for 20 minutes, Philbin came out to kibitz with Lowell Memorial Auditorium head honcho Tom McKay and his partners, Leo Creegan and Terry McCarthy. They chatted football, being in Lowell and



Above: Regis Philbin, left, meets with his old college buddy, Lowell native Bob Ready, backstage at the Lowell Memorial Auditorium yesterday. At right, Philbin chats with Ready, Ready's friend, Violet Dupuis of Medway, left, and Marion Brousseau, Ready's stepsister.

SUN PHOTOS/TORY GERMAN

how long Philbin's afternoon would be, because he was not going on until late in the show he shared with Susan Lucci.

Then, Philbin thanked a reporter from *The Sun* for

helping get the reunion under way and joked about being reviewed in the paper.

Ready couldn't have been more pleased to catch up with Philbin.



"I told him all about our old friends, including Minnie Mavraides, who was also from Lowell and had passed away. He knew that. I told him about my family — four

kids all Cornell graduates," said a delighted Ready.

"He looks great, and I told him I was very proud of him and the success he's had," Ready added. "We Notre

Dame graduates are proud of each other. It was wonderful to see him."

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At left, George Dixon Jr., one of the early supporters of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, above, says the Pledge of Allegiance at yesterday's dedication of the Memorial at Vinal Square.

SUN PHOTOS/ANNA BETTENCOURT

Vietnam Veterans Memorial dedicated in Chelmsford

MEMORIAL/From Page 1

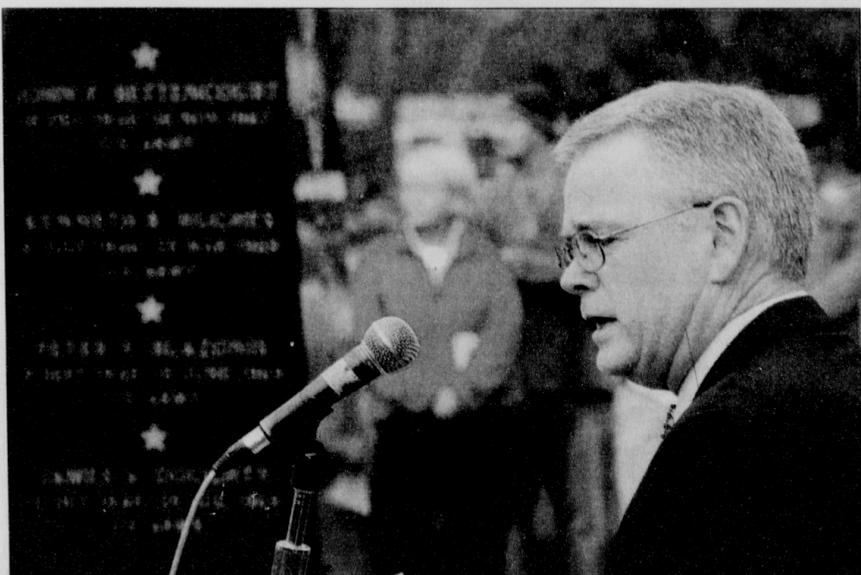
All of them graduated from Chelmsford High School and served in the Army. Hughes was 22 when he died; the others were 20.

The project started several years ago when late Sewer Commission Chairman Jack Emerson and resident George Dixon Jr. approached the town's former Veterans Agent and Human-Services Director Martin Walsh with the idea to honor Hughes.

Hughes was Dixon's classmate from Chelmsford High School, and Emerson was a good friend of Hughes' brother.

The three men later agreed that the memorial should be for all veteran soldiers from the war. The town then formed a committee made up of Dixon, current Veterans Agent Regina Jackson, Public Works Director James Pearson, and local Vietnam veterans McAllister, John Hurrington, Robert Casper and Robert Mackey. During the past several months, the committee raised nearly \$20,000, enough to erect the monument and buy two benches to go with it on the Vinal Square Common.

The four veterans on the committee took turns introducing each of the fallen sol-



Vietnam veteran David McAllister speaks of fellow veterans who didn't make it home. "It's important to me," he said of the memorial, the first of its kind in Chelmsford.

diers as their family members listened. They all had charming personalities that put people around them at ease.

Selectman Bill Dalton, reading a proclamation from the town at the ceremony, said they were "brave young men" whose actions "symbolized American spirit."

Though the Vietnam War divided the nation, "nothing reduces the magnitude of

their sacrifice," said Thomas Kelley, state secretary of veterans services and the guest speaker for the ceremony.

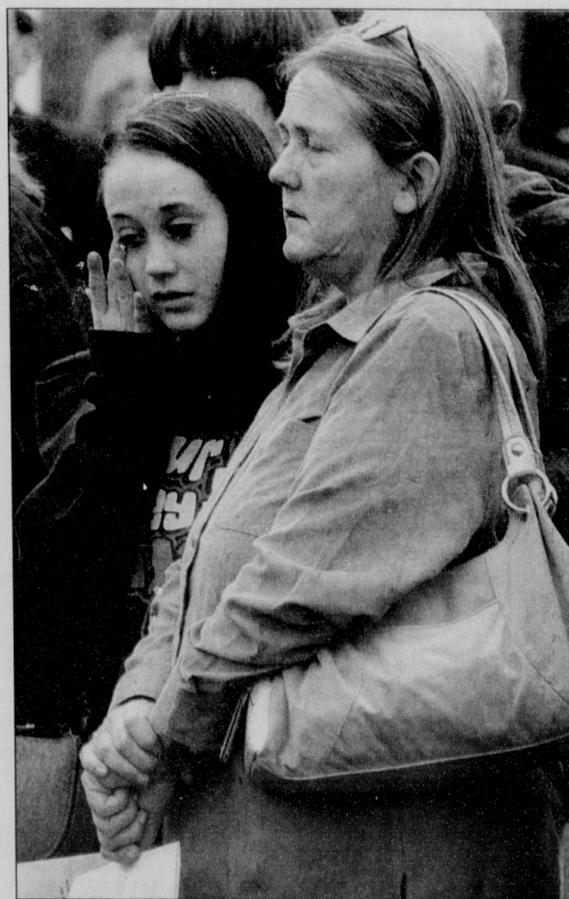
Kelley, who served in Vietnam, is a recipient of the Medal of Honor. Hurrington said Vietnam soldiers were not welcome back after the war.

"It took 30 years to change that," he said. "It took years for the wounds to heal."

He said the monument should remind people the sacrifice the fallen soldiers made.

McAllister said the phrases etched on a side of the memorial sum up his feeling for his dead friends: "At the going down of the sun and in the morning, we will remember them."

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Amy Kirklent, 18, and her mother, Nancy, both of Chelmsford try to hold back tears at yesterday's dedication.