



### **Reverend John E. Morrison, III '59**

John Morrison's first "academic" memory of his undergraduate days at Dartmouth College centered around a bespectacled Mr. Hollis for freshman English. He has no recollection of what became of this young professor, but he can recall vividly his first essay assignment; it had to do with 'hate'; he'd never thought much about 'hate'; in retrospect, he wondered whether he'd ever thought much at all. Hence he began his paper with some sort of definition gleaned from a dictionary (not even the venerable OED) and Mr. Hollis wrote in the margin that "S... would also still do very well here." At the end of this initial effort, John received an E2—which, as he recalls, meant something akin to "How did you ever manage to get admitted to this elite college in the first place?" Good question. Probably because his father was an alumnus and he was supposed to be a pretty good basketball player. He didn't even make the freshman team, which illustrates how perceptive talent evaluators can sometimes be.

The reason the above is part of John's recollection is because in 1969 he came under the influence of a professor at SUNY @ Stony Brook who turned his academic and intellectual life as a teacher and as an adult upside down. Dr. Tom Rogers worshiped the Socratic method, the literary text, the inferential question, the carefully constructed argument offered as a response; and he modeled what he taught. Dr. Rogers's excellence as a mentor exacted an unspoken promise from John that his students would not be as ill-prepared for college English as he had been. One influential teacher helped to mold his life in which, for 36 years, Monday mornings were as much a delight as Friday afternoons, a life that led to nominations by his students on multiple occasions for inclusion in Who's Who, a life that culminated in recognition by the New York State English Council as Teacher of Excellence, a life that has led to graduate study at Oxford and Cambridge under the auspices of the C. S. Lewis Foundation, and a life where a once woeful and superficial reader and writer was able to publish more than a dozen articles as well as a well-received book about the literary and theological correspondences that exist between Victor Hugo's Les Miserables and the hit musical of the same name.

In 1982, John was ordained a priest in the Episcopal Church and his life took on an even greater fullness enriched by a still deepening spiritual dimension. Only when he retired from full-time employment in the secular world did he discover that God wasn't finished with him and his part-time employment as a parish assistant evolved into full-time work as an Interim Rector on Long Island and in northern Westchester. To paraphrase Michael Corleone (and, of course, way out of context), "just when John thought he was out, he was drawn back in" and the decision at this later stage has brought new joy into his life.



If not quite towering above his 6'4" frame this more than half-century since graduation from Bay Shore High School, Susan, his wife of nearly 50 years, has been securely beside him—encouraging, beckoning, supporting in all his endeavors. For more than 40 years, their lives have been rooted in Christ and his church and they have served at the heart of the renewal movement in the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island. John has directed spiritually nearly 30 Cursillo weekends and was Professor of Literature and Theology at the diocesan seminary.

The Bay Shore-Brightwaters community has been an integral part of John's life for nearly 60 years and it was an honor and a privilege for him to be inducted into the Bay Shore High School Hall of Fame with those for whom he has worked and taught and played with on the athletic fields. Let it not be said that "John had the experience, but missed the meaning." In essence, since those first trying days in Mr. Hollis's English class at Dartmouth, he has enjoyed a full and enriching life on all counts, family, spiritual, and academic. Perhaps his entire adult life can be summed up by a paraphrase from the Academy Award winning movie "*Chariots of Fire*": "I believe that God made me for a purpose and that purpose was teaching and serving him, and when I do it well I feel his pleasure."

