

# Blossoms Forever

A Newsletter for Blooming Prairie School District Alumni & Friends • May, 2016



“Charlie”

**Loren Elinger, Class of '61**, found a way to honor his school and his Dad at the same time. Loren's Father, Charles “Charlie” Elinger was the custodian for Blooming Prairie Public Schools from 1932 to 1947. Loren's writing, somewhat edited that follows, provides inspiration for all of us as we live out our lives while remembering and honoring the many employees of Blooming Prairie Schools.

“I feel that my Father played a very significant role, one which is not always thought about, but one which affected many children who walked through the doors of the elementary and high school in Blooming Prairie. He was probably the first person many of the children saw as they entered the building and one who became a friend to many children as they matriculated through their educational experience in Blooming Prairie. I have taken the time to write a brief background of my Dad.

“Charlie”

Everyone knew him. He was the man with the grey shirt and pants with black suspenders. A black bow tie and a gold watch fob and chain hanging from his side pants pocket that students could see as they entered the school building every morning. He was the man who rang the school bell every morning to alert the town that school was about to start. He was the man who pushed the broom down the halls and the man who cleaned the restrooms after school was completed every day. He was the man who started the boilers early in the morning to make the school building warm and toasty on those cold winter days. He was the man who shoveled, by himself, the

walkways leading to the entry of the school buildings. He was the man who mowed the grass in the wet, dewy summer mornings in his bare feet. And he was the man who religiously raised and lowered the American flag on the pole in front of the two story school building.

Any one who might have attended school in the 1930's and 1940's were probably touched somehow by Charlie. He was a man who surely heard many stories from students and teachers about their problems and issues. Charlie had a neutral listening ear and big shoulders for so many people.

November, 1947 was a bitter beginning to the winter season. Early snowstorms had taxed Charlie to keep up with the snow shoveling and boiler preparation. Charlie had visited the Doctor after pains had shot up and down his arms. The Doctor urged him to slow down and have others help him or the prognosis might be fatal. But Charlie knew that was not his way – his work ethic was too strong and there was none who could know how to keep the school running mechanically like he did.

On the morning of Friday, December 5, 1947, he rose at 5 AM, as he always did to make the short 2 block trek to the school to start the boilers. His wife, Martha, would have breakfast ready for him when he came home after the morning chores. But this morning Charlie did not come home. Martha circled the dining room from the kitchen and into the living room and there she found Charlie lying peacefully on the sofa. His days on earth were over. His pipe, which he smoked, was placed neatly over his head on the headrest of the sofa.

Charles “Charlie” Elinger was dead at the age of 51. Quoting from the Blooming Prairie Times, “For the past 15 years he has been custodian of Blooming Prairie's public school building. He performed his duties efficiently, commanded the respect and esteem of the board of education, faculty instructors, and was the friend of every student of the school during the time that he was janitor.” Last rites were held Monday, Dec. 8 at 2 PM. School was dismissed for the afternoon and pupils and villagers in large numbers came to pay their last respects to a respected citizen and friend.

Another article written by students at the time, quoted,

“Charlie was as punctual in his work as he was tireless in his efforts to receive improvements in the school. His services were infallible as the stars and to find that he is no longer with us is incomprehensible. His friendly chiding with both students and faculty made him ever-popular. He believed that hard work was a virtue, he practiced it every day. Besides the hundreds of daily tasks he was never too busy to help anyone who needed it.”

Finally, a letter written by a Music Mother, paid a tribute to Charlie in which she wrote, “as I passed the school today I saw the flag at half mast; my heart ached because I know what it is to lose someone dear to you.”

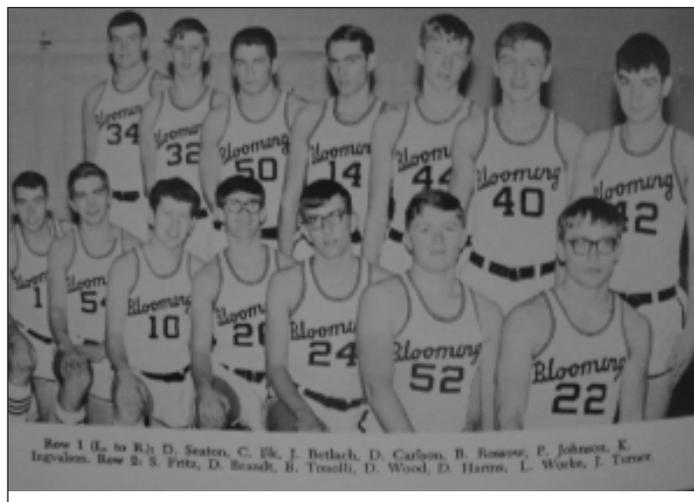
My name is Loren Elinger, I was only 4 when my dad passed away. I never had a chance to know what “Charlie”, my dad was really like, but, I know that my dad would be proud and honored to be recognized as a member of the Blossoms Forever award as Honored Teacher/Administrative/ Staff Member.

**NOTE:** Loren, Class of '61, enrolled at the University of Minnesota and transferred to Mankato State in 1963 earning a Bachelor of Science Degree in 1965. He was employed as a Social Studies teacher in Rosemount, taught there for 2 years, and then for the next 34 years was a Middle School teacher in Willmar. Loren and his wife Nancy have 3 children, daughter Lara and two sons Parish and Anthony. After retiring from teaching in 1969, Loren and Nancy traveled the United States to find their ideal place to retire, Fredericksburg, Texas. Visitors are welcomed.

## THANKS FOR THE YEARBOOKS

Readers have been generous as we attempt to find a yearbook for each of the years of Blooming Prairie Public Schools' existence. Thank you! Blooming Prairie Education Foundation owns the donated books and extras are sent to the High School Library and to the Blooming Prairie Public Library. Our earliest yearbook so far is from 1925. Still needed are those from the years 1900 to 1924, 1926 to 1940, 1964, 2001, 2004 and 2008 to 2014.

## AS THE CHAMPIONS WERE IN '66



### BLOSSOM SUCCESS TO BE CELEBRATED FOREVER

The school year was 1965-66 when hard work combined with talent brought about never-before and never-yet- after glory to Blossom Boy's Basketball. Despite several Sub-District Championships over the 60 or more years of school history, Blossom Basketball Boys had never won a District or Region Championship. That all changed on a March night in 1966 as **Coach Jim Poole's** team upset favored Austin 76-65 to win the District title. Austin Daily Herald Reporter John Kolb wrote of the game, “To everyone's amazement, the Blossoms came back after intermission red hot and there was nothing anyone could do to cool them off.” There were not enough superlatives available to describe the feelings of the team and all of Blooming Prairie on that charmed evening. Years of suffering wiped away on one great night. Could anything be better?

Yes, a District Championship was not enough as the Blossoms went on to defeat Northfield and Red Wing to claim the Region Title. This distinctive Blossom group had earned a spot in the then 8 team Minnesota Boys' Basketball Tournament. History made that would and will resonate positively for many years and especially 50 years later as we celebrate and honor the team and coaches in this issue of “Blossoms Forever”.

Each of members of the '66 team including Coach LeMar Nelson was asked to write about the Tournament experience and about their life experiences in the 50 years that followed. Their responses follow. We regret to report that **Coach Jim Poole** and 3 team members, **Keith Ingvalson, David Brandt** and **Dean Wood** have since passed away.

**Our thanks to Bob Tonolli for sharing good memories of deceased team members Keith Ingvalson, Dean Wood and David Brandt.**

**Keith Ingvalson** was a starting guard. Keith was a talented athlete who excelled in several sports. Keith attended Austin Junior College and was a state representative for autos and recreational vehicles in Austin and Rochester. Keith died in August, 2000.

**Dean Wood** was a 6-1 reserve forward. Dean was reported to have the sharpest elbows on the team. Dean graduated from Austin Junior College and worked as an architectural draftsman for Northern Energy. Dean lived in Minnesota Lake, was married with 2 children and 1 grandchild. Dean passed away in January, 2005.

**David Brandt** was a reserve center. At 6-2 he was one of the taller team members. After high school, David spent 4 years in the US Air Force. David spent 40 years working in the telephone industry in Blooming Prairie and Owatonna. David lived in Blooming Prairie, was married with 3 children and 7 grandchildren. David died in May, 2013.

### **MEMORIES BY LEMAR NELSON**

My memories of 1966 basketball depend a lot on my past perceptions. Parts of that three-day period remain crystal clear, but some are in some foggy past for which events become hazy at best. Needless to say, those memories bring back some of the most exhilarating, yet frustrating times in my whole educational career.

The weekend was most exciting for me on a personal level, as the next day after the tourney, I received an Honor Roll Teacher of the year Award, and just 3 weeks after that, I was named principal at BPHS. But getting back to the tournament.

I remember quite clearly that the team and the entire community was stymied because of a late winter snowstorm that shut down the entire area. It prevented the team from getting to Minneapolis for the banquet honoring the competing teams on Wednesday night before the tournament. At least two of the team members were fighting a rather hard case of the flu, and one player had to snowmobile from Albert Lea in order to join the team on their trek to the tournament.

I remember Coach Jim Poole and I having to drive car in order to get to the tournament in time to fill out forms needed for verification of the team's credentials. What is hazy in my mind, however, is how we met up with the team and any details about the games themselves. Henning defeated us in the first game, thanks to two Peterson brothers, and Windom rode some hot shooting to take us down in our second game.

### **FROM JIM BETLACH**

I have to admit I was quite surprised to get the phone call asking me about the 1966 BP Basketball team. My contributions to that tournament run were very minimal. I remember trying out for the team my junior year and just being happy to make the squad. Needless to say my basketball skills were very limited and most of my time was spent on the bench. My playing time usually came when the team was so far ahead that I couldn't do too much damage at that point. I also remember being on the bench and watching our front line players play some awesome basketball. When it became tournament time we had to cut the team down and I was told by Coach Poole that my bench warming talents were no longer needed and I could go back and play trombone for Cliff Jones and the BP band. Looking back, that was a very exciting time to be a Blooming Prairie Blossom and I want to say congrats to those guys on the team that made it happen.

After high school I continued my education going to Austin Junior College-Mankato State College and Minnesota School of business. I moved to the Twin Cities and ended up working

in sales for Control Data Corporation. For the last 25 years I have been Vice President and part owner of Techware Distribution Inc. I met my wife Nancy of all things on a blind date and we currently live in Eden Prairie Minnesota. We have 2 children, Jenny who is a Vice President with Wells Fargo Banking and Greg who is a senior financial advisor with Allianz. We also have 2 grandchildren with a 3rd on the way. We have been very fortunate, everyone is healthy and doing well in their chosen fields. I will always have fond memories of growing up in Blooming Prairie and being with that fantastic group of friends. Again, my hats off to the guys on the team and that amazing run we/they had going to the Minnesota State basketball tournament. It is fun to go back and remember that wonderful time in Blooming Prairie sports history.

### **FROM LARRY WORKE**

I remember the roads being blocked by a big storm. Cars were covered up by snow. We were picked up by Snowmobiles and taken to the school. Snow was so high that we could walk over our Chicken House and Hog House because snow covered them up. The whole town was in a frenzy. Most of our team played together since third grade. Everyone was like family. Wish we would have had 3 point shots. We would have had tremendous scores. We had wonderful coaches and unbelievable backing from the fans. It was a life-long experience. I can't believe that 50 years went by so fast. I went to Waldorf College after graduation. Soon after, my Dad fell off a roof and was injured. I came home and sold cars for 30 years. I am still in business in the old Hursh Building in Owatonna buying and selling Collector Cars. I like Corvettes.

NOTE: Wife Judy took Larry's comments over the phone and she insists that his quote of Coach Jim Poole be included. According to Larry, at halftime of the Austin game, down 11 points, the team expected a tongue-lashing from Coach Poole. Instead, the Coach said, "We've got 'em right where we want 'em."

### **DEAN SEATON**

Part 1: How Did I Feel?

Hard to explain after so many years. I felt: happy, excited, honored, scared, and burdened. I'll try and explain all of these feelings. Happy, that the team had won the District Championship. Happy, that all the hard work from all of the team members paid off. Excited, about going to the State Tournament. Excited, from the standpoint of traveling to the big city just to play basketball. Honored, that the entire school and community was backing us, the team. Honored, to be part of a team that had so much talent. Scared, that we as a team were going to the big time, what if we failed? Scared, could our team from a small school compete on the state level? Burdened, we as young men were carrying not only our hopes and dreams but also the hopes and dreams of our school and community. Burdened, by feelings of being inadequate to the task at hand.

Part 2: Life After High School

I spent (2) years at Austin Junior College. I then transferred to the University of Wisconsin Stout in Menomonie, Wisconsin where I received my BS Degree in Industrial Arts Education. I taught for 5 years in Jackson Michigan at Vandercook Lake

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H.S. I left teaching and moved back to Minneapolis, and got a job as a purchasing agent for an industrial supply house. After about 4 years I went to work for a small company called Lab Volt. We built educational training equipment that taught about pneumatics, hydraulics, and electro - mechanical components and how energy is turned into work. We also had a writing staff that wrote all the educational manuals for the class work. We shipped this educational equipment all over the world. I then went to work for Control Data for ( 15 ) years as a purchasing agent/buyer. I worked out of the MPI Division. I was responsible for buying 15 million dollars worth of raw materials a year. These parts were used in the building of disk storage drives. I was 1 of 25 buyers for this division. I then started my own business in lawn care and snow removal. I started as a one man operation. Within 4 years I had two employees and we were doing lawn care and snow removal in 12 different town home complexes and 6 different commercial complexes every week. I ran this business for 20 years then retired. My passion now is photography. You can see my work on the following website; [deanseatonphotography.com](http://deanseatonphotography.com), have a look. I hope you enjoy my work.

#### **FROM STEVE FRITZ**

There are so many great memories from the 1965-66 season. Most center on the State Tournament experience, but also a lot has to do with the road to Williams Arena.

I think the highlight of the whole run was beating Austin for the District 2 championship. No BP team had ever beaten Austin, who was a power in the state through the 50's and 60's. We had lost to them in 1965 in the district final. We trailed at half but came out shooting and making our free throws. That win as a heavy underdog put us in the Region 1 tourney for the first time. We went on to beat very good Northfield and Red Wing teams to advance to the State Tournament. We had beaten 5 Big Nine schools that season Faribault and Owatonna being the other two.

The town was very supportive and excited. We had a large reception at school after the Red Wing game, a fire truck ride through downtown, media coverage, free haircuts and of course, a state tournament snowstorm.

The storm delayed our trip to Minneapolis by a day and they cancelled the tournament banquet. We stayed at the Leamington Hotel and felt like we were on top of the world.

We lost twice to Henning and Windom, but the experience was unbelievable. To play on the Williams Arena floor and use the Gopher locker rooms was thrilling.

I am fond of those days and will always be proud to be a Blossom and part of the 1966 state tournament team.

After serving 31 years as the head basketball coach, I am currently the Director of Athletics at St. Thomas and enjoying watching Tommie teams. My wife Bev and I have 3 married children and enjoying our 6 grand kids.

#### **FROM BOB TONOLLI**

The 1965-66 Blossom basketball team was coached by Jim Poole, assisted by LeMar Nelson. The team's regular season record was 16 wins and 2 losses. The Blossoms won the Go-

pher Conference for the 5th straight year with an 11-1 record. The team set the conference scoring record with an average over 74 points per game. In the regular season, the Blossoms beat Big Nine Conference foes Faribault (63-42) and Owatonna (71-57). Faribault was the 1965 state tournament runner up. The Blossoms also knocked off Waseca (59-48) in a non-conference game. In tournament play, the Blossoms beat Ellendale for the West Sub-District 2 title. In District play the Blossoms beat Hayfield and then won the school's first ever District championship by beating Austin 76-65. Austin finished the season with a record of 15 wins and 4 losses. The Blossoms then won the Region 1 title by beating 2 more Big Nine Conference teams, Northfield and Red Wing. For the season BPHS beat all 5 Big Nine Conference teams they faced. The Blossoms entered state tournament play on a 13 game winning streak, including 6 tournament games. In 1966, Minnesota had only 1 class, so Blooming was one of only 8 teams out of approximately 400 to make it to the state tournament. Southern Minnesota was hit by a blizzard the Tuesday before the tournament was to begin so the Blossoms did not arrive in Minneapolis until Thursday, the day of their first game, missing the Wednesday practice session and the tournament banquet. The Blossoms winning streak came to end in the first round against Henning. The team also lost their consolation round game to Windom to finish the year with 22 wins and 4 losses. The 1965-66 team achieved a couple of things that probably will never be matched: a record of 5 wins and no losses against the large schools of the Big Nine and being one of only 8 regional champions in the whole state.

After high school, I graduated from St Olaf College with a BA in mathematics. I taught high school math at Kellogg High School in Roseville for 4 years before moving to Bismarck ND where I joined Super Valu Stores. In 1978 I became a Certified Public Accountant and continued to work for Super Valu as Division Controller in Bismarck, Jacksonville FL and Fargo ND. In 1988 I returned to Bismarck as the Chief Financial Officer of the North Dakota Insurance Reserve Fund, a position I held until retiring in 2015. In 1973 I married my wife, Linda, a Bismarck native, and also a St Olaf math major. Linda retired in 2011 from teaching math at Bismarck State College. We have 3 grown children, who have all migrated back east to the Twin Cities.

#### **FROM BRUCE ROSSOW**

I remember lots of fun. A good team. Fun remembering working with Poole and LeMar. Great playing Big 9 Schools. Big deal. Albert Lea Gym packed when we played Austin. Crowd cheering and noise was deafening. Went to Austin J.C. one year and was drafted into the Army and served in Vietnam. Came back, married and worked at Hormel's for 39 years. Enjoying retirement especially fishing and hunting. Have two sons.

#### **FROM DAN HARMS**

Fifty short years ago we played in the state basketball tournament, wow what a thrill. What I mainly remember is the difficulty we had not only winning the games, but physically getting to the tournament. The blizzard closed many area highways. We didn't leave for the cities until Thursday the day

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of the game. Highway 218 North was closed so we took a route to Rochester, then up 52 to the cities. We missed the Wednesday night banquet, for which the MSHSL still owes us a meal. We arrived Thursday in time to check into the I think, the Curtis Hotel. Most of the kids stayed at the Nicollet Hotel across the street.

Since we were very young, through countless playground games, we had decided and believed we would one day play in the state tournament. Excellent teams that came before us proved it was within reach. During a time when high school sports were the biggest game around, we played before packed houses both at home and on the road. For me, winning the Region 1 Championship was naively expected but the fantastic reaction from the Blossom fans of the town and area was not. To this day, much of it exists in a haze.

From the day of the region finals, good fortune departed. The afternoon of the game I became ill but struggled to play anyway. Unfortunately, the rest of the team caught what I had a short time later. The weakened team had two or three poor practices. My grandmother died so I was at a funeral home in Albert Lea when a huge blizzard hit. I spent the night in a truck stop on the north side of town. The next day our family shoveled and pushed the car down unplowed roads from Albert Lea to Blooming Prairie. Although we were late, the following day the team left for the Twin Cities and arrived in time to play. Like I said, in my mind, that crazy week exists in a haze. After graduating from Winona State and then attending Mankato State, I taught for a half year at Blooming Prairie High School. During that brief teaching experience, I met my wife of 41 years, Barbara Hart, one of the home economics teachers. I then worked for 3M in St. Paul for 3 years followed by a career of 29 years in various sales capacities in Sioux Falls, SD and the Twin Cities with W.W. Grainger Inc. of Chicago, IL. We retired 11 years ago to a home we built about 25 miles southwest of Grand Rapids on Sugar Lake in Cass County. After being pressed into service, Barb and I have served on the Torrey Township board for the past 7 years. We are very proud of our two sons, their wives, and our, soon to be, four grandchildren.

#### **FROM DOUG CARLSON**

Beating Austin in the District Championship after being down at halftime was unbelievable. When we got back to Blooming we were put on the fire trucks and driven around town. We got the same treatment after beating Northfield and Red Wing. I have never forgotten the score of the Red Wing game (59 - 54) to send us to the state tournament. I remember looking at each other with big eyes saying " WE ARE GOING TO THE STATE TOURNEY !!!!! ". Also, we had a huge snow storm a couple of days before the State Tournament and had to leave for the cities a day late. We all had to have haircuts for the tournament, so our local barber, Jack Shaw, gave us free haircuts. I remember all the excitement that goes with a small town making it to the State Tournament, especially when there was only one class back then and we had to beat the big schools to get there. I also remember what a big deal it was to go to the cities and stay in a HOTEL ! It was an awesome experience and had a big impact on my decision to become a high school teacher and coach.

After graduating from Blooming in 1967, I attended Luther College in Decorah, Iowa and graduated in 1971. I taught high school math at Harmony, Mn (which is now Fillmore Central) and coached football for 22 years and basketball for 35 years. I married Colleen Fiebiger (class of 1969) in 1970. We have 3 daughters and 6 grandchildren.

#### **FROM CRAIG ILK**

My recollection of the Blossom's trip to the 1966 MINNESTOTA STATE BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT comes from a different perspective than most because I was a benchwarmer. As such, my principle role in the games that lead to the state tournament was to cheer as loudly as I could for my far more talented teammates. I was disappointed when we learned that only 12 players to travel to Minneapolis. I was not ranked among the top 12. But, as fortune would have it, one of the members of the 12 player squad was injured so I was added at the last minute. After a day delay departing for Minneapolis due to the huge blizzard, we did finally get to play in a tournament game. Sadly, we were hopelessly behind with 1 or 2 minutes left to play so I did get to participate in the game. I remember taking one wild shot that probably didn't hit the rim. After the tournament all the players received a small trophy to commemorate participation. I did not get one because I was not among the original 12. However, several weeks after the tournament I received a message that I was to report to Coach Poole's classroom. This caused me to become quite anxious because, as we all remember, Coach Poole was a tough taskmaster. When I got to his room he pulled me aside and handed me one of the participation trophies. That thoughtful gesture is the thing I most clearly remember from that time. After that I graduated with my class in 1967 and completed my Bachelor of Science degree in 1971 at the University of Minnesota. From there I went to Yale Medical School for 2 ½ years to become a Physician Assistant. Then I moved to Pittsburgh Pa where I still live and continue to work as a Physician Assistant in Emergency Medicine at the University of Pittsburgh Medical Center 43 years later. I'm very happily married and proud of 3 grown children and 5 grandchildren.

#### **FROM JIM TURNER**

Fifty short years ago we played in the state basketball tournament, wow what a thrill, What I mainly remember is the difficulty we had not only winning the games, but physically getting to the tournament. The blizzard closed many area highways. We didn't leave for the cities until Thursday the day of the game. Highway 218 North was closed, so we took a route to Rochester, then up 52 to the cities. We missed the Wednesday night banquet, for which the MSHSL still owes us a meal. We arrived Thursday in time to check into the I think, the Curtis Hotel. Most of the kids stayed at the Nicollet Hotel across the street. We made it to Williams arena in time to play Thursday night's game with Henning. Being late, hurried and sick we didn't play very well. Henning was a fine team and had tourney experience. The games are a blur, but the experience stayed with me. It is amazing how fast 50 years went by.

I graduated from Mankato State College and taught and coached in the Kasson-Mantorville school district for 34 years. I am currently retired and live in Mantorville, with wife

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Teresa-Pelinka, We have 3 girls Angie, Beth and Hallie, and now 4 Grandchildren. I still spend some time as a computer technician, and a so-so golfer.

#### **FROM JOHN CARROLL**

Our march to the state tournament was not a “moment in time” that happened quickly and was then over. This was a slow process taking many weeks. BPHS did its usual winning in sub districts and districts. Our teams were used to winning up to a point. Eventually, the team was winning games at levels it had never reached before. I do not remember any games late in district play or regionals when BPHS coasted to wins.

Games were emotional roller coasters for everyone, Coaches, players and fans. One of the last 8 unbeaten teams from the hundreds in the state that tried to get there. Finally the day arrives. But this is Minnesota. It snowed a lot in Minnesota in those days. I can't speak to how a caravan of cars and road clearing equipment was organized to get us to Minneapolis that day. Snow is not a reason to miss your first ever state tournament game.

We arrived too late to have a practice, so the first time on the court was the Thursday game. BPHS played its first ever State tournament game. This time however the winning was done. Disappointing on one level. On another, BPHS made it to “the Barn”. This team played in the high school state basketball tournament at Williams Arena.

I do not remember ever thinking, the team is so good it can go to state. Every kid dreams of that for his school, but most of it stays as a dream forever. I think everyone knew this was a combination of luck, skill, determination and teamwork that made this particular team, at this particular time, something more than the sum of the parts. And I think most of us were a bit in shock that we made it so far. Every time the team needed someone to rise to the occasion to get another win it happened. Today all of us still have the memories of that time tucked away inside. Ready to come out again if someone happens to bring it up. Like this.

As for my personal experiences since those days long ago. I went on to college in Minneapolis at the U of M. Studied Chemistry, then, as often happens, ended up doing something totally different. A job in Information Technology. On the way to that IT career, I had what for me another memorable experience. I worked at Pillsbury Foods for awhile with the guys who invented microwave popcorn and microwave pancakes. I can honestly say that I have actually stood knee deep in popcorn and pancakes. Later I joined a Minnesota Plastics company. I am still working there today. I married, have two kids and now some grandchildren. My wife and I have been lucky enough to travel a bit and see some of the world. I will be retiring soon. Now we are looking forward to that next adventure. The first one was that journey to the state tournament so many years ago. Which certainly was a true adventure for a group of small town kids like us.

#### **FROM PAUL JOHNSON**

Coach Poole was a very good coach and very disciplined. If practice didn't go well, you did extra laps. I remember the team didn't want to lose a game on the road, or it would be a very long, silent bus ride home. The town rallied to our regional championship victory with Red Wing in Rochester. Fire

trucks met us in Blooming Prairie to parade us through town after the game. It was a very cold night, and as my Mother commented, sure hope no one gets sick. Unfortunately, some of the starter players did get ill. A March blizzard started the day we were to leave for the state tournament, dumping 17 inches of wet snow which caused electrical outages for many days. For that reason country boys, Keith Ingvalson and I stayed at Bob Tonolli's the night before to make sure that we made the bus trip. All team members were issued two pairs of white wool socks. (I still have both pairs to this day, along with my uniform.) The Legion Auxiliary ladies were to serve us a send-off pancake breakfast but that was cancelled. We played two games, Henning and Windom at Williams Arena. The loss was a big let-down of course. I feel proud knowing that our small town team beat five big-nine schools. History will never repeat itself because schools are now broken into several classes. Yes, we were the awesome Blossoms.

After graduation, I enlisted in the U.S. Army Reserves. The same fall of 1966, I also enrolled at Austin Community College. I attended college for 2 years. In 1970 I married my wife, Dianne. We have 3 daughters and 8 grandchildren. We purchased the former Lutheran parsonage in 1974 and raised our awesome blossom daughters in Blooming Prairie. Thirty years later (2004) we made the move to Owatonna. During the 42 years I was in the reserves, 15 years were active duty, the first being called up during Desert Storm. With my MOS in food service, I assisted deploying troops during the Iraq/Afghanistan war for 5 years at Fort McCoy, Wisconsin. I retired from Hormel Foods in Austin after 35 years. Currently, I work part time for Enterprise Car rental in Owatonna. I made time for fishing, camping in our RV at the campground on Lake Francis, and spent the last 3 winters at South Padre Island, TX.

#### **FROM JOHN SANDERS**

In 1966 only eight schools, no matter the size, qualified for the State BB Tournament, and it was, far and away, the state's biggest high school sports event. If you played basketball, the possibility of making it Williams Arena in March was the pinnacle of your dreams. In my case I have the regret of not having been able to play in the Blossom's run to the tournament after an eye injury in the Faribault game early in the season, but thankfully I was able to be a part of things and contribute a bit from the bench, among other things keeping shot charts on game night. It was still a great experience.

The friendship, support for one another, hard work, camaraderie and success that Blossom team achieved was worth every moment, and a valuable lesson along the way. Some bumps in the road, of course, as life throws at everyone, but my most profound memories are only fond ones. And that sentiment extends to my experience growing up in the small town life of Blooming Prairie, in a great school system, with great friends and supportive people all around.

Following high school, I graduated from the University Of Minnesota College Of Liberal Arts, and then continued on the University Law School, graduating in 1973. I practiced law for 28 years before joining Wells Fargo in 2001, where I worked in several different roles, retiring in 2013. In 1978, I

married my wife, Gail Owen, who is from Coon Rapids, where we've lived now for the past 30 years. We have two daughters, Jane and Libbie, both of whom were active in high school sports and now live in the metro area. Each is expecting the birth of her first child (our first grandchildren) this year.



## FOR THE KIDS

Sue Zwiener

The 13th annual Blooming Prairie Education Foundation was held on April 2. Once again it proves that Blooming Prairie is truly a great place to live and raise your family! Several hundred people turned out to help raise funds to provide the students of this school district with an extraordinary education. Folks of all ages from newborn babies to 90 year old retirees, current citizens and many alumni came out that night. We were able to top the previous year's auction totals with just a little over \$80,000. In my opinion, that is nothing short of amazing from this little town to raise that amount of money in one night. We want to thank not only the folks that came out that night, but a huge thank you goes to the donors. Without them, we have nothing to sell and there would be no auction. Also, all of the workers are volunteers that gave their time and talents. Truly AWESOME-NESS, go Blossoms Forever!

## 2016 Blossom Class Reunions

**Class of '43** will meet August 24th at the Pizza Ranch in Owatonna. Gladys Wanous Pechacek is the contact. email [gpechacek@gmail.com](mailto:gpechacek@gmail.com)

**Class of '44** meets every year at the Pizza Cellar on the first Friday in October. Esther Hansen is the class contact.

**Class of '45** meets at the Pizza Cellar at 11:30 a.m. on each first Friday after the 4th of July. Contact Gerry Oswald for more information.

**Class of '47** meets annually at the Blooming Prairie Pizza Cellar on the second Saturday of August.

**Class of '48** plans to meet every year at the Pizza Cellar on the last Sunday in July. Dick Klemmenson is the contact. 507-583-7135

**Class of '50** will meet Saturday, July 9 at Blooming Prairie's Pizza Cellar. 11:00 to 11:30 a.m. arrival. RSVP to Barbara Kading Wesely at 507-451-6355. UPDATED SEPT. 2015

**Classes of '52 and '53** will meet for a meal at BP's Pizza Cellar on July 3rd, 12:00 p.m. Note the time change. Classmates are asked to remind each other about this yearly event. Same place, same time, every year.

**Class of '54** will be together at the Pizza Cellar on the first Saturday of August each year. Contact Darlene Schmidt at 507-451-1909 for more information.

**Class of '55** will meet at the Pizza Cellar on the first Saturday of August. Sally Wincentzen is the contact. 651-459-9338 or email [winfal7@aol.com](mailto:winfal7@aol.com)

**Class of '56**, recovering from their exciting 2013 reunion, will be refreshed enough to meet again at 2:00 p.m. on the first Saturday in August of 2016 at the BP Servicemen's Club. Jim Lysne is the contact. 507-451-8695

**Class of '57** will meet annually on the 2nd Saturday in August at the Pizza Cellar. Contact Margaret and Bill Noble for more information. 507-583-2992

**Class of '58** will have a Reunion on Saturday, September 17 at the Pizza Cellar. Contact is Judy Wencil, 507-583-7570

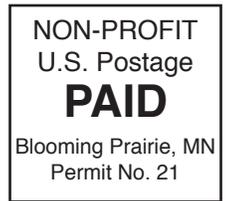
**Class of '59** plans to meet together on the second Saturday in September each year at the Pizza Cellar in Blooming Prairie. For details, contact Joyce Fawver at 507-433-4020 or Eileen Sheedy at 507-437-2579

**Class of '60** will meet on Saturday, October 8, 12:00 noon at the Pizza Cellar. Contact is Elaine Hillson Trotman at 507-583-2704.

**Class of '61** has decided to meet every year on the first Saturday in October, 5:00 p.m., at the BP Pizza Cellar. Carol Knutson Kruckeberg can answer your questions. 507-528-2122

**Class of '62** will meet at 5:00 p.m. every year on the first Saturday after Labor Day in the "Foxhole" at the Blooming Prairie Serviceman's Club. Jean Ramsey Haubenschild is the contact. 507-583-2526

Blooming Prairie Education Foundation  
PO Box 521  
Blooming Prairie, MN 55917



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**Class of '63** class member and contact Suzy Coughlin Helgeson 507-438-1929 said the group will meet annually on the second Saturday in September at the Blooming Prairie Pizza Cellar.

**Class of '65** Plans to be together on Saturday, September 24, 3:00 p.m. at the Pizza Cellar. Contact is Pam Folkens (Christenson) at pfolkens@frontier.com or 507-391-4336.

**Class of '66-** Save the Date—September 24,2016- 50th Reunion to be held at the Austin Holiday Inn. Contact John Sanders at johncsanders@aol.com or 612-203-8405.

We would like to advertise your class reunions. Contact Doug Myers at 507-433-6262 or e-mail dmyers3@charter.net

For information about the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation go to blossoms.k12.mn.us or to Facebook.

www.bloomingprairie.com contains current information about the City of Blooming Prairie.

## 4th of July

Join us in the "Blossoms Forever" Tent in the Park on the 4th. Each year, stories are told that need to be verified. It's a good idea to be present just to protect yourself.

