

# Blossoms Forever

A Newsletter for Blooming Prairie School District Alumni & Friends • November, 2015

## 2015 BLOSSOM HOMECOMING

Blooming Prairie High School students have celebrated Homecoming for many years, most often with the absence of Alumni. This year was different as the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation's Alumni Committee organized activities to welcome back graduates and educators on the same date as the BPHS Homecoming. Five alumni and a valued teacher participated in the Homecoming Parade, a half-time introduction at the Blossom Football game, a meet-and-greet at the Serviceman's Club and a celebratory Banquet Saturday evening. The October 2nd and 3rd gathering is a switch from previous years when the annual banquet was held in January. Successful, in the sense that 150 people were present at Saturday night's Banquet, it is apparent that an ice and snow free date is a good thing.

The 2015 Honorees include **Clair Coughlin '53**, honored for Distinctive Service as a Founding member of the faculty at North Hennepin Community College and long-time member of the School Board of Osseo Public Schools, **Dr. Wayne Ruhter '64**, posthumously selected for **Distinctive Service** as he served as a Nuclear Scientist for our country and for the world. **Kenny Behnken** became the 6th person to be chosen for the Honored Educator award. Teacher and Coach, Kenny served BPHS students for 31 years. The list of Hall of Fame Athletes increased by three as **Bill Underwood '49**, a 5 year letterman and also the only Blossom so far to also have earned the Distinctive Service Award, **Ken Esplan, '66**, described in the '66 yearbook as "Every inch an athlete" competed at a high level in football and track and especially in wrestling as he was the first Blossom to compete at the state level in that sport, and **Lisa Zweiner Bruns** excelled in Basketball, Softball and Golf throughout her High School years and continues to excel as she now serves as a Kindergarten teacher at Blooming Prairie Elementary School.

The achievements of Blossom honorees, current and past, are very positive and lengthy. Our friends and colleagues contribute around the world. If you would like a detailed write-up of all of the accomplishments of this year's group, email me at [dmyers@charter.net](mailto:dmyers@charter.net) and I'll email the written material back to you.



Pictured with Award Plaques at the Foundation Banquet are left to right Lisa Zwiener Bruns, Kenny Behnken, Ken Esplan, Karen Beede and Sheila Fuller accepting for Bill Underwood, Clair Coughlin, and Natalie Larson and David Ruhter accepting for Dr. Wayne Ruhter.

## 2016 BLOSSOM HOMECOMING

Save the dates of **October 7 and 8, 2016**. The 2015 Homecoming/Honoree celebration was a great success. The weather was perfect, the Blossoms footballers were victorious, 6 were granted "Blossom Forever" honoree status, and 150 people were in attendance at the Saturday evening Banquet. Consequently, we have scheduled the 2016 events for the BPHS Homecoming dates, October 7 and 8.

FYI, each year the "Blossoms Forever" Alumni committee selects people to be honored in the categories of Distinctive Service, Honored Educator, and Athletic Hall of Fame. Those chosen are then celebrated during the weekend activities. We welcome nominations at any time. Once nominated, that person is considered for selection every calendar year. For more information, email us at [dmyers3@charter.net](mailto:dmyers3@charter.net).

We believe there are worthy candidates in each category of recognition that have not been nominated. For example, we know from a company news release that **Darrel, Class of '57, and Luella, Class of 58, Jensen** have been recognized as a "Three Times Dealer of the Year" and "Three Times Volume Dealer of the Year" by the Husqvarna Viking Sewing Machine Company and the Elna Company. They were recently inducted into the 2015 International Vacuum and Sewing Hall of Fame. They and many others deserve to be recognized. Think about others and then send in a nomination. Blooming Prairie Education Foundation, Box 521, Blooming Prairie, MN. 55917

## FOR BLOSSOMS NOW AND IN THE FUTURE



Photo taken of a page in a  
Blandin Community Leadership  
Program Brochure

Synonymous with the historical strength of Blooming Prairie as a rural, small-town community that “cares” has been the development of a school system that many would regard as the backbone of the city. Countless citizens, then and now, have extended themselves in many different ways to ensure that the two, the city and the school, would grow and thrive together. Based on what is visible currently in the two entities, we can say that the efforts

have brought about success.

A leadership development program stated in the words of the Blandin Leadership Program “to strengthen rural Minnesota communities” is now underway in Blooming Prairie as a continuation of past efforts. City officials worked with Blandin representatives to recruit local volunteers who “want to be more effective at developing and sustaining the health of their communities”. Those willing in Blooming Prairie include **Mandy Doocy, Sarah Esplan, Tamzen Johnson, Dan Miner, Tom Monson, Jaclyn Schlichter, Naomi Smith, Lon Thiele, Nancy Vaillancourt, Alan Van Ormer, Izzy Wacek and Jeremy Wangen.** These good citizens will take part in an intensive Blandin Foundation training program scheduled initially with a week-long away-from-home event and followed by three days at home over the next few months. In behalf of our Blossom Alumni and Friends group, our thanks to these 12 Blooming Prairie leaders. You are role models for all of us.

As an Alum of the Blandin Leadership Program, I know that those in the Blooming Prairie Cohort will be returning home with a responsibility to together find a way or ways to strengthen their community. It is our hope that Blooming Prairie Public Schools will be considered and included in their plans for the future. Perhaps a partnership with the Blooming Prairie Education

Foundation could result in a plan to make a strong Blooming Prairie School District even stronger. The stated mission of Blooming Prairie Public Schools is to provide challenging opportunities for lifelong learning in a safe and caring environment. Working together with inspired Blandin trained leaders can guarantee Mission success.

## BLOOMING PRAIRIE EDUCATION FOUNDATION

December 17, 1998 is the official date of formation of the Blooming Prairie Public School Foundation. Now known as the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation, the organization has raised and contributed thousands of dollars to support students of Blooming Prairie Public Schools, ISD 756. Continually aware of the Foundation’s written mission, “The Mission of the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation is to contribute to the development of innovative programs, fund special equipment needs and otherwise promote projects and programs to enhance learning opportunities for children”, board members solicit improvement ideas from faculty members twice each year. In the past few years, approximately \$80,000 has been spent each year to support the Mission.

In the years since 1998, we estimate that 50 to 75 people have served students directly as Foundation Board Members. High School students have also been members of the board each year. Such service reinforces positively the ongoing good nature of Blooming Prairie citizens. Clair, ‘53 and Pauline, ‘54 Coughlin talked about the benefits of that good nature when Clair was honored for service during his career as an educator. Clair and Pauline said, “How fortunate we have been, growing up in a farming and small town community, attending grades 1-8 in a one room school and grades 9-12 in High School.” After leaving Blooming Prairie in the 50’s, they said “except for five years spent in Grand Forks, N.D., our lives have been spent in small rural towns and farming communities. People (BP People) created an atmosphere of being friendly, neighborly, helpful, kind to and considerate of others... Traits our family has tried to imitate as we live our lives. The people of Blooming Prairie have always supported the schools. The teaching staff gave us lots of incentive to choose education as a profession. The teachers were academically well prepared, worked hard and were always there for the students. We enjoyed the friendship of students in class as

well as in sports and other activities we shared.” From those good folks that surrounded Clair and Pauline as they grew up are now in Blooming Prairie the children and grandchildren of those friendly, neighborly, helpful, kind and considerate Blooming Prairie citizens. The unstated Mission of the earlier years is now stated and carried out by those that have served and those now serving Blooming Prairie students as members of the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation.



Pictured from lower left and around the table are Elementary School Principal, Chris Staloch, Paul Tollefson, Sue Zwiener, Student Representative, Camden Heimerman, Doug Myers, Student Representative, Sally Walsh, Carrie Farr, Lois Nelson, Lori Arndt, Elementary School Teacher, Diane Swenson, Julie Noble, Karen Fouarge, Roger Sorenson, School Board Member, Pam Hameister, and Superintendent Barry Olson. Board members not pictured are High School Teacher, John Bruns, Mark Larkoski, Sue Helgeson, Josh Toquam, Rod Krell, Jennifer Walsh, Sally Peterson, and Judy Bishop.

## The Family of Clair Coughlin



Bottom row: Lynn Hagen (daughter), Clair Coughlin, Ellen Kastl (daughter). Middle row: Pauline Coughlin (wife), and Margaret Kleven (daughter). Top row L -> R: Tim Coughlin (son), Steven Coughlin (son), and Mary Sargent (daughter)

## MORE ABOUT THE GOOD LIFE

Pauline Butler Coughlin, Class of '54 made us feel especially good as she wrote about husband Clair and the Blooming Prairie positive influences on her life and their life together. Her comments about life in the '40's and 50's resonate with all who appreciate small towns and rural life. Of neighbors, Pauline wrote, "Every harvest time neighbors would help each other... The men would come into the house at noon and women would have a great meal ready for them.... Lots of noisy conversation and laughter... Such a good memory... if any family suffered a tragedy, neighbors were always right at their doorstep to do whatever they could... The deceased were 'waked' in their homes then... Friends and family would gather to be with the bereaved family... Food was brought in... Coffee and light meal served before the gathered went home.... Someone always stayed with the family overnight... The person would stay up and awake the entire night..."

About her teachers,

"One time in history class, Bob Ackerwold wrote out a test and asked me to go to the office to make copies for our class.... That I did... I never thought much about it at the time, but years later it occurred to me how he trusted me not to look at the test... Of course, I did not look at it and the thought of doing so, never entered my head... What a fine man...."

"Every game night, I would stay in town with either Marguerite Morrison, Joanne Morrison or Janet Harding.... I would spend the night and my Mom would get me in the morning.... This was the way it was for four years of high school."

Even the bus rides,

"The bus rides to and from school were lots of fun... Ernie Christensen was our driver...."

Families, teachers, friends and bus drivers; all part of the recipe for a good life ahead and beyond.

## REUNION OF THE CLASS OF 1960

Enough superlatives cannot be found to describe those pictured at the Reunion held 55 years after graduation. Standing tall, the group enjoyed music from the '50's, a good meal, a time to reflect on class members that have passed on, readings from '59-'60 "Black and White Chronicles" and stories of past enjoyment.

This outstanding group of Blooming Prairie High School graduates are also pictured as second graders in 1949 in the now demolished elementary school with teacher Jean Hein Shaw.



Another exemplary group of little Blossoms. This picture is in the '47 yearbook but does not identify the students. We think the group is made up of what became the graduating classes of 1958 and '59.



By rows, right to left that we think we can identify are Buddy Oquist, Karen Tonolli, Don Miller, Carol Wagner Bob Kurtin. 2nd row, Bruce Ebling, Marlene Dennis, Hazel Benson, John Morrison, Doug Myers, Row 3, Steve Thorson, Elaine Hillson, Denny Turner, not sure, Jeri Jelinek, Marlys Nelson, Row 4, Regina Robinson, Marlys Knutson, Vaughn Bothun, Richard Marsh, Dorothy Carlson, Jean Hoyt, Row 5, Georgia Harms, Adrian Farrington, Judy Morton, June Sorenson, Irwin Iverson, Lois Lysne, Hazel Benson, Row 6 Jimmy Underwood, Dean Turner, not sure, John Milton, Don Rye, Ramona Selstad



Pictured in the front row are Andy Weiss, Denny Turner, Marlys Knutson Sutherland, Karen Tonolli Antonovich, Kathy Peterson Bussian, Ethel Vokoun Ervin, Dorothy Carlson Kilian, Elaine Hillson Trotman, Bonnie Pirkel Maxfield, and Georgia Harms McDougal. Second row includes Rodney Robinson, Burnell Hansen, Marvin Christianson, Jerry Robinson, Karen Anderson Kinny, Gary Madsen, Tom Trotman, Judy Morton Myers and Doug Myers.



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## 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 '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 Wencl, 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

**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.

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

For information about the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation go to [blossoms.k12.mn.us](http://blossoms.k12.mn.us) or to Facebook. [www.bloomingprairie.com](http://www.bloomingprairie.com) contains current information about the City of Blooming Prairie.

## ANNUAL SUPPORT NOW DUE

### THANK YOU, YOUR ENCOURAGING WORDS AND DOLLAR SUPPORT ARE APPRECIATED.

We mail the newsletter to approximately 3,500 Alumni and Friends for which we have an address. Recent graduates, 2000-2015, may not be included if we don't have contact information. We want to be inclusive. Send us addresses for anyone not receiving the newsletter.

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.**

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## HERE'S TO OUR BALL TEAM THAT IS HARD TO BEAT-----

Several vintage Blossoms, you decide what vintage really means, have said they can't remember the words to our school song. So, taken for accuracy from the September 11, 1959 "Black and White Chronicle" item

### "LEARN YOUR SCHOOL SONG"

**Here's to our ball team that is hard to beat,  
They're just a hundred per from head to feet,  
They've got that style, that smile, that winning way,  
So where e'er you go you'll recognize them  
And you'll say that there's a team I'd like to know  
They've got that good old BP pep and go  
So when you see them play it's quite a treat,  
Can't be beat, Our Ball Team**

We don't know who authored the Blossom song but we know for sure where the music originated. Wikipedia said the music was written over a period of three years by students at Washington and Lee University. Finished in 1913, "It (The Washington and Lee Swing) became the most well known and widely copied football marches ever written." In researching "Prairie Schooners" and "Black and White Chronicles", we are not able to find any mention of the person or persons that wrote our lyrics nor do we know the year of origin.

Of interest perhaps to those of you who are Blossom Historians is that BPHS has or had an Alma Mater. That is, an officially adopted song. Below are the words of the school song taken from the 1925 "Prairie Schooner".

### CLASS SONG—OUR OLD HIGH

Once again here as schoolmates assembled  
We feign would lift our voices in song  
To our High School—our dear Alma Mater  
Let gladness the moments prolong.  
We are proud of her lads and lasses  
Of honors won in days gone by,  
So here's a cheer for our old High School  
For our old High School----Our dear Old High

## CHORUS

Here's to her lasses  
Here's to the lads they adore!  
The Seniors to mighty,  
The Juniors so flighty,  
Freshy and Sophomore!  
Let mirth and gladness,  
Banish all sadness,  
and as the days go by;  
You'll find us ready and  
Boosting for our Old High.

Soon for us the days will be ended,  
The dream of youth that fades so fast steady  
But I know that oft the heart will ponder  
In memory over scenes that are past.  
There are joys that will be long remembered;  
And friendships, too, that ne'er shall die.  
So here's a cheer for our old High School,  
For our old High School, our dear Old High.

When Blossoms are together, nostalgia reigns. It is good to know that those that preceded us took pride in their school and community.

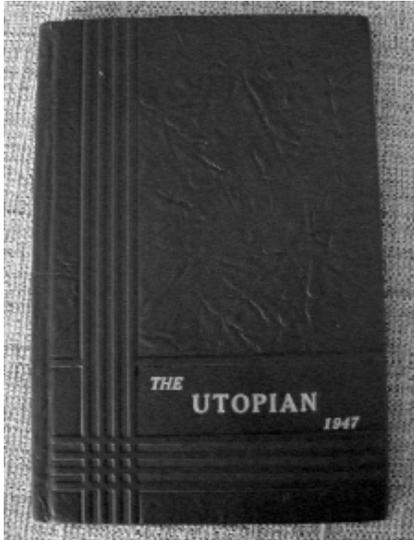
## DONATE A YEARBOOK

Response to our requests for donations of BPHS yearbooks has been outstanding. **THANK YOU!** We now think we may be able to build a complete set for the Blooming Prairie Education Foundation, for the BPHS library and for the Blooming Prairie Public Library. Still needed are books from **1900 to 1924, 1926 to 1940, 1964, 1997, 1998, 2000, 2001, 2004, and 2008 to 2014.**

We learned from the donation of the 1947 yearbook, interestingly named "The Utopian", that yearbooks were not published during the war years so the history of BPHS school years from 41-42, 42-43, 43-44, and 44-45 does not exist in a yearbook. "The Utopian" has additional distinction as it is perhaps the only yearbook that listed years in service of our country for three of the graduates. It was noted that **Allen Jolson, Spencer Lindquist, and John S. Peterson** served in the U.S. Navy and had returned to school after the war was over.

Donated yearbooks should be sent to **Blooming Prairie Education Foundation, PO Box 521, Blooming Prairie, MN. 55917**

## THE UTOPIAN 1947



Each of the yearbooks published over the many years of the existence reveals the factual and anecdotal history of the school year of publication. Quite often, the BPHS achievements and accomplishments of individuals and classes noted in the Annuals did predict the future. You need only to read about the yearbook history of many of our

Blossom Honorees to know that their positive impact would be felt soon after graduation and beyond for many years.

The foreword in "The Utopian" written as WWII was ending, reflects a concern for preserving the history of the school year 46-47 while at the same time searching for a perfect future. Yearbook Co-Editors **Delores Johnson and Don Morrison** for sure had a hand in writing and editing the foreword. The words of the students of 46-47 follow.

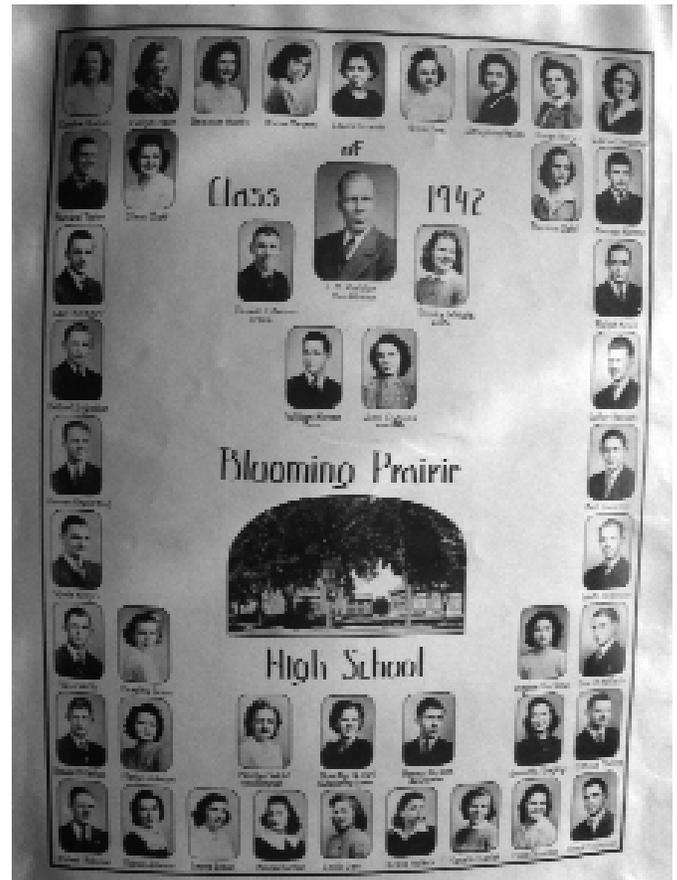
"According to Webster, Utopia is a place of ideal perfection. This is the theme carried out in the Utopian--the annual of the class of 1946-47. We realize this yearbook is not perfect, but the staff has tried to produce an annual that will accurately picture our everyday school life."

"This is the first year that an annual has been presented to the students of this school since 1941. With the realization that a yearbook cannot become a part and parcel of school life in only a year, **we hope we can bring the spirit of a true Utopia to the students at Blooming Prairie**, for only with a goal of perfection before us can we hope to advance."

Earnest desire preceded and followed in the words written in many of the "Prairie Schooners" that came before and after 1946-47. In the 1925 annual, graduate Ione O'Malley wrote of their future, **Whatever rests in store for each in the future, it must surely be a life of greater activity and variety. But mingled with the feelings for the past comes anticipations for the future. Before us stretch widely diverging paths, which lead us ever onward. Truly we are launched--- whither**

**bound.** In 1948-49 graduates wrote, **Four years ago a group of hardworking, trustworthy, pioneers began their search for a gold mine---graduation.** And later in the paragraph, **They struck gold in richest form known to man ----education.** And later, **May their riches grow and may they put it to best use they know how.** In 1978-79, sentences among the five paragraphs written on the dedication page include **We feel that we leave our high school days with a solid background of skills, a high ideal of purpose and high personal goals, and a stable outlook on advantages and disadvantages for the future.** And also referring to an unsettled world, **But we still go forth with an optimistic attitude that we can make the world a better place to live.**

So, since 1947, has Utopia been found? For sure, no. But the search for perfection continues. Found in the work of current Blooming Prairie School District teachers and administrators and the many achievements of recent and current students is a positive outlook on life. The '79 graduates said it well, **"But we go forth with an optimistic attitude that we can make the world a better place to live"**.



NO YEARBOOK IN '42--  
SO WE PUBLISH FOR THEM IN 2015

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

