



Blossoms Forever

A Newsletter for Blooming Prairie School District Alumni & Friends • November, 2013



Front(L-R) Jenna Krell, Shelbi Swenson, Sam Ivers, Tessa Ivers, Sydney Heiber, Lizz Willert, Megan O'Connor, Abby Wayne, Mariah Holland, Anika Nowlan, Bria Baldwin, Assistant Coach Duane DeBoer, Assistant Coach Chad Gimbel, Manager Gina Gimbel, Elly Strunk, Kalyn Naatz, Ashley Krohnberg, Delaney Nelson, Alyssa Krohnberg, Madison Worke, Head Coach Alison Mach

BLOSSOM STATE CHAMPIONS!

by LeMar Nelson

The wait was worth it. A year ago the BPHS girls walked off the diamond at Caswell Park, disgruntled because they thought they should have played just a little better. A year later the team lined up to receive first place medals, after defeating New Life Academy of Woodbury and earn the Class A Minnesota softball championship.

The final game on Friday, June 7, at the Mankato site vindicated a long wait for the Blossoms, who improved a notch in every one of the four straight tournaments they were able to string together. This one culminated the four-year streak by a 3-1 score. It was the first championship for any Blossom team since 1984, when a group of six girls, led by the incomparable Jeanne Kruckeberg, captured the state girls' track trophy. "Isn't this exciting, exclaimed catcher Sam Ivers, and shortstop Jenna Krell chimed in with "It doesn't get any better than this." Even coach Ali Mach displayed a rare smile as she congratulated each person individually. "Isn't this fun and awesome," were her comments to anybody listening.

After New Life got a one-out hit from pitcher Valerie Hohol in the fourth inning, pinch runner Theresa Baranick stole second and scored on a close play at the plate when Nicole Johnson singled into center field.

Things looked a little bleak for BP at that point. That changed in the bottom of the fifth, however. The Blossoms exploded for 3 runs on 4 hits and an Eagle error to take a 3-1 lead. In the inning that began with a one-out single and a stolen base from Tessa Ivers, RBI singles, one each from the three senior starters on the Blossom team, furnished the big hits in the inning. New Life got a one-out walk in the sixth and a two-out single in the seventh, but the locals wouldn't be denied this year and they threw their hands up in triumph, when Madison Worke took a weak ground ball and stepped on first for the final out. Jubilation became etched on every Blossom player as realization that they were state champions quickly sank in. Tessa Ivers, Sam Ivers, and Swenson each had 2 of the 9 hits for the Blossoms. BP had 3 runs, 9 hits, 0 errors; New Life Academy had 1 run, 4 hits, 1 error. Swenson won the game, with 1 walk, a hit batter, and 8 strikeouts. Valerie Hohol took the loss, with 1 walk and 9 strikeouts. The Blossoms finished the season with their finest record in history, 23 wins, and only 3 losses.

SWENSON TOSSES SHUTOUT

"It was just one of those games." One of those games where BP senior pitcher Shelbi Swenson and her Awesome Blossom teammates simply wouldn't allow the season to end. The Blossoms earned their second straight trip to the finals of the state softball tournament with a tensely played 1-0 shutout over previously undefeated Kerkhoven-Murdock-Sunburg in the semi-final contest Thursday, June 6. Earlier in the day BP had edged New Ulm Cathedral by an identical 3-2 score from last year's. Quarterfinal game.

"I just tried to keep focused today," remarked Swenson, "and I felt better today than I have felt for several games." Swenson not only pitched the Blossoms to the victory, by she also drove in the only run of the game with a ringing double to left center with two outs in the first inning. That followed a sharp single and an error that allowed Sydney Heiber to get all the way to third base. Heiber has been the most consistent hitter for BP through the section and state tournaments.

Catcher Sam Ivers echoed Swenson's evaluation of her pitching, when she commented. "I think that was

BP QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

At a certain age, determine for yourself what age that is, we spend much of our time awake ruminating. That is, trying to remember, "accurately", what our life experiences have been. If you doubt what we are saying, attend your next class reunion. Classmates know the true stories but the passage of time for sure blurs distinctions. However, in our newsletter we strive for accuracy and find satisfaction in reporting previously debated truths. Below are some still contested questions and some reported true facts.

Officially, when did BP Schools begin? History books available to us indicate the date may be 1861, 1868 or later. Some records name members of what may be the first class to graduate in 1903. The official date has some importance as we think about celebrating another all-school reunion. When should we celebrate 125 years? Or has that date come and gone?

Is Genevieve Hanson Peterson, Class of '35, our longest living Blossom? Was Lou Kvasnicka Noble, Class of '28, one of our first cheerleaders? Our name, Blossoms, and School Song? We know we are Blossoms but we're not absolutely sure how our name came into existence. We know our school song is sung to a version of the Washington and Lee Swing but who wrote the words that we sing?

Below are known and unquestioned Blossom facts:

Many Blooming Prairie women and men have been given community awards by the Blooming Prairie Jaycees.

Jaycee award winners listed in the 1976 Mrs. Jaycees booklet "Patchwork" include **Outstanding Young Minnesotan's** Dr. Tim Nealy, Bernie Brand, Marvin Ingvalson, Darrell Bauder, Jim Mork, Bill Noble and Dorothy Bauder.

Outstanding Young Farmer's were Orlo Toquam, Owen Ferguson, Jack Noble, Jerry Hemingway, Roger Wrase, Dale Underwood and Glenn Medgaarden. **Outstanding Young Educator's** noted were Naomi Erickson, Harold Peterson, Mike Gail, Cheryl Kollander and Frank Vorlicek.

Distinguished Service Awards were presented to William Thiede, Harriet Ressler, Don Morrison, Harold (Bud) Hansen, Claude Grandprey and George Curtin.

FHA Officers in 1988 were Becky Morales, Rachel Underwood, Amy Johnson, Joni Peterson, Teresa Ebling, and Tonya Christianson.

In 1992, three Blossoms, Dawn Knutson, Teresa Brandt Laura Coughlin, were named to the All-Conference basketball team.

Members of the 1994-95 Student Council were Sara Prihoda, Jamie Lea, Rachel Knutson, Lynnae Flor, Allyson Kubista, Brad Nelson, Lisa Zwiener, Karin Peterson, Andrea Bishop, Amy Christianson, Jackie Knutson, Adam Swenson, Brenda Donnely, Ben Gabriel, Chontel Houzenga, and Tina Pirkel. **In 2002**, the senior class chose a Dr. Suess quote as their class motto. "If you never did, you should. These things are fun, and fun is good."

the best game I have caught for her. She used a variety of pitches and was able to wiggle out of a couple of tough spots to get the win.”

Of course, pitching alone can't win ball games, and Swenson had as couple of defensive gems behind her to keep the shutout intact. In the fourth inning, Heiber made a sprawling catch of a foul ball for the first out of the inning, and in the 6th inning Jenna Krell turned a sharp ground ball into a force at second, which was followed by a two-out single, but Swenson's 11th strike-out ended the threat. Earlier in the fifth Mikayla Hagen led off the inning with a double, but a sacrifice was followed by two strikeouts and left the runner at third. “Swenson pitched a great game,” summarized Coach Ali Mach, “and she pitched around potential problems like the all-state player she is. She and Fighting Saints' pitcher Erin Haglund (another all-state performer) have played together in summer ball, and Swenson managed to get the better of her in this game.” BP had 1 run, 4 hits, 0 errors; KMS had 0 runs, 5 hits, 1 error. Swenson finished with 12 strikeouts, and she walked none.

BP SURVIVES HOMERS

In the quarterfinal game of the state tourney, Swenson proved too tough for Cathedral, despite giving up two solo home runs in consecutive at bats. BP defeated Cathedral 3-2, the identical score by which the Blossoms had edged the Greyhounds in last year's state appearance. BP counted a run in the third and another two in the fifth for the three runs they needed. Both of the Cathedral home runs sailed way over the left field fence, but those two hits, plus a 4th inning double, were the only hits Swenson allowed. “I felt pretty good all day”, remarked Swenson, “and our defense made good plays. I know I can count on them behind me, as we are pretty good fielders.” A walk, a sacrifice and two straight singles by Krell and Heiber counted the first run; Heiber and Swenson had back-to-back base hits in the 5th inning to drive in a pair of runs. The win advanced the team to the state semi-final game. Cathedral had 2 runs (home runs by Lisa Helget and Leah Krzmarzick), 3 hits 2 errors; BP had 3 runs, 5 hits, 0 errors. Swenson walked two and struck out 14 Greyhounds in picking up her 21st victory of the year.



4TH OF JULY PARADE UNIT BLOSSOM HONOREES

Blossom Honorees were warmly greeted by the large crowds that attend Blooming Prairie's 4th of July Parade. Enthusiastic in responding to friends and neighbors were the Turners, Norm, Larry, Denny, Dean, Jimmy, Distinctive Service honoree, Kathy Thorson Gruhn, and Honored Educators Renee Felchle Burns and Frank Vorlicek. If you look closely, you will also see 2012 award winner Franchon (Connie) Pirkl. Franchon told us that she only wanted a ride to the park but the Turner boys wouldn't let her get off. We are always glad to see Sister Franchon.



Class of '45 Those attending the annual reunion of the Class of '45 and seated in the front row are Calvin Paulson, Joyce Ditlevson Hoflinger, Elaine Kiley Peterson, Gerry Johnson Oswald. In the back row are Elaine Magnuson Larson, Donald Bakke, Jeanette Ditlevson Grabner, Lola Hunter Wood and Carol Hanson Wright.



Class of '45

Janet Kjos Schmidt, Class of '56 said, “We have had a reunion for many years with a great attendance to every reunion.” Good attendance for the '56 Class is significant as their group was split to different attendance areas for their senior year. Janice wrote, “ You probably remember the class of 1956 didn't consolidate and we had to go different directions, It was traumatic for many but as Blossoms do – We survived and made the most of splitting up our Senior year—Some went to Austin Pacelli, Dodge Center, Hayfield, etc. The smiles in the picture tell the story. The good memories prevail.



Class of '56

The Class of '58 can rightly claim distinction as their class was the first to graduate from the then brand new high school building. To commemorate the honor, the

55th class reunion was held at the currently renovated high school building on September 21st. Judy Dixon Wencil enjoyed the event and wrote, “As you know we were the first class to graduate from the new school in 1958. We had tours of the school by Sharon Lea and it is very awesome now. Glad we had our reunion there.” Classmates attending were as pictured.

Seated Left to Right—Jane Morton Hoshal, Luella Anderson Jensen, Betty Tollefson Ronningen, Teacher Phyllis Dandeleit, Doris Engler Rasmussen, Sharon Ramsey Lea, Judy Dixon Wencil
Standing – Rosemary Dannen Shaden, Catherine Thimmesch Peschon, Ken Trihus, Richard Anderson, Chris Thissen, Carol Erickson Benson, Margo Anderson Brudwick, Elaine Angell Schmeling, Carolyn Ruzek Harms.



Class of '58

Class of '63 gathered at the Casino in Red Wing for their 50 year Reunion. Based on the smiles in their group picture, the event was a success. Barb Oakland wrote to tell us that class members commemorated the reunion by sending memorial money to the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation in behalf of class members who have since passed away. Those remembered and honored are Gary Moeykens, Joan Marsh, Ronnie Koster, Frank Trihus, Teri Alwes Schnebly, and Eunice Yanke.



Class of '63



NELS AHLBERG aka "BIG SWEDE" by Mary Kittleson

Laying alone in the shadow of a large pine tree in the Blooming Prairie City Cemetery, a long forgotten grave marker was slowly being consumed by the earth around it. Today, thanks to the compassion and generosity of Blooming Prairie alumni Jack Jelinek, the red granite marker which reads NELS AHLBERG "SWEDE" 1885-1952 sits on a new platform of concrete insuring its place in the history of Blooming Prairie for many years to come.

During a Memorial Day visit to the cemetery Jack noticed the abandoned looking marker and then remembered the large man known as "Swede" from his childhood of growing up in Blooming Prairie. Jack states he remembers "Swede" as the "ice man" and that he also did some work for the city of Blooming Prairie. If you have memories of "Swede" please consider sharing them in the next issue. Memories and actions like Jack's are truly what makes him a **BLOSSOM FOREVER**.

OUR TOWN, OUR SCHOOL, OUR LIVES

The newsletter, "Blossoms Forever" has a purpose or perhaps better said, purposes. Meant first and foremost as a positive collective memory for those that attended and/or graduated from Blooming Prairie Public Schools. We repeat, **It's great to be a Blossom**. However, there is a broader intent in twice a year writing and sending the newsletter. That is, a recognition, acknowledgement and celebration of each and every life connected with our town and our school.

Harriet Beecher Stowe who gave us the gift of "Uncle Tom's Cabin" wrote in her 1869 book "Oldtown Folks" "It has always been a favorite idea of mine that there is much of the human in every man, that the life of one individual, however obscure, if really and vividly perceived in all aspirations, struggles, failures and successes would command the interests of others. Mary Kittleson's search for details in the life story of a man that we all knew as "Big Swede" affirms Stowe's favorite idea. Her words resonate with us as we, perhaps more in retrospect, recognize, acknowledge and celebrate the lives of our friends, our classmates, our teachers and all the good people, past and present, of Blooming Prairie.

It is always good to say Thank You! So, to our parents, to our brothers and sisters, to our teachers, counselors, administrators and coaches, know that we appreciate your lives and your dedication to your profession. We won't ever forget the support of Blooming Prairie Pastors, Sunday School teachers, and Scout Leaders and your dedication to us. Many of us needed and got help from business owners, women and men, as they provided part-time jobs to those of us that needed them. Our village wasn't and is still not Lake Wobegon but Blooming Prairie people did and still do help in raising their children.

Intertwined in the newsletters purposes is that of acknowledging the lives of certain Blossoms. That is, those who have made or are still making significant contributions to the well-being of others, educators whose work made a great impact on many of us, and the athletic accomplishments of our classmates and friends. Our hope is that in celebrating individual successes, each of us living lives that Stowe described as obscure, will find our own life enhanced as we honor others. How many times have you smiled when hearing about a classmate or friend and said to yourself, "I knew him/her back then"?

Our town and our school are well. "Much of the human" is still there. We send a message of support to current Blooming Prairie children and students in telling them in spite of struggles, and failures many successes have been ours. The stories of each of our lives would indeed command the interests of others.

2014 BLOSSOM CLASS REUNIONS

Class of '39 meets every year at noon on the first Friday in August at Jerry's Other Place in Austin. Contact Merten Hansen for further information.

Class of '43 will meet August 25th at the Pizza Ranch in Owatonna. Gladys Wanous Pechacek is the contact. Email pechacek@centurylink.net

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 '50 will meet the first Saturday in July at "Torey's", 685 Bridge St. in Owatonna at 11:15 a.m. RSVP to Barbara Kading Wesely at 507-451-6355. **A special invitation is extended to classmates living out-of-state.**

Classes of '52 and '53 will meet for a buffet meal at BP's Pizza Cellar on July 3rd, 5:00 p.m. Classmates are asked to remind each other about this yearly event. Same place, same time, every year.

Class of '54 will celebrate their 60th year since graduation on the first Saturday of August, August 2, 2014, at the Pizza Cellar in Blooming Prairie. Contact Darlene Trom Schmidt for more information. 507-451-1909

Class of '55 plans to meet at the Pizza Cellar on the first Saturday in August at 4:00 p.m. each year. Marilyn Robinson Tollefson will provide more information. 507-753-7553

Class of '56, recovering from their exciting 2013 reunion, will be refreshed enough to meet again in Blooming Prairie on the first Saturday in August of 2016. Janice Kjos Schmidt is the contact at 507-451-4347.

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 '59 plans to meet together on Saturday, September 13 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 11, 4:00 p.m. 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 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

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 '64 October 11, 2014 at the Owatonna Holiday Inn. Contact is Vernie Benson at vbenson33@yahoo.com or check out Facebook.

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.

CLASS REUNIONS

Class of '43, Class of '45, Class of '56, Class of '58, Class of '63

Listed in this issue of "Blossoms Forever" are 2014 dates for many Blossom Class Reunions. We know there are more as our list spans only from 1939 to 1964. The list perhaps illustrates the passion for "remembering". We are highlighting five reunions that were held this past summer simply because someone in each group, '43, '45, '56, '58 and '63 took time to write and send a picture. **Class of '56 and Class of '63 members have to self-identify. Pictures were submitted without names.**

Gladys Wanous Pechacek, Class of '43, wrote about school days back "when". Gladys said, "I was not raised in Blooming Prairie. We lived on a farm about 10 miles west near Summit.

I rode the Earl Oswald school bus to school every day for four years. It was a happy bus, we all enjoyed Earl's antics and teasing. One day on the way home, just a short ways out of town, I was sitting over the hind wheel of the bus, and the wheel came off. It was rolling ahead of the bus in the road. I was bumping along above the empty wheel well. The wheel had come off because some of the boys thought it would be funny to loosen the bolts. I don't know if he ever found out who did it. Nobody got hurt and we had another bus come and take us home.

Another time Roland Street was driving our bus. There were many pot holes (frost boils) in the road. Our bus hit the boils and it went into the ditch just missing a large culvert into a ditch filled with water, tipped over on the side the bus and water was coming into the bus. We scrambled to the top edge of the seats which were out of the water. After finding out that no one was hurt, we crawled out the bus through the windows and onto the roadway. Roland called someone to take us the rest of the way home, there were about six of us at the end of the route. We only had gotten wet feet and some bumps and bruises.

One time in Mr. Reynolds Business class, Leonard Vandebrook was sitting at Mr. Reynolds desk because we were short of desks. He was on a folding chair. Gladys Wanous, (our writer) was sitting at the desk next to him. He always teased and poked at her jokingly. This time his chair collapsed and he fell sprawling backward on to the floor. What a laugh we all had on him.

Another time in Mr. Reynolds class we kids decided to have a peanut shower on the Teacher. We all had peanuts in the shell at our desks and pockets and while he had his back to us at the blackboard we all let loose with the peanuts flying at him. He was flabbergasted, didn't know what to do. One of the kids explained to him that it was an honor to have a peanut shower and could all eat the peanuts at the end of the class period. Then all was well.

One day in another business class we were all seated alphabetically, that is why I ended up seated with Allan Wold, Leonard Vandebrook and Axicor Trihus. I came after they were seated at the big tables in the library and could not pull my chair away from the table so I could sit down. The boys had their long legs under the table holding my chair down so I couldn't pull it out. Miss Travis said "Gladys please sit down". I said "I can't pull my chair out because the boys are holding it down." Sweet Miss Trapp said "Boys" and smiling they let it go."



Submitted photo

Class of '43 meets

Members of Blooming Prairie High School's Class of 1943 met in Owatonna on Aug. 19 to celebrate their 70th class reunion. From left in front are: Gladys Pechacek, Lavonne Smith, Carol Johnson and Nina-Kay Rogers. From left in back are: Ron Bartels, Allan Wold, Orene Dennis, Lutzvig Wenzel, Donaki Yentsch and Arlene O'Donnell. Dennis said 21 of the class' 63 members survive, but not all could make it to this year's reunion.

CONTINUING TO HONOR AND CELEBRATE

Saturday, January 25, 2014. Mark it down! Everyone is invited and encouraged to attend the Annual Banquet of the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation at the Blooming Prairie Servicemen's Club. In addition to enjoying good food and hearing of the Foundation support of Blooming Prairie Public School students, we join together to honor fellow Blossoms and Blossom Educators. 2014 Distinctive Service Award honorees will be **Eunice Basness Coughlin, Class of '38** and **Dr. Stanley Diesch, Class of '43**. Honored educator will be long-time **Superintendent Maurice McFarlin**. Athletic Hall of Fame inductees to be honored are **David Tonolli, Class of '63** and **Janet Pesch, Class of '86**. The Coughlin and McFarlin awards will be made posthumously. Each of the honorees was nominated, some more than once, by a fellow Blossom or a friend. A committee of current Blooming Prairie area residents meets together to discuss each nomination. A group consensus vote then determines each year's selections.

The contributions and successes of the 2014 Honorees will be presented and celebrated at the **January 25th** banquet. Tickets will be made available closer to the date.

2014 honorees will join previous honorees as listed below:

Distinctive Service

Millie and Bud Hansen '36

LeMar Nelson

Marian Amundson Lehman '51

Bill Underwood '49

Roger Ingvalson '46

Janis Ingvalson Lueth '74

Chuck Halstenson '71

Kelly Magnuson '82

Dr. James Oleson '59

Sister Francon (Connie Pirkel) '53

Dr. Jerry Hanson '57

Kathy Thorson Gruhn '70

Athletic Hall of Fame

Margaret Zwiener Hogan '34

Dean Brudwick '57

Allen Wold '43

Jeanne Kruckeberg Ide '86

Don Morrison '47

Roger 'Moose' Johnson '53

Dick Anderson '50

Tom Walsh '73

Coach Jim Poole

John Peterson '47

Barb McDonald McWhirter '79

Lyle 'Ike' Turner '45

Norm Turner '49

Ronald "Laddie" Turner '52

Larry 'Shorty' Turner '56

Denny Turner '60

Dean Turner '60

Jim Turner '67

Outstanding Educator

Robert 'Bob' Ackerwold

Harold 'H' Peterson

Renee Felchle Burns

Frank Vorlicek

ANNUAL SUPPORT NOW DUE

THANK YOU, YOUR ENCOURAGING WORDS AND DOLLAR SUPPORT ARE

APPRECIATED. Each year we question whether "Blossoms Forever" should be continued. Consensus, determined by written and spoken encouragement and dollars received, is that we Blossoms enjoy, in essence, "reliving the past". Consequently, on we go!

A **15.00** payment is now due which covers the cost of printing and mailing for a one year time period. Volunteers gather information, pictures, and write the newsletter. **A self-addressed payment envelope is enclosed. Checks should be made out to the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation.**