

It is my distinct honor to present a truly Outstanding Owen J. Roberts Alumnus, Mr. Ralph Bozorth. Ralph graduated in 1956 as a member of the FIRST Owen J. Roberts graduating class following the establishment of the district from the merger of Warwick and North Coventry School Districts.

Unlike many of you gathered here this evening, I have not had the pleasure of knowing Ralph Bozorth for long. But I can speak to character traits such as leadership, service, and respect that emerged quite quickly in our conversations. I'll always remember our first interaction. I was in charge of communications for the district. There were a lot of very big communications endeavors happening at the time: one being a much needed pruning of the amount of information on our sprawling 8 websites. We had perhaps been over zealous in our endeavor to provide information when users really needed to cut through clutter and access relevant facts as quickly as possible; but the process was proving to be difficult.

Out of the blue one busy afternoon, a gentleman phoned my office, introduced himself as alumnus Ralph Bozorth, and shared an idea to add a historical section to OJRSD.com. (I confess to feelings of panic at the mention of expanding the very website I had been trying to find ways to abbreviate.)

But we chatted and Ralph briefly mentioned some of the ways he stayed in contact with the district over the years, including providing scholarships to current graduates pursuing the study of engineering. He explained that he felt that access to the history of our district and this geographical area might enrich our community, and I completely agreed. But my team was in the midst of making tough decisions so as to reduce more than 5,000 pages of content already on our sites. The timing wasn't right to create a new section of the district website. Unlike many highly motivated and enthusiastic people I have encountered, Ralph listened to the challenges I presented, asked probing and understanding questions, and we began exploring options.

In the end, Mr. Bozorth took initiative to purchase a domain, develop, maintain and host a robust website— [ojrshistory.com](http://ojrshistory.com). The link to this website not only lives on [ojrsd.com](http://ojrsd.com), but will be available to the public indefinitely as it is contained in the Internet Archive and the Library of Congress. The website is rich and meaningful, containing photos of at least 25 old schools and 31 churches. There are township maps dating from 1690, history of the seven townships comprising the school district, and records involving the establishment of Owen J. Roberts

School District. Having been a teenager during the time of the district merger, I kept expecting to hear that Ralph may have experienced some hardship, but if that were the case, he never mentioned it. He always talked about the good of others. He seemed to find joy in his research and discoveries and I looked forward to his calls and emails sharing his progress. His research shows us that settlements, villages and workers came to this area and constructed schools, places to gather and places of worship so that people would be educated and connected in ways that built a positive community. In our townships, people, industries and modes of transportation changed. Time marched ahead just as it does now and societies blended and evolved in different ways. One thing that stands out from studying this history is how important education was to those who came before us. That information is foundational to the excellence for which Owen J. Roberts strives.

One of the goals for the students of Owen J. Roberts is to support the curiosity of each individual. As an OJR Alum, Ralph Bozorth has not only remained inquisitive, but has used his curiosity to build up others. Another quick example of this was when he attended a meeting of the Delaware chapter of Veterans of Battle of the Bulge and ended up spending many years serving and transporting vets and revamping their website, even serving as executive vice president of their organization. Ralph also has a passion for building registries of war veterans to make sure that vets get all the recognition they deserve (even though his personal contributions didn't include serving in the military).

Thank you, Ralph Bozorth, for your tireless efforts to understand and share our history. We hope that the peek into our past can help us grow and adapt as our community and country continue to evolve.

Thank you also to the OJR Education Foundation for their work on behalf of supporting the school district and for giving our community the time to explore and honor the contributions of OJR alumni.

Jo-an Rehtin

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