



# Aggie

Newsletter of the Northwest  
School of Agriculture  
Alumni Association

Volume 23, No. 2

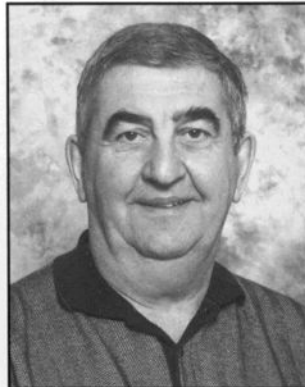




# The Alumni President's Corner

Happy New Year NWSA Alumni,

It is time for each one of us to make plans to attend the 2004 NWSA Alumni Reunion to be held June 25-26, 2004. I hope that you are already including it in your plans for this summer. It is a great time to see classmates and friends and enjoy some of the events planned for the weekend. There were changes made to last year's reunion, like the afternoon alumni association meeting. That meeting was normally held during the Top Aggie Recognition banquet, but last year we moved the meeting to Kiehle Auditorium just prior to the program that honored the fiftieth anniversary class in the afternoon.



Last year's program included music, prizes, and a special slide video that honored the Class of 1953. Bigger and better things are being planned to honor this year's Class of 1954 on their fiftieth. The Heritage Room will be open, the bus tours will be available, and of course, we will recognize our Top Aggies. This issue of the Aggie has the nomination form available so if you think of someone from your class that should be honored please fill out the form and return it to the UMC Office of Development and Alumni Relations.

It will also soon be time for our annual Heritage Fund Drive. I want to encourage everyone to participate in this drive. It is our chance to help keep the Aggie coming and support all the activities of our Alumni Association. Your contributions are important if we are going to remain connected and enjoy the publications, reunions, and other opportunities we share as alumni. Please consider your part in our annual drive.

I hope you enjoy this issue of our newsletter. I also hope that you will mark your calendar for the reunion in June and enthusiastically support the Heritage Fund Drive. The NWSA Alumni Association appreciates you, and as you read this issue of the Aggie, I hope it finds you safe and warm enjoying the best in the New Year.

Sincerely,

*Ray Dusek*

Ray Dusek  
NWSA Alumni President

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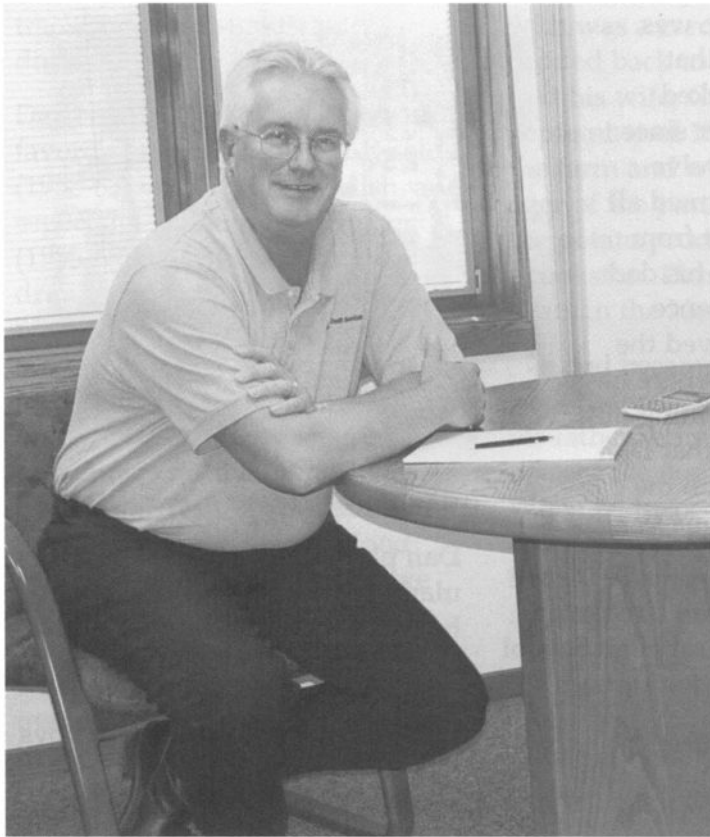
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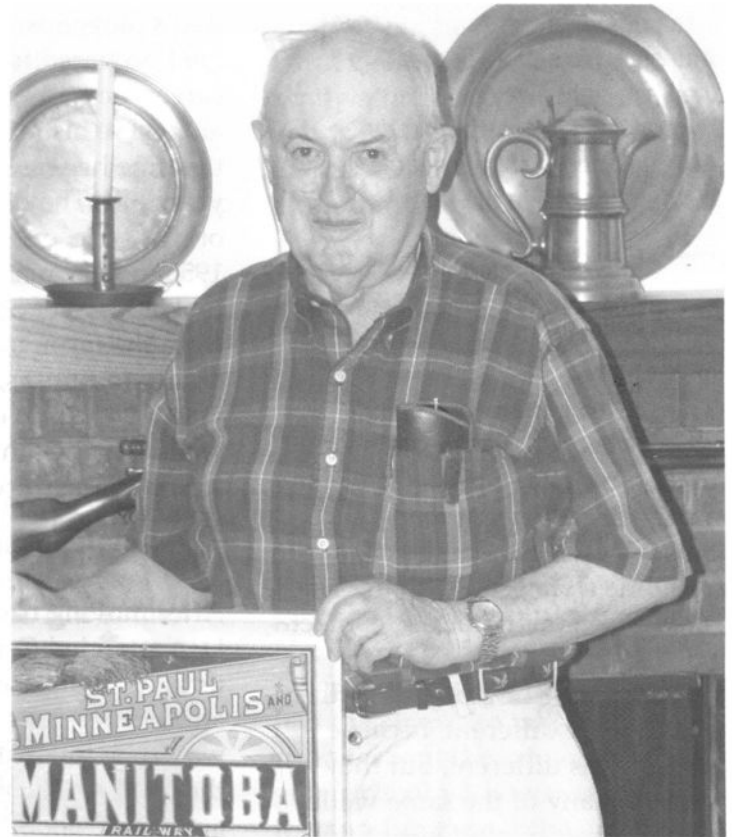
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# Alumni Spotlight

DAN ERDMAN

When some loud braggart tries  
to put me down  
And says his school is great  
I tell him right away  
“Now what’s the matter buddy  
Ain’t you heard of my school  
It’s number one in the state”

– Lyrics from the Beach Boy’s Song  
“Be True to Your School” (1963)

The sixties generation of Northwest School students grew up in a mobile society. Cars were a part of the lives of many students— giving them the chance to go home from school on the weekends and remain in close contact with their families and their hometowns. The students of the sixties were different, because society was different, but they still held to many of the same values and interests as students of the NWSA in years gone by. Anyone can recognize that when listening

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*“Who can forget catching the supper line after basketball and then spending a little time at the Aggie Inn before study hour?”*

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to Dan Erdman, Class of 1965, talk about what it was like to be a part of the campus in its final years as an agricultural high school.

Dan grew up near Crookston on a farm, and he wanted to be a farmer. His father farmed, and Dan enjoyed the camaraderie and working together. It was as simple as that, and like many others, Dan

wanted to follow in his dad’s footsteps. He was well prepared for that career; he had worked alongside his father since the time he was twelve years old. They farmed all of that time, except from 1955 to 1959 when his dad took a leave of absence from the farm, moved the family to Kansas, where he was involved in drilling oil wells. That meant that Dan attended the third to the sixth grades in a Kansas school.

After moving back to Crookston, Dan attended Central High School until he completed junior high, and his dad asked him if he would be interested in going to the NWSA. The attractive thing about the school was the fact that you could attend for just six months, which gave Dan the chance to be home for work in the spring and fall. Sometimes with beet harvest, work was stretched to seven months.

Dan enjoyed the social life and fellowship that the school afforded the students. He recalls how they all enjoyed the “dropping of the chain” on Friday afternoons when the padlock on the parking lot chain was unlocked, and everyone jumped in his or her car to head home. The quarter mile marker from just outside the campus to the railroad track served as a drag strip, and the cars and drivers competed for the fastest quarter mile.



Dan Erdman (#24) as part of his team photo

Dan played basketball and particularly remembers playing when he was a junior and senior with his roommate, Lowell Lerud from Twin Valley. One year, Coach Lysaker encouraged the two boys that they should come out and practice with the track team to get in shape. The first day they came to run with the team they were nowhere to be found so they decided to run the course together anyway. They ran it, and when they were almost back, they realized that they were able to run the course in about half the time that the team was running it. Lowell and Dan thought that they should seriously consider running track. The next day they met up with the track team to practice. When Lowell and Dan took a turn in the course, someone hollered asking them where they were going. That was when they realized that they had only run about half of the course the day before—an explanation for their amazing time. After attempting the full course,



they decided that their destiny as track stars had significantly dimmed.

Dan remembers some of his favorite faculty as Joyce Reynolds, (1958-63) who taught English, and especially William Menzhuber (1955-68) and his mechanical drawing class. Mr. Menzhuber was "a very gracious man and inspiring," and Dan enjoyed taking every drawing class offered on campus. Another thing Dan remembers is "the home away from home feeling you had with Ma Brown at the helm of food service. Day in and day out, we had as close to home cooking as you can get. She kept us in line when we were standing in line, made sure that the latest 45s were in the jukebox, and all our favorite snacks were stocked in the Aggie Inn. She was the best." When he was a freshman, he recalls Mrs. Jamison, the little lady who kept the boys in line in Selvig Hall. Dan remembered the pair of boxing gloves in Senior Hall that were used if a score needed to be settled before lights out in the evening. He also was reminded of chemistry which he says he would never have passed without his lab partner, Teresa Helmstetter, a "straight A" student from Roosevelt Minnesota.

Following graduation, Dan farmed and then took a three-month training course in card-punch computers. He took his portfolio of work from the course and left for the city to get a job,

when the only thing he came up with was a card-sorting job, he headed back to the farm. He married his wife, Connie, in September of 1968. In 1970, he left the farm and worked as the manager of the parts room at Jiffy Fry, the potato processing plant in Crookston. Dan also spent six years in the National Guard.

His dad became ill and Dan went back to the farm. In 1980, when his father retired fully, Dan bought the family corporation. When he turned fifty, Dan wondered what he might have done if he had taken a more serious approach to school. It was then



Dan Erdman (#24), 1965

that he decided he wanted to find that out. He had served on the Farm Credit Services Board of Directors, and there was talk of expanding the business to

Crookston. Dan left the board and after a year, he went to work for Farm Credit Services. He is currently a financial service officer, and is licensed in all types of insurances and helps farmers with a full range of services through

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*"It was a great school with wonderful kids; it was a fun time."*

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Farm Credit. He has been there for six years.

Dan says that no matter where he goes, he meets graduates of the Northwest School. "We are everywhere," Dan says, "and I have had the chance to talk to many people about the school. It was a great school with wonderful kids; it was a fun time. Who can forget catching the supper line after basketball and then spending a little time at the Aggie Inn before study hour?" Whether you graduated in 1909 or in the 1960's, the NWSA was a unique part of students' lives. Therefore, while not everyone may have experienced exactly the same things during their time here, they do hold one thing in common: they attended an outstanding educational institution and are part of its unique history. It all rings true with the message echoed by the Beach Boys, "Be True to Your School!" ♦



Mike Meyer, Director of Development

## Aggie Update

Welcome to the new Aggie! We thought the wonderful painting by Jerry Ruich '49 would be the perfect cover for our winter edition. We thought it captured the feeling of a brisk Minnesota afternoon while celebrating the joyful spirit of children at play. It is just a good old nostalgic feeling of a wholesome winter's day of the past. Please read more about Jerry and the painting on page 10.

We were so pleased with the look of the cover that we went ahead and looked at enhancing the inside of the Aggie as well. From the archival photos at the bottom of the pages, to the new type font we used to introduce the stories,

the Aggie has been enhanced from top to bottom. Our goal was to develop a look that would enhance the fascinating stories and pictures of our alumni and friends. Please let us know what you think of the new look.

## Arizona Social

Mark your calendars for March 5! It is once again time for a gathering of alumni, faculty, family, and friends of the Northwest School of Agriculture in the Arizona area.

The social will be in Mesa, AZ at the Terrace Green near the View Point Resort. We will gather from 12:00 until 3:00 or so to get caught up with one another. It will be a "Dutch Treat," so everyone will be responsible for their own meal. The folks at the Terrace Green have lined up a nice lunch for us with soup, a sandwich, fruit, dessert, coffee, and ice tea for \$10.00. It would be worth \$10 just to hear Del Roelofs tell stories!

Please call Lorraine (Zipoy) Love '54 at 480-380-1863 or the Office of Development at 800-232-6466 to let us know if we can plan on seeing you there.

## Fund Drive

It is that time of year again when we send out a request for support of your alumni association. Your

contributions to the Heritage Fund allow is what allows us to keep the Aggie coming to you four times a year.

Your support also is also what allows us to bring NWSA Alumni together for regional socials (like the upcoming Arizona gathering); to host the annual reunion on the campus; and to provide scholarship support to current UMC students that are descendants of NWSA alumni.

Your support is what keeps the memory and spirit of the NWSA alive and well.

## The Reunion

Speaking of keeping the spirit alive...we look forward to seeing everyone, especially the class of '54 at this year's reunion June 25 and 26th. As NWSA President Ray Dusek mentioned earlier in the Aggie, it will be a great time for sharing stories, renewing friendships, and celebrating what the NWSA was all about. We will be sending out more information and registration packets soon.

That is all from the frozen tundra of Crookston. I leave you looking forward to spring and to seeing you all at the reunion.

Mike Meyer  
Director of Development



# ARIZONA SOCIAL

Northwest School of Agriculture Alumni

March 5, 2004 • Mesa, Arizona • Terrace Green • 12pm - 3pm • Dutch Treat - \$10

Please call Lorraine (Zipoy) Love '54 at 480-380-1863 or the Office of Development at 800-232-6466 if you plan to attend.



# Faculty Spotlight

## RALPH AND JOAN TITUS

Joan Titus was the wife of a popular instructor at the Northwest School of Agriculture (NWSA), Ralph Titus. Ralph passed away November 3, 1999, and when you meet Joan and her daughter, Linda, you feel their deep sense of loss. Ralph left a void in their lives that they will always feel, but the memories they share sustain them every day and there are many of them.

The Titus' home in Stewartville, Minnesota is comfortable, and Joan is so welcoming. Around coffee and warm rolls, she shared about her life with Ralph and their five children, Linda, Ralph, Dan, Ron, and David. That story

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*"With two young children and a third on the way, they moved right into the Stephens Hall apartment and took charge of one hundred and sixty sophomore boys.*

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centered on the Northwest School and raising children in Stephens Hall while serving as dorm parents. Linda remembers riding her tricycle in the hall of the dormitory. Students served as babysitters, and Joan remembers her favorite, Sandy Risser ('61).

Ralph and Joan moved to Crookston right after Ralph's graduation from the University of North Dakota in the fall of 1958. With two young children and a

third on the way, they moved right into the Stephens Hall apartment and took charge of one hundred and sixty sophomore and junior boys! From 1958-1966, Ralph taught algebra, geometry, and physics. Joan remembers hurrying the boys off to class and cutting short a morning card game, pulling down the shades to find pin-up girls pasted up with toothpaste, and chaperoning for dances. "The first time Ralph and I chaperoned," Joan says, "the students had put up a wall of sandbags to separate the chaperones from the dancers."

She recalled the night someone set off firecrackers in Stephens Hall. Ralph got up, set off the fire alarm, and ushered all the boys out into the chilly night. He returned to their apartment and retrieved his coat, went back outside, and waited until someone owned up to their prank.

In 1962, Ralph received a stipend from the National Science Foundation to go back to the University of North Dakota for his master's degree. When he completed that, he moved his family to Stewartville where he was hired by IBM in nearby Rochester to teach programming. In 1985, Ralph got involved in a program to teach IBM employees to be programmers and later, he was administrator for the University Partnership Program working as a liaison between



Joan Titus and her daughter, Linda

IBM and the University of Minnesota, Penn State, Texas A&M, Purdue, and others.

Ralph was instrumental with the technology program at Stewartville High School and following his retirement he taught C+ and C++ at Winona State College. He and Joan adored their family, fourteen grand children, and three great grand children.

Joan still enjoys hearing from students from their days at the NWSA, and the warmth in her voice when she talks about her life here is easy to hear. In upcoming issues of the *Aggie*, there will be more memories of Ralph, Joan, and their family. If you would like to share something about one of your favorite instructors, please contact Liz at [ltollefs@umn.edu](mailto:ltollefs@umn.edu) or by phone at 218-281-8432 or 800-862-6466 ext. 8432. ♦

# Alumni Spotlight

JIM JOHNSTON

Willard Johnston was a 1916 graduate of the NWSA, and his son, W. James (Jim) Johnston was a 1943 graduate. Jim remembers the commitment of the instructors and the value of the education he received. The memories he has of the school and his interest in history led Jim to share a valuable piece of Red River Valley history with the campus – a railroad broadside printed in 1880 by Rand McNally.

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*“Whoever owned the St. Paul and Pacific would possess two and a half million acres of the richest agricultural land in the Midwest.”*

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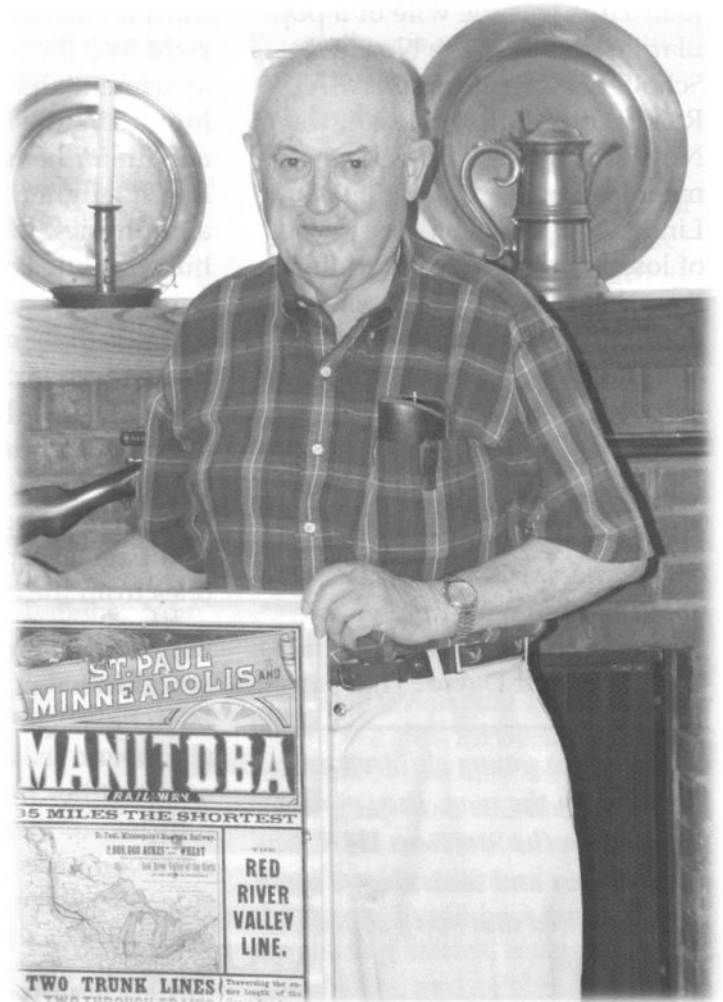
The broadside advertises “2,000,000 of the best wheat lands in the world, mostly situated in the Red River Valley of the North in the state of Minnesota.” It also touts the “only all rail line to Winnipeg.” The broadside will be part of the display cases in the Kiehle Building and later, in the Heritage Room. He discovered the broadside in Washington, D.C. at an antique mall. It had been found in between the walls of a house that was being torn down. Jim is giving this exciting historical piece of the St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba Railway and the Red River Valley in honor of the Class of '43. Included with the broadside are two books on railroad history.

The broadside given by Jim advertises the St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba

Railway, which was a predecessor to the Great Northern Railway. Railroad magnate, James J. Hill, believed that the railroad could not succeed unless the territory was successful. Hill knew “that whoever owned the St. Paul and Pacific would possess two and a half million acres of the richest agricultural land in the Midwest.” In 1879, the St. Paul, Minneapolis, and Manitoba was formed with Hill as General

Manager and in 1889 the Great Northern Railway Company was formed. (Excerpted from *The Great Northern Railway* by Charles and Dorothy Wood)

Hill, gave the state of Minnesota 476 acres of land for the purpose of founding an agricultural experiment station. Mr. Hill supported the idea of that experiment station being located in the Red River Valley, “to learn how to farm the prairie.” That idea became reality with the establishment of the Northwest Experiment Station and the adjoining agricultural



Jim Johnston holding railroad broadside.

high school. The railroad and the NWSA were significant to the development of agriculture and life in the Red River Valley

One year T.M. McCall held an assembly to talk with students about a shortage of labor for thinning sugarbeets. Students would be allowed out of school for two days to work in the fields. “I finished out those two days of work,” Jim recalls, “but after a half a day, I knew I did not want to be a farmer.”



Jim remembers not being fond of Miss Hughbanks' typing class. The first day of typing Jim was struggling to type the familiar exercise: now is the time for all good men to the aid of their country, he recalls not meeting with her expectations. Jim had to stay after and miss football practice. He said, "I went to the coach and told him he just 'had to get me out of that typing course.'"

He recalls getting to go to Thief River with Coach Harry Roesse (1942-43) for an afternoon. His younger brother, Bob, was caught squirting the fire hose on the second floor of Stephens Hall. Jim had to go and talk to T. M. McCall about keeping his younger brother in school after the incident. Jim shares memories of eating in the dining hall and walking around the square with his girlfriend to take her back to the dorm.

One of his favorite memories involves sneaking to the swimming pool for a swim. "I loved to swim; I grew up on a lake near Nisswa, Minnesota" Jim reflects, "so when all the staff were gone we went to the greenhouse and then over to the tunnel to sneak a swim in the swimming pool.

Following his graduation, Jim went directly into the navy and served in the Philippines. When he came back, he attended the University of Minnesota on the G.I. Bill for two years and while there where he met his wife, Mary Ellen. Jim went to work for a large insurance company, and later, he started his own company. Mary

Ellen taught school in the Minneapolis school system. They have two sons and two grandsons.

Jim and Mary Ellen have enjoyed traveling the U.S. and Canada, and since Jim is Scottish, they have even traveled in Scotland. They lived for many years on Gull Lake before moving to Edina where they live now. Jim collects duck decoys and has a number of special decoys.

Together, they avidly collect early American pewter, and Mary Ellen collects santas of all kinds. They both have an eye for finding an extraordinary item.

Jim recalls discovering the railroad broadside and recognizing he had found "something really special." His decision to share this part of history with other Northwest Schoolers and UMC students is unique. The broadside is a special addition to our campus. ♦

*If you are interested in seeing the broadside, please, stop by the Kiehle Building. We would love to have you visit anytime, and I am sure you will enjoy viewing this piece of history and the other NWSA memorabilia.*



The 28" x 24" painting by Jerry Ruich is part of the Heritage Room

He has participated in and won awards at art shows, and now his art work will grace one of the walls in the Heritage Room. Jerry Ruich has been painting for years, and it all started when he told his wife, Jeanette, that he could reproduce a painting that they saw at Montgomery Wards, where she worked. One day while she was at work and his kids were busy, he decided to gather all the floor, trim, wall, and ceiling paint to attempt that painting. He discovered that he could not recreate that picture, but he also discovered that he enjoyed painting, and that is how it all began. He gave up using room paint and works in acrylics. One hundred and fifty paintings later, Jerry competes in art shows and paints whenever he can. Although he says with a smile that some of the paintings look best facing the wall, he has many beautiful paintings that are evidence of his talent and love for art.

Jerry was born in Fargo, North Dakota and lived there until he started fourth grade when he and his family moved to Reynolds, North Dakota. He went to a one room school, Bentru #8, through the eighth grade. In the ninth grade, he moved in with his sister and her husband, who lived in Grand

Forks, where he attended East Grand Forks Central until five weeks before the end of the year, when he had to transfer to Climax, Minnesota to go to school. He finished the year in Climax, and then went on to attend the Northwest School.

Two of the teachers he remembered the most were Miss Jean Kjorlie and Mr. Alvey Pilkey. He also enjoyed going after class to the Aggie Inn to get a jelly roll. Jerry recalls, "I liked to watch girls after the evening meal going back to the dorm, but I didn't have a girlfriend until my advanced year."

In 1952 after farming with his dad near Reynolds, he married Jeanette M. Sykes. He continued to farm for another year. The farm was sold, and Jerry rented the land and continued to farm for one more year. The following year, he started working for Western Auto

Parts in Fargo and studying electronics on his own and taking on-site training in Louisville, Kentucky. Jerry began doing television repair work and moved to Fargo. Through the school in Kentucky, he got a job at RCA Victor television in Bloomington, Indiana. He got laid off four months later, and was relocated to Fort Wayne and worked in military electronics at IIT. Jerry worked on missile support equipment and B-52 ground test equipment. When work slowed, Jerry moved over to work for Magnavox and work on submarine detection equipment. It was during the cold war and Jerry was working on a classified project called Automatic Julie.

After working there, Jerry began working for GTE in telephone equipment engineering until he retired in 1987. Jerry and Jeanette still live in Indiana. They have four children including a daughter, Deborah, twin sons, Randall and Ronald, and another daughter, Sandra. They also enjoy being grandparents to 11 grandchildren.

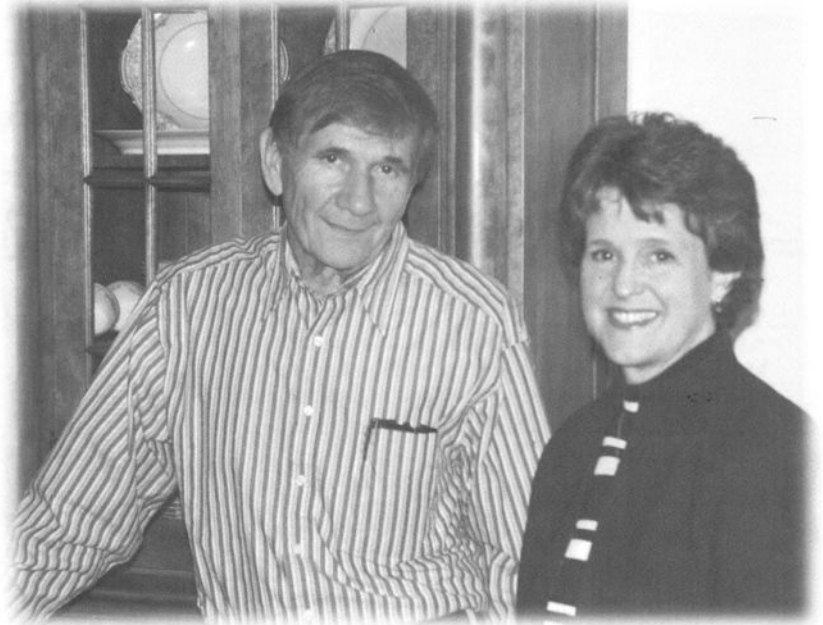
Jerry has been busy since retirement. He has worked driving 18-wheeler for his sons in their logging business. Logging is the fourth largest industry in Indiana. He also did contract engineering work for eight years for the telephone company. When the contract work was slow, Jerry delivered utility trucks as far east as South Carolina, as far south as Louisiana, and as far north as Minneapolis, Minnesota. They purchased lake property which





some eight to ten year olds burned to the ground six weeks after they purchased it. In 1990, they built a new year round house at the lake and lived there for two years, until late 1995.

During 1988, he and Jeanette had bought forty-five acres and during 1994-95 they built a farm. Jerry enjoys doing a little farming; this year they had 27 acres of soybeans and 2 acres of corn which he hand picks and sells to a Fort Wayne business for squirrel feed and a large plot of potatoes that his grandchildren pick during a fall gathering. He paints as time allows and Jeanette enjoys stained glass. Jerry displays his work at Arrow Head Studio in Albion, Indiana. If you have a chance, stop and see Jerry's painting in the Heritage Room. It features skaters in front of an old mill. It brings to mind memories of childhood and growing up near the Northwest School just this time of year. Thank you, Jerry, for sharing your work and allowing us to share it with others. ♦



Jerry Ruich stopped by the Heritage Room to visit with Liz Tollefson.



Have you been making plans for your summer vacation? Don't forget these very important dates—June 25 and 26, 2004! Join your friends and classmates for the best reunion ever! Last year was just a taste of what is in store for reunion attendees this year!

We will be honoring the Class of 1954 on their golden anniversary! After all, 1954 is the year that Lassie debuted, Sport's Illustrated was born, and On the Waterfront was named best picture. It was the year that this slogan was introduced, "It melts in your mouth, not in your hand!" What a year to celebrate!

Just what is in store for you? On Friday, June 25 there is an evening social, and Saturday will feature a reunion program, banquet honoring the Top Aggies, and much, much more! Plan to get together this summer to share the memories! We are looking forward to seeing you in June!

*Featured Story*

# Crookston Daily

NORTHWESTERN MINNESOTA'S FORE

CROOKSTON, MINNESOTA, MONDAY, M

## 67 Found Dead In

## Polk County's To

### **The Black Blizzard Part I**

The temperatures crept into the 30's on Saturday morning, March 15, 1941, on the campus of the Northwest School. Buds were beginning to form on the bare lilacs around the sunken gardens outside Stephens Hall. Earlier that week, clothing stores in Crookston had advertised that it was "suddenly the season for spring coats." An ice company promised its customers daily deliveries for the hot months of summer. In Grand Forks, the first robins of spring had been sighted.

There were no blizzard alerts for the Red River Valley. The weather station in Chicago merely warned that a cold air mass was moving southeastward from Canada. The Fargo-Moorhead station predicted nothing worse than "strong northwest winds" for that evening.

By 8:00 p.m., Kiehle Auditorium was filled with students, faculty, and a few residents of Crookston who had come out to the campus for lectures and a movie on Australia. My mother, my sister Kathleen, who was twelve, and my brother Roger, who was nine, sat in the front of the auditorium near the high west windows of the building. They were in spring clothes, without mittens, over-shoes, or hats.

A year earlier, during the annual student talent night at Kiehle, one of the students had put on a hockey mask and cape, then lumbered into the audience like Frankenstein.

That hockey monster had so terrorized me that on March 15, 1941, just turned seven, I was still

looking for reasons never to return to Kiehle. A slight case of the flu served that purpose, and my father, who had been the Aggies football and basketball coach since 1929, stayed home with me.

While the audience in Kiehle enjoyed lush scenes from Australia, they had no idea that a fierce blizzard was bearing down on them like a freight train. It had formed on Thursday as a high pressure area in the Klondike, then began heading southeast, picking up speed as it moved, rushing into a low pressure trough that preceded it. In Alberta, its high winds began churning up prairie dust and dirt and mixing it with the heavy snow. Residents of Regina in Saskatchewan heard what some



## n NW Stor

## ll Set At 12

were now calling "The Black Blizzard" approaching from the distance like a rumbling avalanche. Crossing into North Dakota on Saturday afternoon, its 85 mph winds pushed a twenty-seven ton box car along like a runaway sledgehammer.

At 9:30 p.m. Saturday night, a wall of dirt and snow hit the west side of Kiehle Hall like an icy fist. The movie was stopped and someone rushed to the stage to urge every one to return home quickly. Two students led Mother, Kathy, and Roger the short distance to Stephens Hall, where they intended to call my father. But once inside Stephens (now the Sahlstrom Conference Center), they were pink with cold and discovered that all the campus phones were out. Now what to do?

My mother and several other faculty members who had taken refuge in Stephens considered their options. Bed down there for the night, or continue to try to get

home? Only four months earlier, on Armistice Day 1940, a sudden fall storm had struck the campus and interrupted a war memorial ceremony at Kiehle. During that storm, my father had led several faculty members and their families home on a rope. Fearing that my father would now head out to attempt another perilous rope rescue, and perhaps perish himself, Mother decided to try to make it home through the blizzard.

Suddenly, campus custodian George Hillmon stumbled into Stephens. With jug ears, a thick mustache, and always the kindly smile of a milquetoast, he was an unlikely looking hero. But he was as fearless as his irrepressible son Rollis, who liked to show off his adolescent daring to the rest of us campus kids by lying in front of approaching freight trains on the Great Northern tracks east of campus.

Mr. Hillmon ran the campus heating plant, as well as the projector at Kiehle, where he kept extra

clothing and overshoes for just such blizzard emergencies. Bundled against the cold now and covered with snow, he said he knew every building, road, and walkway of the campus like the back of his hand, and he offered to guide faculty families home on a rope, exactly as my father had done.

My mother was an immediate taker, along with Mr. and Mrs. Orville Kiser, who lived in one of the first homes along the circle of faculty houses on the east end of the campus. Several students rummaged up hats and gloves for Kathy and Roger. Mr. Hillmon disappeared and returned with a long coil of thick rope. In the Stephens lobby, he looped each member of the party to the rope and instructed them to hold on with both hands. Then they headed out into the storm. The odd mix of dirt and snow was so impenetrable it was like peering into thick paint. They were at only two foot intervals on the rope, but

*Continued on page 14*

The following article details the March blizzard in 1941 on the Northwest School of Agriculture (NWSA) campus. The author of the article, John Christgau, is the son of Rufus Christgau who coached and taught at the NWSA from 1929-'42. The Christgau's experienced the blizzard first hand while living on the NWSA campus.



John is a part-time writing instructor at St. Mary's College of California; he is also a frequent guest lecturer to professional and educational groups. He has written a number of books; for more information, visit his Web site at <http://www.johnchristgau.com/>

*This piece was originally intended to run as a two-part article, but we felt that the impact of the story was hurt by running it in two separate issues of The Aggie.*

# Featured Story

## THE BLACK BLIZZARD

none of them could see each other. Only the occasional slack and then tug on the rope signaled that they were still attached. Mr. Hillmon was followed on the rope by the Kisers, Mother, Kathy, and Roger. Finally, two strong students acted as tail-end charlies, with instructions from Mr. Hillmon to rescue anybody who fell or became detached from the rope.

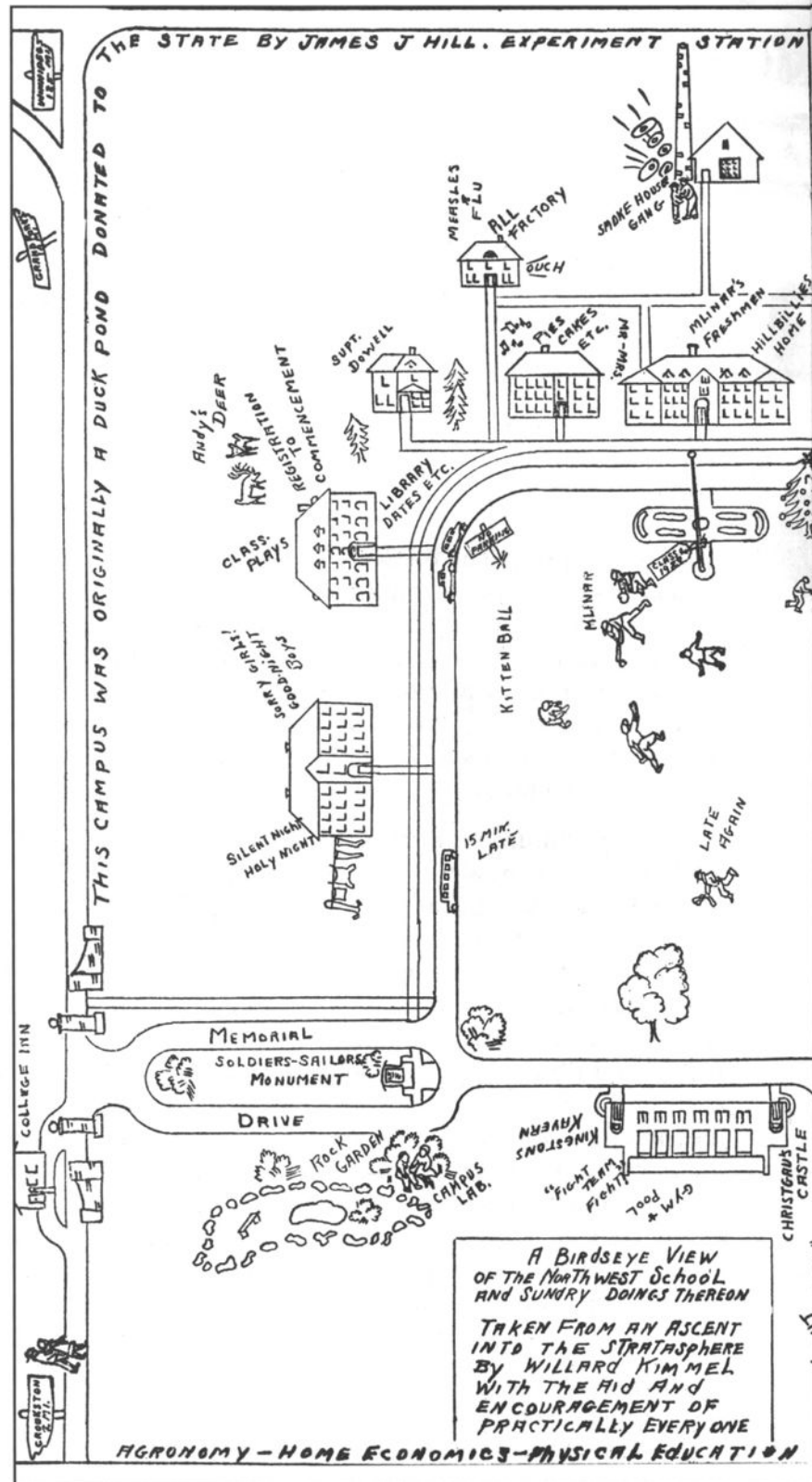
They moved slowly. Mr. Hillmon maintained a steady easterly direction by keeping the ferocious wind off his left shoulder, and using his feet as curb feelers. They could not see the soft globe lights which marked the campus walkways in front of the Dining Hall (now Bede Hall). Continuing slowly eastward, they passed in front of the tall Hill Building.

For faculty kids, the Hill Building was our favorite haunt. It was in a dark, tree sheltered corner of the campus. We often gathered in front of it at dusk for kick-the-can games. A skeleton hung in my father's science classroom on the third floor. So we also took turns testing our bravery by challenging each other to sprint up the stairwell in the dark, then touch the skeleton and return unharmed. Meanwhile, my dad had a piercing, two-fingered whistle which could immediately stop student horseplay in the locker rooms, and it was always his distant whistle that called us home at night.

That same landmark Hill Building, just a few feet away, was invisible now as the rope party passed in front of it. They were all beginning to experience frost bite and snow blindness. Following the curve of the road, Mr. Hillmon led the little party into the west wall of Owen Hall. Like a blind man, he groped along the wall for the entrance, then led them all back into a large room for vehicle maintenance.

They stood in a circle in the warm building, water from melting ice and snow pooling at

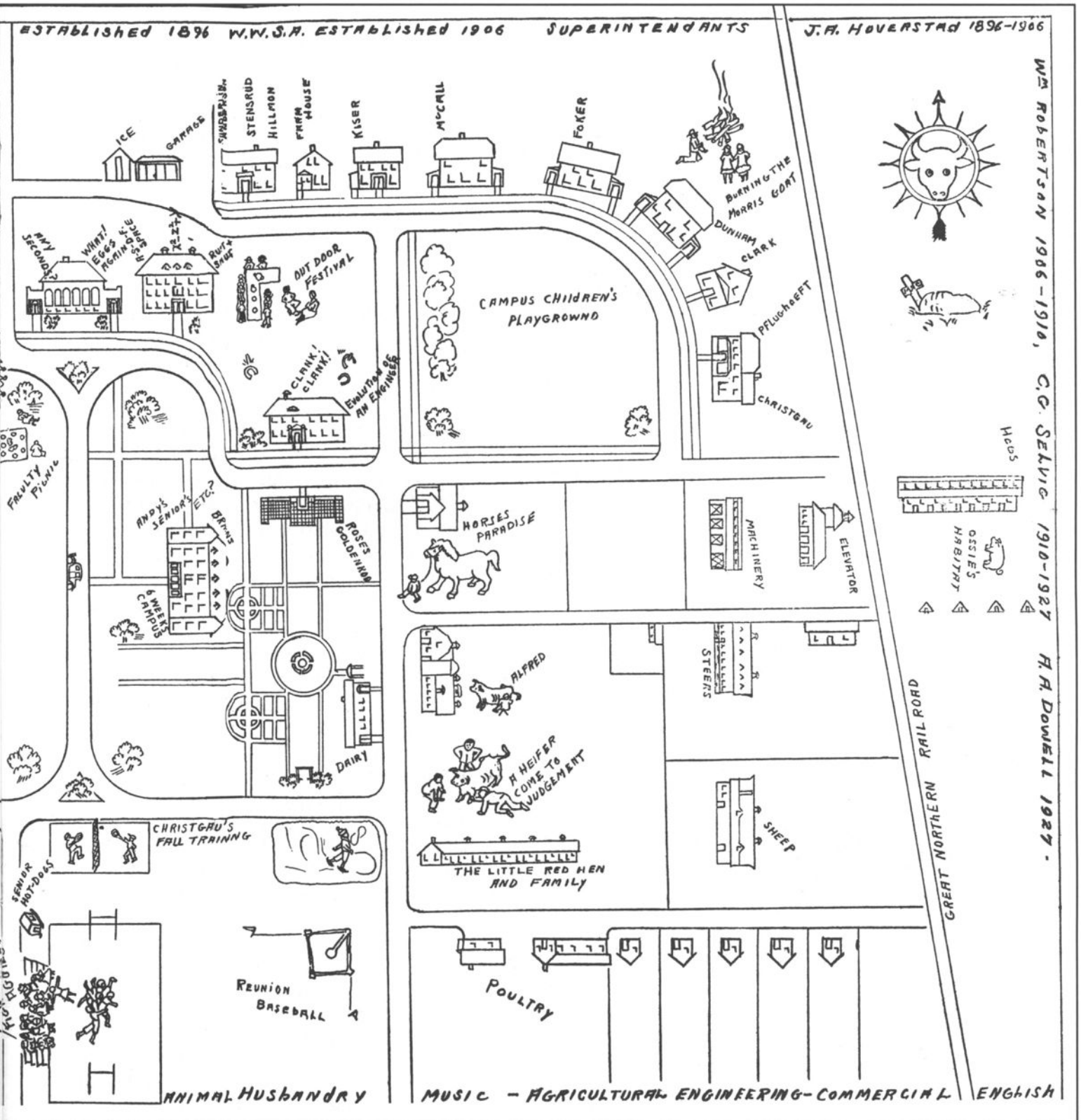
*Continued on page 16*



Map of NWSA Campus 1928



# THE BLACK BLIZZARD



their feet. The storm was worsening. Should they go on? Or wait it out in Owen Hall? Still fearing that my father would head out in search of them, my mother argued, "We've made it this far. We need to go on."

Roger's only thought was that somehow the adults would get them home. Mrs. Kiser regretted aloud that she and her husband had gone out to Kiehle in the first place. "I've never liked Australia," she complained.

Kathy managed to take off her glasses, which had icy caps on their lenses, and laugh.

Mr. Hillmon quickly reassured them all that he was up to the task of leading them on.

They had come a little over a thousand feet through an icy hell and were already halfway home. But the worst was still ahead.



### Part Two

We called our two-story home on the east end of the campus the Clark House, after the family who had lived there before us. It had a small screen porch in front of which students bearing torches gathered every homecoming eve. Cheering led by campus Pepsters in snow-white jumpsuits always brought my father to the porch steps, where he spoke briefly about the upcoming game.

With the arrival of spring, we had hung a swing on that porch, and now I could hear it banging against the house as the violent blizzard winds of March 15, 1941, pitched and tossed it. In the Clark House living room with me, my father also pitched and tossed. He had guessed correctly that somebody would try to repeat his Armistice Day blizzard rescue of four months earlier. What he did not know was that this time it would be Mr. Hillmon, the campus custodian, who would lead my mother, sister, and brother, along with the Kisers and two students, across campus from Kiehle Auditorium to Owen Hall, where they had stopped to warm themselves before heading out into the storm again.

Each time my anxious father opened our front door to look out, a sudden blast of cold hit me on the couch where I sat nursing the flu. Then, using his piercing, two-fingered locker-room whistle, he stood on the porch sounding a beacon for them to seek.

But even that whistle was swallowed by the howling wind. Finally, he went upstairs, changed into his winter clothes, and prepared to go out for a rescue. He turned to me before he stepped out the door. "You stay here," he said. "I'll just be out on the porch."

Then he disappeared into a hurricane of snow.

Meanwhile, two blizzard tragedies with Northwest School connections were unfolding elsewhere:

Earlier that evening, Miss Harriet Coger, a school principal in Grand Forks, and Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Ellington, also from Grand Forks, had headed for Crookston on highway 2 in the Ellington's streamlined Lincoln Zephyr. But as soon as they were on the road, heavy snowflakes began drifting against the windshield. At 9:30 p.m., they rounded a sharp turn in highway 2 and passed the Northwest School entrance, its two globe lights only dimly visible in the drifting snow. Then the wind shifted suddenly and the speedy Zephyr slowed to a crawl.

Whether the Zephyr's ignition was fouled by the "Black Blizzard's" snow and dirt, or frozen in the sudden cold, the car stalled just beyond the entrance gates to the campus.

The Ellingtons and Miss Coger sat for a moment in the car and plotted what to do. Aware that Kiehle Hall was only yards away, they put on gloves and turned up their





## THE BLACK BLIZZARD



collars. The two women wrapped their legs in newspapers. Then they took a blanket from the car and headed for what they thought was the safety of the campus. But in the sudden whiteout, they were soon lost, heading dead into the wind and away from the campus. In a matter of minutes they were suffocating and freezing. They lay down then and huddled beneath the blanket. Searchers who discovered the bodies on Monday could only speculate on how long it had taken them to die.

Thirty miles to the northeast, just outside the tiny farm community of Hazel, former Aggie student James Weckwerth became concerned about his 16-year-old brother, who had gone to visit with neighbors. Worried that his

brother would try to come home through the blizzard, Weckwerth had run to their barn, saddled a horse, and headed for the neighbors. He did not get far before he was forced to dismount and seek shelter. He died sitting upright along a fence just fifty feet from the family barn.

At the Northwest School, Weckwerth had been an honor student and a gifted writer. My mother, beginning a career as a writer of children's books, had recognized Weckwerth's talent and encouraged him. In the 1936 *Aggie*, which Weckwerth had edited, my mother had written a dedication to him and his classmates. "Play the great game of life," she had urged, "without penalty for unfairness, without bitterness

when losing." She would have had little inkling as she wrote those words that the loss she referred to might be Weckwerth's own life. Or even hers, as she and the others looped to Mr. Hillmon's rope followed him out the rollup maintenance doors of Owen Hall and into the whiteout.

Mr. Hillmon's intention was to turn immediately and go a few yards north to the Kiser's home, then continue east, following faculty circle around to the Clark House. But the trees and the protection of the Hill and Owen buildings momentarily cut the wind coming off his left shoulder. With no clear direction finder, instead of heading north, he drifted east, out onto the grassy, five acre playground upon which campus kids often shagged fly balls hit by my father. Now, however, as Mr. Hillmon led them into the snow-and-dirt obscurity of the playground, it was potentially as deadly as the prairie where the three Grand Forks travelers were slowly freezing.

On the playground, the full, hurricane force of the winds hit them. They began struggling to breathe, inhaling and choking on the snow-dirt.

Immediately behind Mr. Hillmon, Mrs. Kiser began crying out, "I can't breathe! I can't breathe!"

They began to zigzag and circle. It was the same deadly dance being enacted all over the Red River Valley. From the little towns of

*Continued on page 20*

# Faculty Spotlight

GENE MILLER

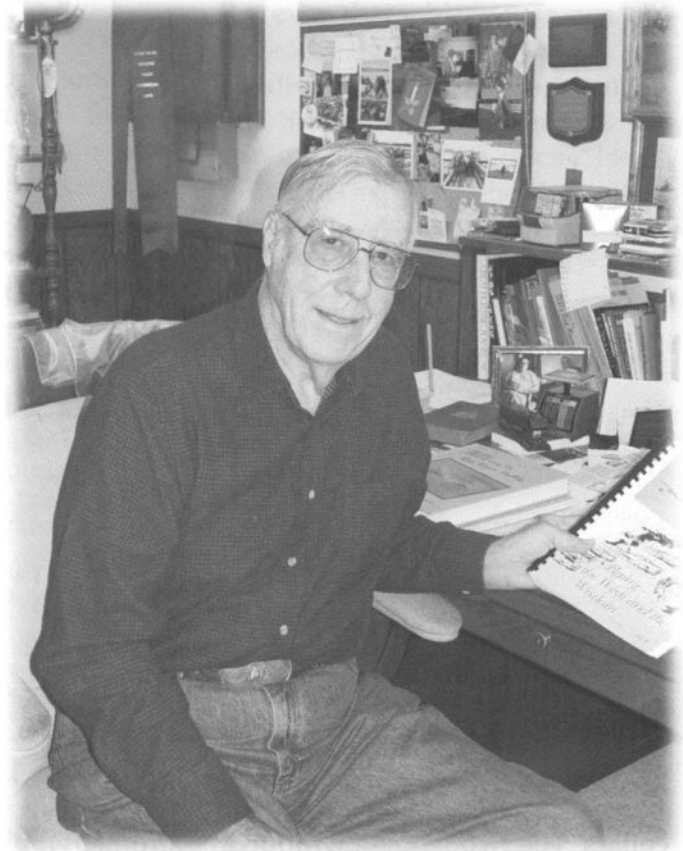
There were two things that Gene Miller (1954-1986) wanted to be when he grew up: a cowboy and a pilot. I think there are many young boys and girls who could identify with those wishes, but unlike many of them, Miller fulfilled both of those dreams. While growing up in Wisconsin, Miller would spend the summers on the farm with one of his mother's twelve brothers and sisters. He always tried to spend his summer on the farm that would allow him the chance to ride horses.

In 1940, Miller graduated from Fairchild High School in Fairchild, Wisconsin. He lettered in basketball and track all four years and set some district records in the hurdle events. He met his wife to be while still in high school. They decided to skate together while on a roller skating rink midway between their two schools and shared a orange pop with two straws.

Miller attended The Stout Institute at Menomonie, Wisconsin, following graduation from Fairchild but running short of funds in his second year, left and worked in the shipyards at Sturgeon Bay, Wisconsin. While there he took the test for the Army Air Force Reserve and was called into the Aviation Cadet system in 1943. Upon graduation he married his high school sweetheart on valentines day of 1944 on a quick trip home. The Army Air Force then sent him to instructors school at Randolph Field, Texas, and assigned him to a single engine fighters base at Eagle Pass, Texas.

Initially being disappointed at being separated from his graduating class who largely went overseas, Miller enjoyed his instructor assignment. He was later assigned to an instrument squadron where he built up considerable flying time. As the war proceeded, Miller got on orders for B-17 transition training at Sebring, Florida where he was introduced to multi-engine aircraft. This assignment was to led to B-29's in the South Pacific, but WWII ended and he hurried back to college to complete his bachelors degree. One night during a basketball game in which he was playing, he had to leave for the hospital where his son, Corky, was born.

Miller headed to Perham, Minnesota for his first job following graduation from Stout where he taught industrial arts for two years. From there, he headed to Fergus Falls where he would hold a job working with the On-farm Veterans Program under the G.I. Bill. Miller set up a "mobile shop," where he could take his expertise directly to the farm and teach. Miller and six or eight students would meet on someone's farm and build what ever might be



Miller holding one of his many writings.

needed — everything from milk houses built to code or to plumbing into an old farmhouse. Later, he would write his master's thesis on his two and half year experience using "mobile shop" and teaching.

In the winter, Miller began flying people around to foxhunt, and in the summers, he sprayed crops in the Fergus Falls area. Along the way, Miller decided that he should sell everything and move his family to the veteran's trailers on the St. Paul campus, and there, go to work on his master's degree.

Following graduation, Miller was sent to see Bernie Youngquist, then superintendent at the Waseca, Minnesota campus. When Youngquist looked out the win-



dow, he told his secretary to "get rid of the salesman that was coming to visit." However, Miller was no salesman, and Youngquist hired him, and it was there that Miller began the aeronautics program to the Schools of Agriculture in 1953, probably the first high school program known in the U.S.

During the early fifties, Miller became involved with The Minnesota Flying Farmers. Miller and Supt. Bernie Youngquist invited the flyers to use the new Southern School of Agriculture facilities at Waseca, Minnesota, or their state convention of 1953. For the next thirty years, Miller was a part of the organization and served as president in 1969-70. Miller and Ed Johnshoy, later to be instructors in the college flying programs, put together a ground school course for locals who couldn't get it elsewhere. It was called the Flying Farmers Ground School to fit with the offerings of the school and was given at night sessions.

In 1954, Miller flew up to the Crookston campus and met with Tom McCall. Mr. Foker had retired as head of buildings and grounds and Miller took the job for \$4,600 a year and housing. He enjoyed the Crookston campus very much. "It was like a small society," he says, "we were very close knit." Most of the staff then lived in houses right on the campus. They were expected to work at least the week and on Saturday mornings - longer if some event

was pending. "We associated much more with students when we were all living here," Miller states, "we were one, big family." The Miller children grew up alongside all the other campus children, and they played together all the time. (See their story on pages 21-23)

When McCall retired in 1956, Bernie Youngquist joined the NWSA family, and Miller says, "It was Bernie who sparked the collegiate idea." When it became evident that they were going to need to change, Miller remembers meeting every noon to determine the course work and divisional offerings of the emerging technical college. Miller and Ed Johnshoy wrote the first course proposals for the new college aviation program. Johnshoy soon came on as a full-time flight

instructor and Miller taught much of the ground school.

Miller accepted an assignment which required 100% of his time on the Northwest Experiment Station side of the campus in 1986. He was involved with many projects concerning silos, haylage, solar energy, and agricultural pollution. Miller worked his last four-five years on the development side of things in conjunction with Lowell Larson. He retired in 1986. Since retiring, Miller has written and published three books, and he continues to write. His office is full of wonderful memorabilia that show that it is possible for a boy to become a cowboy and a pilot, because Miller has photographs and memories to prove it. ♦



Miller residence on campus.

Wylie and Oslo, from Kelso to Fisher, farmers and travelers, panicked by their sudden snow blindness, and within feet of warm shelter, were wandering and zigzagging and freezing in the fierce wind.

It was when the wind began burning into the right side of Mr. Hillmon's face that he knew he was headed wrong. He turned almost straight into the wind then, back toward Owen Hall.

It was ten slow minutes of a step-by-step struggle into the teeth of the wind before he found the road in front of Owen Hall and turned north, following the curb to the Kisers.

Delivered to their doorstep, they invited the others to take shelter for the night, but mother urged Mr. Hillmon to keep going.

He was already moving, pulling them slowly past the Pilkey's home, then the Foker's, where the storm had interrupted a huge dinner party, finally the Dunham's. None of the houses were visible in the blizzard.

Somewhere between the Dunham's and the Clark's, Roger fell, still holding onto the rope for dear life.

He was scooped up immediately by one of the students and put back on his feet. They all bunched then, their backs turned to the wind. They were frost bitten, shaking uncontrollably, and struggling to breathe. That beguiling but deadly urge to just lie down



and sleep was only moments away.

Then Mr. Hillmon shouted, "It's not much farther!" and without waiting, he began pulling them all along again. With his feet, Mr. Hillmon found our walkway and headed for our porch. It was then that Kathy also fell and had to be dragged the last few feet, as if she were a sled.

My father had left the porch steps of the Clark House twice, only to be turned back both times by the hurricane force winds. He was standing on the steps, futilely sounding his shrill whistle, when Mr. Hillmon stumbled out of the blizzard, the others staggering or being dragged behind him.

There was whooping and celebrating as puddles formed in our living room. Over the next days, newspaper casualty maps of Polk County made Crookston and

especially the Northwest School campus seem like the blizzard's bull's-eye. Seventy-two people died, most of them in the Red River Valley. Mr. Hillmon scoffed at any idea of heroics. But his uncanny sense of direction had brought them almost a half mile through one of the worst blizzards in Minnesota history. It was only through the miracle of his dead reckoning and courage that he and the seven others behind him on his rope weren't among the "Black Blizzard's" casualties. ♦

*"The author wishes to acknowledge the following sources for this story: Dr. Ray Dunham; Dr. Roger Christgau; Floyd Spence; Liz Tollefson; Steve Gehre; the Crookston Public Library; the letters of Kathleen Christgau Devaney and Alice Christgau; and authors Doug Ramsey and Larry Skroch, for their book "Looking for Candles in the Window."*





# Campus Kids

From the desk of **LORRAINE MILLER**

One of my memories involves Crops and Soils Days that the Experiment Station sponsored for the county extension agents from the surrounding area. The county agents would be invited in the summer to come tour the crops. Hay wagons were everywhere that would take the agents to the variety of fields, pulled by tractors.

A perfect Crops and Soils day would be hot and sunny and this meant plenty of pop would be available on ice, cooling in what appeared to be water troughs. I remember watching the agents getting off the hay wagons, heading straight for the makeshift coolers and reaching their tanned arms way down into the ice, pulling out an "Orange" or "Root Beer" and slugging down the small bottles of pop. On this special day, I knew I could freely go grab a pop too without getting into trouble. Just think, nobody counting how many you drank, all day!

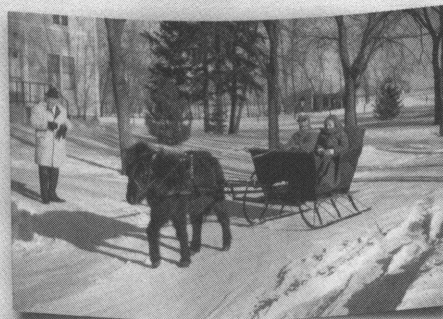
When my friend, John Anderson and his family, lived on the campus, we both had ponies for exploring the campus and surrounding area. When we wanted a real change of pace, we would head for a special spot in a certain field. This field had a tree that we could tie our horses to, and that would provide shade for us. One of us would bring a deck of cards and we would play "Crazy Eights" to our hearts content, without distraction from John's little brother or sister. I suppose we came back when we felt it was getting close to suppertime.

During the summers of 1961-1964, when I was seven to ten years old, I virtually lived on my pony, Buckshot. As I first started to learn to ride, I would travel the gravel roads around the numerous barns that housed the variety of livestock kept on the Experiment Station. As I got older, I could explore the fields and orchards that were a bit further away, as long as I was careful about the crops.

There used to be a dirt road that connected the campus to the outskirts of town. This road was probably a "lean mile" long, but seemed longer when traveling on a Shetland pony. This dirt road didn't lead to just anywhere. It took me to the Dairy Queen. After wrapping Buckshot's reins around one of the small trees that were close by, I would pull the dime out of my pocket that my mom had given me to spend. I always ordered a dilly bar, usually chocolate, with an occasional butterscotch. I had heard you could win a free dilly bar if it said so on the stick that was covered by the ice cream. I don't ever remember winning one, but I couldn't bring myself to ordering anything else. On the other hand, maybe it was the only thing I could buy for a dime.

I am currently entering my 6th year as an instructor in the Early Childhood Studies Program, Department of Education at the University of Minnesota Duluth. My husband, Don, and my two sons, Will and Cameron enjoy living in the country. My sons are involved in a variety of sports throughout all the seasons and we enjoy camping, hiking and fishing together.

--Lorraine



# Campus Kids

From the desk of **CORKY MILLER**

Being a campus kid was a great experience and the best of worlds. We had our very own community of year around campus friends, our extended "town" public school friends, as well as the association of regional agriculture students and their instructors and coaches. Campus kids grew up in a culture concerned with the support of research, production, education, and outreach.

As campus kids we were never far from a gymnasium, a swimming pool, or wooded area for tree climbing, exploring, or serious "fort" construction. There was usually an interesting construction site on campus to help "supervise" or a coach who could offer some "tips". Having a wonderful sense of space, hide-and-seek with other campus kids covered the whole campus area and would usually finish with a bike race to the goal with the last player out. Bicycle riding was our favorite summer activity because we literally had the streets and whole campus to ourselves after campus crews quit for the day. The street that currently runs by Youngquist Auditorium continued straight South to Crookston. That back road made "town" friends, exploring Crookston, or a Dairy Queen treat a short bicycle ride away. The view of the prairie from the water tower catwalk was glorious and a backward lean against the rusty old Hill Building third story fire escape rail would produce chills even on a hot day.

Winter and school activities would offer challenges for campus kids. There were days when we celebrated no buses running due to weather conditions. So close to town yet far enough. And there were times we waited what seemed like hours for a ride home after basketball or other practices. We passed on some activities because of road concerns at that time or because of bad weather any given day. If we didn't mind our manners when waiting inside Bede Hall for the public school bus, we would soon have to face Reta Bede or Ma Brown concerning any misbehavior. Yes, that would be the original Reta Bede and the very original Ma Brown.

I had the opportunity to return to campus for several years working for a company that leases space from UMC. It was indeed a real pleasure to be back on campus and experience again the campus culture and its people. A walk to the library could remind me of flying model airplanes with Paul or David Youngquist in the open squares, chasing cottontail rabbits with Roger Parkin, ice skating with David or John Lysaker, getting a quick golf lesson from Erwin "Rei" Reiersgord, finding a book with Berniel Nelson, or running an errand to deliver something to Tillie Gebhardt. I was surprised a few years ago as I carried a box to a dumpster. I re-discovered a campus kid hand written graffiti inscription by the Owen Hall back door. Written on brick was "David is nuts". I won't expound any further here about which David nor will I admit what year I believe that to be written.

At informal coffees, department open houses, and other activities, it remains fun to visit with campus people about old or new campus buildings, personalities and events. The conversation from time to time will progress to some early year campus trivia such as where the houses were located or some early staff member. All in good fun, and everyone realizing that my campus role has been observer only, I usually attempt to claim final knowledge of some "who's" or "where's" because more than likely, I was here before they were.

--Corky





# Campus Kids

From the desk of **LIZ MILLER**

My earliest memories of the campus are as a 1st grader. I was 6 yrs old when my family moved from Waseca, MN, to what was then the Northwest School of Agriculture. We lived in a small red house, later, when remodeled, it was the yellow house. During the summers I rode my bike endlessly around the large and small 'square's, curiously seeing what was out in the larger world beyond the campus houses. Roller skating on the old porches of the dorms was a fun summer activity, and in the winter there was always an ice skating rink out in the 'big square'. A few years Dad made a smaller ice skating rink right in front of our house on the 'small square'.

One of my favorite places to play with my dolls, all spread out on a blanket, was under the 4 large Elm trees in the small 'square' across the road from our home, and near the old horse barn. My girl friends, (the Beresford sisters) played there with me almost every day. It was a cool and shady place to be if it was a hot day. I remember that my babysitters were the older girls who were Aggies. On Halloween, the 'campus kids' would always go 'trick or treating' to all the homes on the campus, and to the dorms. The dorm parents always had good treats for us. In the summer the 4-H camp was on the campus and I always loved going to the plays that they put on in the old auditorium. Eventually I would spend hours in that auditorium playing the organ that was there as I took organ lessons from Don Anderson who was a music teacher and also lived on the campus.

As I grew older, making forts in the woods behind the heating plant, playing football with all the 'campus kids', and swimming at the campus pool on weekends, made the days go by fast. We had lots of friends to play with back in the days when many families lived on the campus. There were at least 8 or 9 homes on the campus back in the 1950's. In my mind I can walk through each one and tell you who lived there. Sometimes, when I stopped to see my friend David Lysaker, his mom Esther would set me on a stool and trim my hair.

Since I went to school in town, the bus would pick everyone up at the old dining hall. I remember one day there was a blizzard so bad the busses were not going to bring kids home out to the country so Dad and Hersch Lysaker came in a car to pick up the 'campus kids'. Back then it seemed like a long way to go the two miles into town, and especially back to the campus in a blizzard! I think they followed the telephone lines because you couldn't see any lines on the road that day.

When I got into junior high school, my dad bought me a horse. Riding my horse gave me more freedom to travel beyond the campus. Dirt back roads followed the fields, crossed the railroad tracks, and eventually led to the old West Farm and woods, which is now the Wild Life Preserve. I would have delightful rides in those beautiful woods, and find logs to jump my horse over. (ok, just don't tell mom)

I have to admit I sat atop of the soldier's monument many summer evenings with my campus pals, eating crabapples, sometimes watermelon we had 'borrowed' from the State Garden, and watched the glorious sunsets beyond the entrance of the campus.

When the Agriculture High School became a Technical College I was registered in that first class. After all, it was home, and I didn't really want to leave it.

I am the Title I Program Coordinator and Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Awareness Network Facilitator and Program Coordinator for CESA#12 (Comprehensive Educational Service Agency) in Ashland, WII Coordinate Federal and State Grant programs for the 18 schools located in the CESA#12 area.

--Liz





# Campus Visit

ED GRAHAM

Ed Graham stopped by the campus not long ago with his wife, Holly, and sister, Madeline, to show them the trophy that bears his name. He found the trophy with his name engraved on it honoring him as the 1953 outstanding speech student, and Holly took his picture with it. Ed found his favorite book in the library also and then they spent some time in the Heritage Room where Ed shared some of his memories.

He was born in Winnipeg, Canada but grew up on a farm near Petersburg, ND. He attended the Nash #3 one room school and attended the Northwest School of Agriculture (NWSA) for four years graduating in 1953. His favorite classes were Geometry from Alice Ittner and English from Jean Kjorlie. He worked in the Agronomy department with Dr.

Soine and recalled how Mr. Pilkey would always bring up his Canadian roots.

He recalls heading to the men's room of Stephen's Hall to smoke after lunch, and after school, Ed and his friends would go to the Grill and see girls from both the Cathedral and Central high schools in Crookston. One time Ed served as master of ceremonies in the Aggie Inn for the Honor's Banquet. To the surprise of both his wife and sister, he remembered singing "If" at that event.

Following graduation, Ed farmed for a couple of years and then entered the Army. He attended North Dakota State University for two years following his six years in the Army and went to New York to work. It was then that Ed says he "got smart" and went back to school. He attended Cornell for two and a half years in Ithaca, NY and got his degree in Economics. Ed worked in Chicago for a couple of years before



Ed with his trophy in 1953.

beginning work for Commerce Clearinghouse, a legal publishing house where he worked for the next thirty years.

Ed has always been interested in cattle and has owned a farm about an hour outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania called Kildonan Farm for thirty years. Currently, he has fifty Aberdeen Angus cattle and about five hundred sheep. That passion for cattle was one that Ed has long held. That is why he was happy to find that book in the library that to this day he refers to as his "favorite." That book was a history of Aberdeen-Angus cattle, and he has never forgotten it. ♦



Fifty-one years later, Ed holding the same trophy, pictured with Liz Tollefson, Alumni Relations.



# Campus Visit

MARGARET RISTAD BANKERS

Margaret Ristad Bankers visited the University of Minnesota, Crookston (UMC) campus on the way back from visiting the site of her birthplace near Hallock, Minnesota. Margaret was traveling with her daughter-in-law, Sue Bankers, and they decided to stop in and say hello and look around.

Following graduation from the Northwest School, Margaret attended Interstate Business College in Fargo, North Dakota. She was married to Curtis Bankers in 1944; he passed away in 1987. She worked for nineteen years as secretary of Westside Community Schools in Omaha, Nebraska. Margaret is the mother of seven children, sixteen grandchildren, and one great grandson. She moved to Sioux Falls, South Dakota in 1993 to be close to family. She still enjoys traveling and driving to Colorado, Nebraska, Montana, and around Minnesota to visit family there. Below is a letter from Margaret in which she shares memories of her visit to UMC and of her years attending the NWSA.

Recently I visited the beautiful UMC campus on the way home from Hallock. I had visited family and revisited the site of my birthplace in Hazelton Township, Kittson County. That site is now part of Ristad Farms, farmed by Jim Ristad and his son, Eric. Ferdie Ristad was Jim's father and he attended Northwest School in the early 1930s. It gives me great pleasure to know the Ristad name is perpetuated in the area that our forefathers settled, coming from Norway in 1881.

Liz Tollefson greeted me in the newly remodeled Kiehle Building. She showed me through the Heritage Room and the auditorium. I shared many memories with her — things that came back to me as I viewed the artifacts now tastefully displayed in the new Heritage Room. Of

*special interest to me was the 1925 grand piano on the stage of the auditorium. I thought of my senior piano recital when I played Beethoven's Moonlight Sonata on that very piano and forgot part of it! I never was a pianist, but Miss Frykman did her best to teach me and I'm forever grateful that I had that experience. I remembered Lyceum Programs and assemblies we attended there and, of course, graduation. What wonderful opportunities we had!*

*I tried to recall the songs we always sang together when we gathered in the auditorium. I believe "We Gather Together" and the Doxology, which starts "Dear Lord and Father of Mankind", was another, but one of them was sung as a prayer in the dining hall before meals and I can't recall which one. Can anyone fill me in?*

*I saw the washstand from the Health Service, and it reminded of the Junior Senior Banquet and Prom in 1939. A few from our class, including me, were confined in the Health Service with red measles. We watched our classmates go by on the sidewalk all decked out in their finery. My formal dress, which I had made for the occasion in sewing class, was hanging back in the closet at Robertson Hall!*

*The gym suit displayed made me think of gym class. I didn't much like physical education, especially the swimming part.*

*My class was late in the day and there was a rush to try to get my hair dry and presentable before evening meal in the dining hall. In retrospect, I am grateful because I did learn to swim. I don't believe there were many high schools in*



1940 Aggie Board Members in charge of organization and classes. Left to right: Dayton Jacobson, Margaret Ristad, Odney Flaot.

*our part of Minnesota that had a swimming pool!*

*Of course, we all sewed our gym suits, as well as our cooking aprons. I think all of the girls learned to sew quite well and made very nice dresses, suits, and even coats under the very capable direction of Elsie Mae Kingston. Miss Bede taught us to cook and supervised us, a few at a time, in the home management apartment where we stayed a few weeks learning to keep house, plan meals, buy groceries, set a proper table, cook our meals and entertain guests. Where else?*

*Of course, there are many memories of dormitory life at Robertson Hall, mostly of friendships made and kept. In my four years, I had several roommates (3 per room), to name a few — Eleanor Olson, Louise Krogstad, Gladys Vesledahl, Irene Kliner, and Joan Phillips. As I recall, we were required to be in our rooms studying for two hours each night before lights out at ten or ten-thirty, depending on whether you were an upper classman or a lower classman. There was bed check and occasionally Miss Bede would have to "campus" someone. I recall getting up at four or five a.m. to study my debate cards in the bathroom. I sat on the floor with my back to the radiator to keep warm.*

*The Dining Hall Experience — not a cafeteria line, but tables set for eight or ten with tablecloths and napkins. Upper*

*Continued on page 26*

# Remembering

CONRAD SELVIG



Kathryn Clark, Jeanne Dunham, Nock Dunham, Bob McCall

*I remember very vividly, when I was probably three or four, my father telling me that I loved Conrad Selvig and the feeling was mutual. Dad said I used to waltz into his office unannounced and climb up in his lap and Mr. Selvig thought it was great.*



When I was a very little girl, (early 1920's) living on campus, Conrad Selvig left his position as Superintendent to become a Minnesota Congressman. He also left behind his daughter's old riding horse. I think his name was Mac. I don't recall that anyone ever rode Mac, but occasionally the farm workers would harness him up to his buggy and take we kids for rides to our great delight. After poor old Mac died, we tried to fit every workhorse in the barn between the shafts of that cart, but to no avail. Our fun rides were over – forever!!

*Nock Dunham Baker*

## Margaret Ristad, continued from page 25

*class students were assigned to be host and hostess for each table and the meal was served family style. Thanksgiving dinner was memorable. Before Thanksgiving Day, the host assigned for each table was required to attend a demonstration to learn to carve a turkey. Our education was well rounded! The waitresses lined up, each with a big browned turkey on a tray, carried high, a turkey for each table. Many students were on the campus that day because we had classes the next day and, in my case, home was about 75 miles away.*

*The dining hall was closed after the noon meal on Sundays and we were given a box lunch to be eaten in our rooms Sunday evenings. On other days, after the evening meal, many of us gathered in the Aggie Inn to socialize and perhaps buy a candy bar for a late evening snack. If there was a boyfriend, he probably walked me home, taking a long route, perhaps even to stop and enjoy the warmth of the greenhouse!*

*On March 15, 1941, after dinner, my friend and classmate, Howard Brandt, and I walked to the entrance of the campus. We had a spring thaw and it was warm and still.*

*The atmosphere felt threatening. I remember feeling that threat at the gate where we were out of the shelter of trees. At 7:30, a fierce snowstorm struck the area. Many cars were traveling to basketball tournaments in the surrounding towns. They were stalled in their tracks and the temperature dropped dramatically. Many tried to walk. I am not sure anymore how many, but many lives were lost that night. I don't believe there were any storm predictions. The storm raged at least two more days with many inches of snow and high winds. I imagine there*



*are accurate records of that storm. It was a very sobering experience. Some of our faculty were caught in the storm between Crookston and the campus, but I believe all were found safe the next day. (See story on this storm by John Christgau in this issue on page 12)*

*I think that in addition to a fine high school education, I was trained at Northwest School to be a farmer's wife. That didn't happen, but in raising a large family, I certainly put my training to good use and have always felt gratitude for the experience and the opportunity afforded me at Northwest School of Agriculture.*

*My thanks to Gladys Vesledahl Crowser, my classmate, for visiting with me and helping me recall some of these events.*

*If you wish to contact Margaret, her e-mail address is marg824@aol.com. She would love to hear from you! ♦*





# A Very Special Call

WILFORD AND  
MARY LOU DOSTAL

Wilford '49 and Mary Lou (Baird) '54 Dostal celebrated their second anniversary November 12, 2003. Their lives were brought together across many miles, and many years. Mary Lou was living in Milbank, South Dakota during the NWSA Phone-a-thon in the spring of 2001. Wilford was volunteering during the phone-a-thon and was calling the Class of 1954. However, when he called Mary Lou's number, he asked her how she was, and they began to visit. He told Mary Lou he would like to see her again, and she said, "If you want to see me, you should come down," and a week later that is exactly what he did.

Wilford Dostal grew up on a farm near Angus, Minnesota and enjoyed life in the dorms and the camaraderie of life at the Northwest School. Following graduation, he and Mary Lou were introduced by Wilford's cousin and Mary Lou's best friend, Lorraine (Zipoy) Love '54 and dated briefly, but life ended up taking them down different pathways.

Wilford joined the National Guard and went to Korea for a year. When he came home in 1952, he returned to the farm to work and in 1956, was married to Kaye Turn. During this time, Wilford farmed and drove truck, and then in 1973 he began farming full time. He is the father of three, two sons and a daughter and was married forty-two years.

Mary Lou grew up northeast of Crookston. She drove back and forth to campus and enjoyed driving friends to games and spending

time at the Aggie Inn. The day after her graduation in 1954, Mary Lou went to work at Crookston National Bank in Crookston. She was married to Marlin Hegg in 1955.

He was employed by Otter Tail Power Company for thirty-eight years. They were transferred to Milbank in 1974. While living in Milbank, Mary Lou worked at Coast to Coast, and later, became a realtor. Mary Lou and Marlin were married for forty-five years and had four children, three daughters and a son. When Wilford called during the Phone-a-thon, both of them had lost their spouses, and that conversation renewed their friendship. Prior to that time, they had only seen each other briefly at the 1994 and 1999 NWSA reunions.

After his visit to Milbank, Wilford was planning to go again, but Mary Lou's children were home for a visit, and while they were there, she became ill. A trip to the doctor sent her to the hospital for an appendectomy. She remained in the hospital for seven days. Wilford sent her a dozen roses.

Following her recovery, there were many trips between Milbank and Crookston going both ways. When Mary Lou was going to celebrate her birthday in July of 2001, Wilford presented her with an engagement ring. The following



Mary Lou and Willy Dostal

November, they were married and the rest, as they say is history.

Currently, they are planning a weeklong family reunion for both families on their farm. Wilford's children all live in Minnesota, John and Kathy Dostal, East Grand Forks, Jana and Paul Torgerson, Warren, and Jim and Julie Dostal, Coon Rapids. Mary Lou's children are more widely scattered, Debra and Ward Westburg, Twin Falls, Idaho, Tim and Carol Hegg and Becky and Bruce Walters both reside in Missoula, Montana, and Vicki and Mark Thome, Costa Mesa, California. This gathering will include fourteen grandchildren and five great grandchildren. The alumni office extends best wishes for a wonderful week celebrating the joining of these two families.

Wilford serves on the NWSA Alumni Association Board, and he and Mary Lou enjoy spending their winters in Arizona. If you are married to a Northwest Schooler and have a unique story or have been married more than fifty years, please contact Liz Tollefson at 218-281-8432. ♦

# Scholarship Feature

ERIC SCOTT



Eric Scott in the Heritage Room.

Living on his grandfather's original homestead near Lengby, Minnesota is part of the legacy that Eric Scott has from his grandfather, Neal Scott. He also has another legacy from his grandfather – the Heritage Fund Scholarship given to descendants of Northwest School of Agriculture (NWSA) alumni attending the University of Minnesota, Crookston (UMC). Neal attended the NWSA in 1927

and '28 and Eric carries on that heritage at UMC today. The Heritage Scholarship has aided many students through the years.

Eric, a 2001 graduate of Fosston High School attended UMC for a number of reasons. "I wanted to go into Agriculture, and UMC offered me the opportunity to play football for four years. I was recruited by other schools, but UMC offered me the degree I wanted and a chance to play football the longest," Eric explains. "The other reason is that UMC is only an hour from home and I can go home on weekends to help, for instance, right now we are calving." Eric also feels that the computer experience he has gotten at UMC really helps. With a major in Agricultural Education, Eric thinks high schools need teachers to have technology skills. "High school teachers have to have computer skills; it helps small rural schools when teachers have computer knowledge and helps level the playing field with larger schools," Eric said.

Neal Scott would have been proud of his grandson. He spent his life working as a dairy inspector for Polk, Clearwater, Mahnomen counties near the Lengby area. He also loved farming and owned a small hobby farm where he had a few head of beef cattle. Eric's mother and father, Gene and Mary Scott, run the third largest registered Angus breeding operation in Minnesota. They have ninety head calving this spring and a herd totaling somewhere around one hundred and fifty.

Eric said his grandmother told him that it took his grandfather over a day to get the fifty-seven miles to Crookston from home with his horses and buckboard. Life has changed has changed, but the Scott family still values education. Eric says, "The Heritage Scholarship means a great deal to me. Going to UMC is costly, and every little bit of money I get from scholarships helps a lot." ♦

*The campus of the Northwest School of Agriculture in 1928.*



# Remembering

BOB BENSON

September 11, 2001 has touched all of our lives. It does not matter where you live or who you are; that day is a tragedy that goes beyond words. Bob Benson shared his story of 9/11 at the Area 57 Coffee Café in downtown Wanamingo, Minnesota one day last fall.

The town of Wanamingo is home to Bob Benson and Ida Marie, his wife of fifty-two years. Bob attended the Northwest School of Agriculture (NWSA) for two years in 1947-48. He would have continued, but his father broke his ribs when a cow kicked him, and he ended up staying home to run the farm.

When Bob was in grade school, he played hockey, and hockey was something Bob loved. But since there was no school bus from Wannaska, Minnesota, where he grew up, to Roseau, Minnesota, where he could have played hockey in high school, it was decided that Bob would go to school at the NWSA. It was that perfect combination of being needed on the farm and attending a school that accommodated that need.

The first year Bob lived with his cousin in Crookston, but his second year he lived in a dorm with his roommate, Dennis Green from Roosevelt, Minnesota. He recalls the first morning of class he came in and William Barron, who taught machinery and motors, had written a statement on the blackboard. It read, "It is what you learn after you think you know it all that really counts." They were instructed to copy that statement in the front of their workbooks. "That statement," Bob says, "has come back to me many times. I knew I had a lot to learn."

Bob played hockey for an independ-



The 1951 Wannaska Senior Hockey Team is pictured here in one of the warming houses at the rink. From left to right in the back row are Leroy Swanson, Robert Oslund, Marshall Rygh, Duane Carlson and Adolph Erickson. In the front row are Robert Benson, Kenneth Eggen and James Oslund. The rest of the team were not available when the picture was taken.

---Photo courtesy of the Roseau County Historical Society and Adolph and Evelyn Erickson

ent hockey team in Wannaska after he left the Northwest School. Since the hockey program ended the year before he came to the NWSA, he never played as an Aggie. The Wannaska Team played Hallock and Red Lake Falls teams in Minnesota and some Canadian teams as well. They made their own rink, provided their own transportation, and everyone who played was between the ages of eighteen and thirty. Bob played defensemen for six years for the team.

After leaving the farm in 1958, Bob worked for a bridge contractor near Wannaska before he decided to move to the cities. He continued to work on bridge construction until 1975 when he started a concrete construction business in Wanamingo, which he headed for twenty-six years.

Following retirement, Bob began driving motor coach part time. He has toured all over the United States and Canada. Bob explains, "I have met so many great people. I have driven for three and a half years, and I have no intention of stopping." One of the most interesting of Bob's trips took him to New York

City just nine days after the September 11, 2001 attack on the World Trade Center. Bob tells it this way, "I was one of the first two coaches into New York City following the attack. There was all kinds of publicity surrounding our arrival. People were waiting for us and actually thanked us for coming." Bob goes on, "There were twenty-six coaches that had cancelled that week."

One of the most powerful things that they saw on that trip was during a boat ride into the harbor where they could see the towers still burning. "There were no dry eyes that night as we witnessed the huge area of devastation," Bob concluded. He says he has been back to New York City several times since and the whole city seems changed by the event. "They are more friendly; it is not the same town," Bob said.

Wanamingo is a great town too, and if you are passing through, make sure you stop at the Area 57 Coffee Café. You can't miss it on the main street of town. The coffee is good, the people are friendly, and you will feel right at home. ♦



# Class Notes

## Clara (Ness) LaVoi '29

Fosston MN

Clara was married to Lawrence LaVoi in 1929. They had two children Connie (Mrs. Mel Amundson) and Darie. Following her husband's death, Clara worked at the Fosston hospital, which she enjoyed very much. She was also involved in many activities in the community and helped raise her grandchildren.



Clara was basketball captain for the NWSA Women's Team in 1928-29. Her love for the sport continues to this day. She particularly enjoys following the Lady Greyhounds of Fosston. On March 16, 2004, she will celebrate her 96th birthday. We would like to wish her the happiest of birthdays and send our best to her and to her son, Darie, who we had the pleasure of meeting when we stopped to visit Clara several months ago at her home in Fosston.

## Dick Rettke '61

Punta Gorda FL. Dick and his wife, Patti, recently moved from Rice Lake WI to Punta Gorda FL which is on the gulf side of the state and is just one city north of Fort Meyers. They are looking forward to the warm sea breezes in the winter. They plan to return to Wisconsin in the summer. They have a motor home and have a permanent site by a nice lake reserved and ready for their return. Their son Scott and his wife, Bridgett, live in Shakopee MN and are expecting a baby in April. Their youngest son, Todd, and his wife, Marly, live in Eau Claire WI and are expecting their second child in April. The kids will do anything to get them to stay, however, Dick's advice to all, "live the second half for yourself and do what you want to do" and they are. Dick's last day of work with the Wisconsin State Employee Union was November 21, 2003. Email Dick at pattianddick@hotmail.com

## Edward Grove '55

Yorba Linda CA.



On November 9th when many Minnesotans already have their snowmobiles out, Edward and his son, Russ, and granddaughter, Hailey, went kayaking down the Colorado River. No, it was not the white-water Colorado River through the Grand Canyon where Major Powell explored, but the lower Colorado where the water is calm. They launched at a place called Topock, Arizona where Interstate 40 crosses the Colorado River. From there they paddled down to Lake Havasu which is a distance of about 25 miles. This is a favorite area for boy scout troops and other canoeing and kayaking enthusiasts to travel in the spring and fall when the temperatures are not 120 degrees or higher. There are many sandy beaches along the river where one can pull up and have a picnic lunch. There are no access roads along this part of the river. This picture was taken at the Sand Bar, a favorite hang out spot all summer for boaters. Edward and his wife, Marilyn, live in Yorba Linda California. They have three sons and one daughter and seven grandchildren who all live in Southern California. Email Edward at edsworld2@juno.com

## Donald Henrickson '57

DePere WI spent his career as a college professor of accounting and also had his own CPA practice. He has been retired for 5 years. Donald and his wife of 36 years, Judy, enjoy traveling and family events with their 3 children and their grandchildren. His hobbies and interests are exercise and fitness, reading and animals. He has a horse, a burro and three dogs. He is also involved in various community affairs. Donald states his wife enjoys reading and interior decorating and they also enjoy each other. Email Donald at henrdo@itol.com

## Rose Polski Anderson

The yearbook says about her, "She can be depended upon to rise to any occasion," and that is the truth. Rose Polski Anderson taught piano at the Northwest School of Agriculture (NWSA) from 1926-1932. It was a way for her to share something she has had a passion for since she was very young. She says, "Playing the piano came naturally for me. I never wanted to do anything else." Chopin was her favorite composer, and her favorite kind of student was one who was "very anxious to do things." She recalled one student of hers who worked so sincerely at the piano that she considers her one of her "stars". You can see it in her eyes—the pride and joy that music has brought her.



Rose marked a major milestone in late September 2003 when she celebrated her 100th birthday. She has photographs of the family and friends that surrounded her that day at her home in Eagle Crest Commons in Roseville, Minnesota. Rose has lived there for three years and her hobbies include reading biographies and the newspaper, and exercising.

Rose met her husband, Seigel Anderson, while teaching at the NWSA. Seigel taught agricultural engineering (1928-1934). They had two daughters and a son, and after living in several places, they purchased her father's business in the Twin Cities. Rose and Seigel were the original designers of the School Patrol Flag, which is still used today.



Rose brought music to the Northwest School and her students carried what she taught them into their lives. Her influence has been felt far and wide over the years. Music is a special gift that Rose has shared wherever she has gone. NWSA alumni and friends everywhere would like to wish Rose a happy belated birthday, and best wishes for the coming year!

# In Memory

**George Seaton, attended '24**  
Crookston MN  
October 24, 2003

**Marvin Wardner, '30**  
East Grand Forks MN  
October 31, 2003

**Lucille (Urbaniak) Krolak, '32**  
Argyle MN  
September 9, 2003

**Delbert Gustafson, '33**  
Hallock MN  
January 8, 2004

**Robert W. Stevens,**  
**Attended '36-'37**  
Des Moines, IA  
July 23, 2003

**Leona Kellerman, '37**  
Roseau MN  
September 6, 2003

**Arthur J. Weber, attended '37**  
Fertile MN  
November 5, 2003

**Edith Bolstad**  
**NWSA Librarian 1940-43**  
Fertile MN  
December 3, 2003

**Vernon Philipp, '42**  
Goodridge MN  
August 30, 2003

**Jerome Bergeron, '51**  
Warren MN  
December 17, 2003

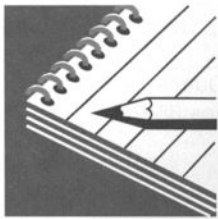
**Merle Lundeen '51**  
Thief River Falls MN  
December 19, 2003

**Duane A. Wagner,**  
**attended '53-'55**  
Staples MN  
September 9, 2003

**Theresa Gruhot, '54**  
Grand Forks ND  
December 15, 2003

**Byron Luchau, '61**  
Hot Springs SD  
September 1, 2003

**Gary Odegaard '66**  
Kindred ND  
November 7, 2003



## Be a part of the AGGIE!

To submit an item for Class Notes just fill out this form and send it to: Rose Ulseth, 2900 University Ave., Crookston MN 56716 or E-mail: [rulseth@umn.edu](mailto:rulseth@umn.edu)  
**Photos of you and/or your family are welcome!**

Name \_\_\_\_\_  
First Middle Initial Last Maiden

Year of Graduation \_\_\_\_\_ or Attendance \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail address\* \_\_\_\_\_

\*Can we post your E-mail address in the next issue of the Aggie? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Information/news that you wish to share with your NWSA classmates and friends.  
(New job, retirement, family achievements, hobbies, etc.) Use another sheet of paper if necessary.

\_\_\_\_\_  
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**PLEASE SEND A PHOTO!**

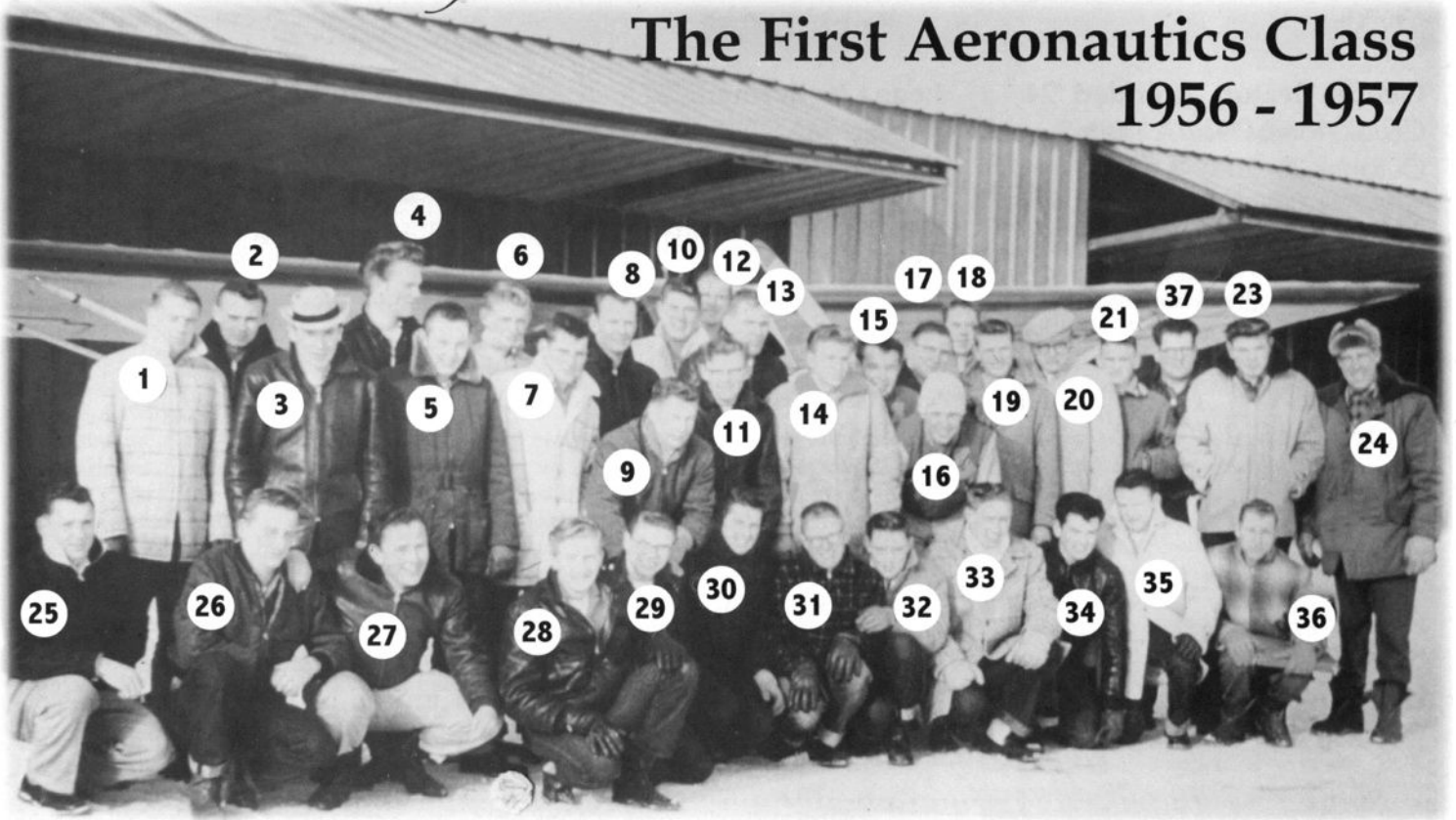


**Please fill out and mail to:**

NWSA Alumni Association, University of Minnesota, Crookston, 2900 University Avenue, Crookston, MN 56716-5001

# Memories of the Past

## The First Aeronautics Class 1956 - 1957



Class identified as possible 41 years later. 1. Ordean Mickelson 2. Donald Hendrickson 3. \_\_\_ Moser 4. Lee Eidem 5. Michael Lundon 6. Glen Arneson 7. Joe Armstrong 8. Ron Guttormson 9. Vernon Askegard 10. Tom Gray 11. Larry Volland 12. Allen Ziegler 13. Roger Anderson 14. Arden hoff 15. Duane Mulcah 16. \_\_\_ 17. Marvin Magsam 18. \_\_\_ McKenzie 19. Duane Kuzel 20. \_\_\_ 21. Roger Tollefson 22. Glen Hanson 23. Del Fryaer 24. E.C. Miller, NWSA Instructor 25. Dale Johnson 26. Michael Vanek 27. Duane Setterholm 28. Donald Boushee 29. Gerald Foss 30. \_\_\_ 31. Ed Pester 32. Allan Brandli 33. Orin Lee 34. Arnold Menzies 35. Roy Morris 36. Carl Hedlund. (Thank you to Berneil Nelson for doing the name research)

If you can identify any of the missing names in this photograph, please contact Liz Tollefson at 218-281-8432.

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