

Blossoms Forever

A Newsletter for Blooming Prairie School District Alumni & Friends • November, 2009



Renovated Main Entrance to the Building



Students and Staff Members in the Much improved Commons Area

BPHS CONSTRUCTION AND RENOVATION COMPLETED

October 11, 2009 was a festive day as Blooming Prairie citizens, students, parents, and staff members celebrated at an open-house the completion of two years of work to add to and renovate Blooming Prairie High School. Work done in 2008 included a renovated gymnasium, a new multi-purpose room, a new track, new lockers, a beautiful Media Center, and work done on vehicle traffic patterns and parking lots. In 2009, the Commons Area was very much improved, and the art, choir, band, and agriculture rooms were redone. A few of the many specific improvements include a single, safer main entry, separate spaces for science lab and seat work, a kitchen and other amenities for special education students to develop daily living skills, LCD projectors and Laptop Computers in every classroom, an athletic multi-purpose room that can also be used for community activities, above ground locker rooms, acoustical improvements in the band room, double the space in the choir room, a modern, efficient kitchen, a track suitable for hosting larger track meets, new code acceptable heating, electrical, and fire protection systems, and a professionally landscaped outdoor area. Superintendent Barry Olson was quoted in the "Blooming Prairie Times" saying, "It's a great facility, it looks nice and the functionality has improved tremendously. The community deserves it."

This beautiful building is one of several that have housed Blooming Prairie students over the past 141 years. From records published in Harold Severson's "Blooming Prairie Update", we can determine that the first building to house Blooming Prairie students was

an 1868 log cabin. The cabin evolved over several years into an 1876 brick veneer two room building that was located on the site that eventually became the spot for the Methodist Church. An 1898 school election and an 1899 bond election resulted in a new building completed in 1900. Severson's book goes on to report that increased enrollment in 1914, 80 high school students, a condemnation of the elementary building by the State Department of Education, and a boiler that was unable to heat the buildings, resulted in a successful bond issue for \$75,000 that led to a new building opened in 1921. The April, 1922 dedication of this building was described as an eye-popping event. State-wide efforts to consolidate school districts brought about enrollment increases and curriculum changes for Blooming Prairie School District in the



Cathy Lightly, Tammy Wurst, Suzy Kramer and Superintendent Barry Olson in the new High School Office



Blooming Prairie School Buildings about 1900.



1921 High School Building

1950's. As a result, a bond election for \$970,000 made possible the construction of a new high school building that opened in 1957. Soon after, the then old high school building was renovated and added to as a facility for elementary school students. This change brought about the destruction of the 1899 building. On September 29, 1963, an open house was held to celebrate the completion of the elementary school building. The segue is back to 2009 as we celebrate once again a fine building constructed in behalf of the children of the Blooming Prairie School District.

School buildings, whether a log cabin in 1868, an 1876 brick veneer building, a new building in 1900 that the Blooming Prairie Times said, "merchants from the Twin Cities claim there is nothing in either Minneapolis or St. Paul that equals it in regard to material and workmanship", a 1921 building described as "magnificent", the then modern 1957 building, or the 1963 renovation and reconstruction of the elementary school have had a positive impact on Blooming Prairie students for each of those 141 years. If walls could talk, imagine the stories that would be heard.

The residents of Blooming Prairie School District once again deserve our thanks. Now, more than ever, students need the best of facilities in which to grow and learn. History has been repeated in 2009 as the current Blossoms are once again safely housed in what Superintendent Olson has said "Is a great facility".

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

1930'S GEORGE TONOLLI, Class of '38, said "it was a shock to change schools" as he came to Blooming Prairie in 1937 to enroll as a high school senior. The shock didn't last as he soon settled in to graduate in 1938 and to become a permanent resident of Blooming Prairie. Perhaps also to ease the pain, George soon met Stacia Dahl who would become his wife in 1940. George describes meeting Stacia as his best memory of Blooming Prairie Schools. Stacia and George became parents of G. Paul, Karen, David, Robert and Colleen. All of whom later graduated from Blooming Prairie High School. In addition to teenage jobs as shoe salesman, church janitor, and harness maker, George moved on to work in and eventually own a hardware store in Blooming Prairie. WWII service became a reality in 1944 and resulted in time in the Philippines as a clerk in General MacArthur's headquarters. George is a Blossom that we all admire.

1940's CAROL HELLIE KANNE, Class of '45, worked in the offices of Federated Insurance until 1948. She then married Corwin Kanne at the Blooming Prairie Lutheran Church. Son Larry, now deceased, and daughter Marcia soon became part of their family as they moved to and lived in Lester Prairie, Mn. And Beloit, Wis. Peshtigo, Wis. then became home and Carol resides there now. Corwin passed away in 2001. Carol remembers wonderful classmates in Blooming Prairie and particularly recalls Joyce Peterson Trom and Gerry Johnson Oswald as very good friends. Dora Tollefson, a Bagley Rural School teacher, that taught Carol was a favorite of her teachers.

1950's DORIS SCHINKEL HAMMEL, Class of '54, now lives at 605 North Beadle St. in Papillion, Nebraska 68046 and would enjoy hearing from Blossom classmates. Doris married Albert Hammel, a member of the US Air Force, and soon traveled with him to England and Germany as he completed his service. Albert is now deceased. Children Daniel, Jerry and Tammy completed their family and now 6 grandchildren have been added. Doris worked as a manager of day care and now spends time volunteering at church and at the Salvation Army. She remembers History teacher, Mr. Ackerman, as one of the best. Her advice to all of us, "Hang in There".

1960's LINDA RICHARDSON BEAIRD, Class of '66, left Blooming Prairie for St. Mary's School of Nursing to become a nurse. After graduating as an RN, Linda went to work in Rochester at St. Mary's hospital and at the Mayo Clinic. Specializing in Psychotherapy, she finished her time in Rochester's Mayo Clinic as a therapist in Intensive Cycle therapy. A four year degree in Mental Health from The University of Minnesota and a Master's Degree in Counseling and Psychiatry from St. Mary's were earned in that same time period. Linda moved to the Twin Cities area in 1980 and then worked as a therapist at St. Mary's Hospital and the Minneapolis Clinic of Psychiatry and Neurology. Her next professional work was with IDS as a managerial assessor. She now is in private practice as a Psychotherapist. Linda's family includes a husband, Jack, and 6 children, 3 of whom were adopted from Albania. Son Michael died as a result of injuries suffered in an accident. This busy life is enhanced by overseas travel, Yoga, Racquetball, and Skiing. Linda has fond Blossom memories of Cheerleading at the State Basketball Tournament, Homecoming activities, and GAA. Memorable teachers were Dee Carey for History and LeMar Nelson for English/Speech.

1970's MARK HOFFMAN, Class of '77, found his wife, Ginger Jelinek among his Junior classmates at BPHS. Mark and Ginger have two children and now reside in Northern Minnesota. After serving in the Air Force, Mark earned an Industrial Engineering degree at The University of Oregon. He then worked for the City of Portland and later for the Landis GYR Corporation. Currently, he enjoys camping, woodworking, and restoring old cars. His best memories of BPHS center on Band and Chorus.

1970'S GINGER JELINEK HOFFMAN, Class of '78, married Mark Hoffman (see above) in 1981 after earning a paralegal degree at Winona State University. Ginger, daughter Carley, Son Kyle, and husband Mark reside as mentioned in Northern Minnesota. Ginger said that they often traveled the Oregon Coast during their time in the West. However, she and Mark gave up a lot to return to Minnesota and eventually to Pequot Lakes, a town much like Blooming Prairie. She said Blooming Prairie "was a neat place to grow up". Ginger's special memories of BPHS include Mr. Vorlicek, Social Studies, Ballroom Dancing and Speech.

1980's PETER GANTRIS, Class of '88, has accomplished much in the 21 years since his graduation from BPHS. After earning a Political Science Degree at Gustavus Adolphus in '92, Peter went to work for the Ford Company in St. Paul. A subsequent '02 MBA degree at the University of Minnesota helped as he opened his own consulting firm RPM Research. Peter has also written and had published a book titled "Art of BMW" which details the history of BMW motorcycles. His spare time hobbies include motorcycling, and snow and water skiing. He and his wife Kathryn live in the Twin City area and have two children, Jasper and Rasmus. Peter especially remembers Band teacher Cliff Jones who led the band during a trip to Florida DisneyWorld, Composition teacher LeMar Nelson, and Art teacher Harold Peterson.

1955-1989 JOHN WHITING, Industrial Arts Teacher, John arrived in Blooming Prairie in 1954 after serving in the United States Army and after teaching one year in Frasier, Montana. He had earned teaching degrees from Bemidji State University and from The University of Minnesota Duluth. John settled into life in Blooming Prairie and still resides there with his wife, Margaret. Over the years, he was an active hunter with pheasants, grouse, and deer in his sights. Deer are still pursued. His teaching career ended in 1989 after which he operated a framing business for 11 years. John remembers his Blooming Prairie teaching Colleague Chan Bailey as a good friend and Maurice McFarlin as a good Superintendent. He also mentioned Blossom highlights of moving to the new High School building in 1957 and the Blossom Basketball team in the State Tournament in 1966.

NOVEMBER PAYMENT IS NEEDED

This issue is the 5th of a series that we hope goes on forever. We have received encouragement from many Blossom Alumni and many Blossom Friends. Thank you! However, encouragement doesn't pay for the cost of printing and mailing to all Alumni and Friends so we are once again asking that each of you send 15.00 each year to cover the costs. The money is spent only for printing and mailing. Volunteers do the writing and picture taking. We have lost money on each issue so far so hope that we can do better this time. A self-addressed payment envelope is enclosed.

LeMar Nelson's Blooming Prairie Fourth of July

I don't know exactly what it is because there are certainly more elaborate and exciting celebrations around the area and the country, but there is still something unique and special about our own "Old Fashioned Fourth of July" celebration that touches a special place in my heart each year. I can't pinpoint the exact nature of the attraction, but it is definitely there.

It certainly isn't the caliber of the entertainment or contests that continue to be a draw. After all, many communities have five and ten K runs and other running events for all ages. Yet, each year organizer John Bruns and his crew get many applications for the various length distances to make it exciting and thrilling in which to observe and to compete in the races.

It isn't the Boys and Girls Club sponsored kids races that are so different or unique, yet each year a horde of kids of all ages descend on the site just in time to compete and thoroughly enjoy themselves as do the many parents who lend their enthusiastic moral support. And it isn't the contests like kickball, dodge ball, volleyball, and horseshoe pitching, because they are common in almost all celebrations

It certainly isn't the annual parade that features more farm implements, classic cars, and homemade floats than marching bands (there wasn't a one this year), but still has almost 150 units and entertains



**2009 Award Winners
Allan Wold, Class of '43, Athletic Hall of Fame,
and Bill Underwood, Class of '49, Distinctive
Service, in the 4th of July parade**



**Bob Ingvalson, Class of '59 cheering for his
daughter, Lisi Ingvalson Wright, Class of '03,
as she performs with the
Galactic Cowboy Orchestra.**

the spectator-lined streets for almost two solid hours. Estimates hovered around 20,000 viewers again this year, and spectators roundly applauded local beauty contest winners and politicians aspiring to one office or another alike.

And compared to the "Taste of Minnesota", the "State Fair", and some other celebrations I could name, the food concessions are nothing out of the ordinary. But who can pass up cheese curds, pork chop sandwiches, shish ka bobs, several kinds of Sundaes and ice cream cones, French fried potatoes, and soft pretzels. No, it can't be the food.

And finally, it can't be the games in the park like miniature golf, fish pond, face painting, and bingo—these abound in every of the community festivities I can recall one doesn't have to come to Blooming prairie to experience all of those things. Then what could it be?



**Loren, Class of '54, and Doris Rasmussen,
Class of '58, studying pictures of
Blossoms from the past**



Phyllis Carlson Ditlevson, Class of '49 remembering the "good times" as she reviewed the '49 Yearbook.

Personally, I think it is all of those things, yet none of them. Their very sameness year after year identifies the attraction. The chance to visit with friends and family that one may not have much contact with from one year to the next; the picnics with those same friends and families that pop up in back yards throughout the town. It is the chance to forget the cares and problems of the world and our society for at least a part of one day, to be a kid again and act childish and foolish for a short time.

It is a chance to sit in a car or on a lawn and "ooh" and "aah" over fireworks that are not as huge or colorful as some places, but suit our small town sensibilities just fine. And when the day is ended, and everyone has to find some new resolve to begin rather normal activities again, we will look back on this last Fourth of July with fondness and a deeper sense of pride in the fact that we live in America and enjoy all the freedoms that our democracy affords us. Hooray for an "Old Fashioned Fourth of July"!

PURPOSE OF BLOSSOMS FOREVER

It took us 83 years to fulfill the challenge Superintendent L.S. Kildahl gave as he spoke to the graduating Class of 1925. He said, "I congratulate you, Class of 1925, on all the good work you did on the extra school activities. As students you were proud of all the school activities. As alumni you will have the opportunity of continuing to help by giving encouragement to your younger brothers and sisters, thereby spurring them on to greater hopes and achievements. With an enthusiastic and loyal alumni association, the possibilities of this high school have not yet been measured."

We are loyal and enthusiastic and our alumni association is off to a great start. We will encourage our younger sisters and brothers and celebrate their achievements.

2010 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 '44 meets every year at the Pizza Cellar on the first Friday in October. Yvonne Walsh is the class contact.

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

Class of '54 will come together at the Pizza Cellar on the first Saturday of August each year. Contact Dick Miller at 507-437-1600 for more information.

Class of '55 plans to meet at the Pizza Cellar on the third Saturday in September each year. Marilyn Robinson Tollefson will provide more information. 507-753-7553

Class of '58's yearly class reunion will be at the Pizza Cellar on Saturday, September 25, at 5:00 p.m. Doris Rasmussen (507-583-2280) and Judy Wencil (507-583-7570) are contacts for the class.

Class of '60 will celebrate 50 years since graduation at some point in 2010. A committee including Karen Anderson Kinney, Marlys Knutson Sutherland, Adrian Farrington, and Judy and Doug Myers has started planning. To facilitate communication, we need e-mail addresses for each of the 1960 class members. Send to dmyers3@charter.net or call 507-433-6262.

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

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

YES, WE ARE THE BLOSSOMS

Has there ever been a better ice breaking comment than, "I am a Blossom?" Almost always, a room full of people will grow quiet and listen while you explain yourself. Proudly, of course.

Across the United States and beyond, our school's distinguished nickname is well known and admired. Consider what others have written about us. From Amy Doherty, writing in the Minnesota State High School League Fall 2008 Bulletin, "And while there are thousands of Minnesota High School students wearing Eagles sweatshirts and it is much easier to find ready-made apparel with Eagles embroidered across the front, for those students wearing "Awesome Blossoms" sweatshirts, it is much more unique to be able to showcase a one-of-a-kind name." Or from an internet site blog.joshlewis, "But think about it. This mascot name (Blossoms) rocks. What better way to make your opponents think you suck than with a wussy name like the "Awesome Blossoms?" Heh, and then after you beat them, they have to deal with the fact that they were beaten by the Awesome Blossoms. Ouch. That'll put you down a peg or two." At the site www.d.umn.edu/~syme0008/5230, we find "Being a Blossom does have its drawbacks since it does top charts across the nation for its "lack of name strength." From the same site comes "No matter where you are in the world we will be the only, the chosen Awesome Blossoms of Blooming Prairie, MN."

We have heard that we weren't always known as Blossoms. When and how did we become the Blossoms and the Awesome Blossoms? No one seems to know for sure, but speculation is that a nearby town's newspaper, probably in derision, called us Blossoms when their athletic teams competed against us. We know that we became "Awesome Blossoms" in the late '60's when Class of '69 member, Tom Ressler, drew an aggressive Blossom as a design in art class. Jeanne Rye Pauletti, Class of '64, wrote in the November, 2008 issue of "Blossoms Forever" that a student vote to change the name failed when Athletic Director Dee Carey vetoed the switch to Black Panthers. So, we remain in 2009 "Awesome Blossoms".

BLOSSOM WRESTLING RECORDS

A trophy in the Commons Area at BPHS lists names of 8 wrestlers that earned 100 or more wins during their Blossom Wrestling careers. They are in order of the most wins:

Name	Class	No. of Wins
Steven Salinas	'04	156
Brad Klemmensen	'06	146
Billy Lindquist	'05	135
Luke Nelson	'04	126
Jeremiah Johnson	'07	123
Grant Johnson	'04	122
Jay Salinas	'05	119
Ryan Klemmensen	'02	114

The Blossom wrestling program has been in place for more than 50 years and we assume that there are other personal records that come close to or exceed those of the 8 listed above. If so, we would like to know about them. Write us at dmyers3@charter.net if you have records you would like to share.

DISTINGUISHED SERVICE/ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME AWARDS

Each year, "Blossoms Forever" will honor alumni and friends under the headings of Distinctive Service and Athletics. Honorees in 2008 included Millie and Bud Hanson and LeMar Nelson receiving Distinguished Service awards and Margaret Zwiener Hogan and Dean Brudwick in Athletics. 2009 Distinguished Service winners were Marian Amundson Lehman and Bill Underwood and Allan Wold and Jeanne Kuckeberg Ide for Athletics. Nominations for 2010 are still sought. Nominators do not need to be an Alumnus or Friend. Send nominations by December 1 to Blooming Prairie Alumni and Friends, Box 521, Blooming Prairie, Minnesota 55917. Supportive information is appreciated and greatly enhances the possibility of your nominee's selection.

Criteria for eligibility are posted at the website of Blooming Prairie Education Foundation. blossoms.k12.mn.us

B.P. TRIVIA



Pictured is John Blythe, who according to a "History of Steele and Waseca Counties, Minnesota" published in 1887, made the first settlement in 1856 within the limits of what in 1887 became Blooming Prairie Township. Blythe chose 160 acres in sections 19 and 30 and built a log cabin. Dennis Moran and his family which included a wife, two sons and a sister-in-law came that same summer. Thomas Bray arrived in January followed by a Mr. Whaley and his son-in-law Mr. Ewers. The Steele County history book said that other early Blooming Prairie arrivals included J.H. McDaniels, James Carey, Joseph Branning, George Topliff, Andrew Cole, Thomas Sweeney, Miles Flanagan, G. Stoddard, S. Roberts, C.E. Hancock, Patrick Fallon, John Anderson, P.P. Thimsen, N.P. Thimsen, and T. Feeney.

First birth in Blooming Prairie Township was that of Walter John Blythe on August 22, 1858. Another early birth was that of James Bray who was born in 1859.

First marriage was celebrated in 1860 when Ira Foster married Widow Mrs. Scott.

Blooming Prairie Township school teachers in 1861 and soon after included Miss Hattie Layton and Mrs. Joseph Carey.

The first frame building in the township was Bracket's station which was built with lumber hauled from St. Paul.

First frame house was C.B. Pettie's.

as a result of the Minnesota and Cedar Valley

The village of Blooming Prairie was platted in 1857 as a result of the Minnesota and Cedar Valley Railway's completion of a line built south from Owatonna.

Recognizable family names included in the early history and biographies of Blooming Prairie village include Dunton, Peterson, Feeney, Jensen, Nelson, Guthrie, Volhardt, Johnson, Morton, Olson, Wheeler, and Mayo.

NOTE: The book "History of Steele and Waseca Counties, Minnesota" is good reading for anyone interested in the early settlements of Blooming Prairie Township, Blooming Prairie Village and Steele County. It is further described as "Album of History and Biography" that embraces sketches of the Villages, Cities and Townships, Educational, Civil, Military, and Political History; Portraits of Prominent Citizens, and Biographies of Old Settlers and Representative Men.

A TRUE AWESOME BLOSSOM

By Margaret Zwiener Hogan, Class of '34

Four decades ago the town was "abuzz" with excitement. There were crowds on both sides of Main Street. Flags, bunting and posters adorned business establishments. The excitement was in anticipation of the return of our "hometown war hero" Lt. Col. Roger Ingvalson of the United States Air Force returning after five years as a "prisoner of war".

He entered the Air Force in 1950 and spent 26 years on active duty, 24 years as a fighter pilot. On his 87th combat mission of North Vietnam, he was shot down and taken captive, endured five years as a Prisoner of War over the Communists of North Vietnam. His first wife Jacqueline passed away while he was a POW.

Military awards received were: The Silver Star for Gallantry in Action, The Legion of Merit for exceptional meritorious conduct, three Flying Crosses for extraordinary achievement in aerial flight, two Bronze Stars for Heroic Achievement, Two Purple Hearts for wounds achieved in action, Seven Air Medals and others.

After leaving the POW he married his present wife "Booncy," a native of Chatanooga, Tn. and moved to

A True Awesome Blossom Continued...

that city. They have four sons and seven grand children. He retired from the Air Force with the rank of Colonel.

After leaving the military service he devoted service to the community. He founded Chatanooga Prison Ministries in 1979 and served as Executive Director for 15 years. He has been active in several civic and service organizations, Board of Directors for Bethel Bible Village, Good Will, Salvation Army, and was active in several organizations The Chatanooga Armed Forces Committee and Christian Men's Committee.

He has been recognized for his community service by receiving the Sertoma Service to Mankind Award, the Sertoma National Heritage Award and the Valley Forge Freedom's Foundation Award for Outstanding Service.

He has also been involved in some district political campaigns.



Pictured is a group of Blossom students in Jean Hein Shaw's 2nd Grade Classroom in 1950. Many consider this group to be the best little Blossoms Class ever formed. We think that we can identify, starting from the left side of the picture, Georgia Harms, Jimmy Underwood, Dean Turner, John Milton, Teacher, Jean Hein, Regina Robinson, Adrian Farrington, Pat Dalager, Vaughn Bothun, Judy Morton, Richard Marsh, June Sorenson, Irwin Iverson, Don Rye, Marlys Knutson, Steve Thorson, Elaine Hillson, Dennis Turner, Jeri Jelinek, Marlys Nelson, Jean Hoyt, Dorothy Carlson, Lois Lysne, Bruce Ebeling, Marlene Dennis, Hazel Benson, John Morrison, Doug Myers, Buddy O'Quist, Karen Tonolli, Don Miller, Carol Wagner, and Bob Kurtin. If you recognize any of the others, please send me their names at dmyers3@charter.net



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