

MY LIFE STORIES | Darlene Anderson



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Dedication



This book is dedicated to my beautiful and intelligent grandchildren, Tor, Stian, Lars, Hanne and Louise.

— Darlene Anderson, born September 1, 1934



What was your Mom like when you were a child?



My Mom, Martha (Gross) Butt, was born January 20, 1894 and died May 8, 1948 when I was 13 years old. She was a very hard working lady, baking fresh bread almost daily and making delicious meals, not fancy meals mind you, but mostly veggies from the big garden that was planted each spring. Also the tender beef that was canned each time a cow was butchered came off the shelf in the cellar and the gravy from the canned meat was wonderful. “Neighbors helping neighbors” during threshing time was always a highlight, coming home from school and seeing them all set (sic) down to one of these meals. Oh, I forgot the fantastic pies she made, mostly apple because of the apple trees in our yard.



Mom was a gentle, soft spoken person. Occasionally, Bonita, she and I would sit on the couch and she would peel us an orange to eat; doesn't seem like such a big deal now, but at the time, it felt very "special" to me.

We had a big closet under our stairs in the house in Janesville and I can remember it getting filled up at Christmas time, because Mom bought a gift for everyone. Usually bib-overalls for the men and an apron or kitchen utensil for the ladies. I can't remember what Bonita and I received, but seeing there were 13 of us kids plus their spouses, that was a lot of wrapping.

Church on Sunday was very important to Mom. Everyone who was living at home at the time attended church on Sunday. The church was in the country, not too far from the farm and I'm not sure of the denomination, but I do remember getting a bag at Christmas time, filled with an apple and some peanuts in the

shell, possibly some candy? but we were grateful to receive it. When we moved to Janesville, (4th grade) I became friends with a gal who went to a Lutheran church and ended up going to confirmation classes with her. Finally my parents started attending this church and that's where Bonita and I were both confirmed.



Mom was admitted to a Madison hospital (I'm now in 8th grade) because of blood clots in both legs. Any wonder after laboring 13 children, but anyway one day I skipped school and went to Madison on the bus with one of Mom's friends to visit her. I

remember vividly crawling up on the bed and combing her beautiful, gray wavy hair. I think I did it the whole time we were there, because Mom loved to have her hair combed by someone and I loved doing it for her.

Sadly, after a month she was sent home (no blood thinner medication back then) and the next morning she was rushed to Elkhorn Hospital. The blood clots had passed to her heart. Her sons, Marvin & Lester and their wives were on their way to Wisconsin to surprise her for Mother's Day but they didn't make it in time. She died that morning on May 8, 1948 at the age of 54. She is buried at Oak Hill cemetery in Janesville, WI next to her husband, my Dad, August Butt.

What was your Dad like when you were a child?



My dad, August Butt, was born June 14, 1886 in Pommern, Germany and came to America in 1894 when he was 6 years old with his parents and siblings. Dad always told us little kids that the flags that flew on June 14th (Flag Day) were because of his birthday, and of course, we believed him.

After arriving in America, they settled in Nebraska on a farm and dad at an early age was a farm hand near Western, Nebraska. He met my Mom and they were married in 1911 when Dad was 25 and Mom was 18 years old. They farmed in Nebraska and raised 13 children, but then the dust storms started, grasshoppers were so bad you couldn't see the sun and of course, the depression hit, so they decided to move.

Dad loaded up the furniture and the machinery on the train and he traveled with all our belongings to our next destination which was Evansville, Wisconsin. Some good friends of my folks who

had previously moved to Wisconsin a few years earlier, told them Wisconsin was “God’s Country”. I don’t know if it’s because I was told the story so many times, or because I was only three when we moved to Wisconsin, but I imagined every train we saw along the way while we were traveling by car was surely the train Dad was on with all our “stuff”.

Neighbors were at our new farm to help unload everything and also had a big dinner prepared for the whole family. The house was big and a beautiful big lawn where all of us kids would enjoy baseball games where Dad was always the umpire.

After some years on the farm, my older brothers were hired out by other farmers in the area, so that left my dad a little short-handed to do all the work. I remember milking cows at an early age, and also out in the field stacking corn stalks, which actually was pretty fun.

It was when I was eight years old and ready to start fourth grade that Dad decided to quit farming and we moved to Janesville, WI where he got a job on the railroad. He worked on the freight line so it required some heavy lifting and hard work, which he was used to. While employed on the railroad, he fell and broke his back and was in a body cast for many months. I don’t ever remember him complaining about any pain. One of the fringe benefits of being employed on the railroad was FREE travel for him and his family. Seeing his Mom and all his siblings were still in Nebraska, I can remember going on the train to see them,

usually at least once a year. After Mom died, Dad took Bonita and I to Chicago on the train to see the Cubs play at Wrigley Field. That I remember as a really big deal!



Me and Bonita at Wrigley Field, 1947

Dad loved to play any kind of cards and that was our Sunday afternoon entertainment sitting around our big kitchen table playing some game we all could play together. I'm sure that's the reason I enjoy playing any kind of cards today.

Dad continued working on the railroad probably until he was sixty-two or sixty-three. When he quit the railroad, he joined a senior community group in Janesville and they played a lot of cards. He met his second wife, Zetta, at one of these card parties, and she was attracted to him immediately and would call him every night usually during supper time. I was a junior in high school and I don't remember Dad bringing her to the house very often for us to get to know her very well.



They got married in 1951. I still had one more year of high school and had made plans to go into x-ray technician training in Rockford, IL, but had to work a year to save up some money. I do remember Zetta telling me not to expect any financial help from Dad, which I had no intention of doing anyway. I moved in with (my sister) LaDean and (her husband) Jim after high school graduation because Zetta wanted to charge me room and board and I wouldn't have been able to save enough for my x-ray training. Dad being the soft-spoken gentleman who never liked to make any waves between anyone, would sometimes sneak me a 50 cent piece so I could take a cab to the dorm instead of walking on the dark street, but he would always say "Don't tell Zetta".

After Ken and I were married and living in Janesville, we would often go to their new house and play euchre with them. Ken would also shovel the driveway for Dad which he appreciated very much.



Dad and Zetta were married ten years and at least once a year, would take the train to Nebraska to visit his siblings.

Dad was being treated for heart problems, probably the last four or five years of his life and died in his bathroom after getting up to go take some medication, maybe because he had pain in his chest.

I never heard him utter any words of regret or complain about his hard working life, but he was always thankful to God for the “good life” he enjoyed with his family and friends.

He died December 19, 1962 at the age of 76. Brian was two and Eric was six months old so they never knew their grandfather. Wish they could have known him—He was a really Good Man!

What were your grandparents like?



The only grandparent I ever knew was my Dad's Mother, Wilhelmina, who was born in 1861 in Pomern (Pommern?), Germany. She, her husband, Ludwig and their five children (my Dad being six years at the time) sailed on the vessel "Sturgart" and landed on American soil on December 18, 1892. "Mooty", which means Grandma in German (Mutti is Mom in German), lived in a very small town in Nebraska called Western (actually located in south-eastern NE). They originally settled on a farm in Nebraska on arrival, but this is the only location where I remember Mooty living when I was a child. Her house was a small cute, white house with a nice porch and I remember her being a very good cook and a neat housekeeper.



“Mooty” in 1949, two years before her death

Mooty was a kind and loving person, although I don't recall every getting big hugs from her or even sitting on her lap as a child. Of course, she lived in Nebraska and our family had moved to Wisconsin so I didn't really see her all that often. She did live to be 90 and died when I was 17 years old, so you would have thought I would have remembered more about her and our visits. My grandfather Ludwig died at the age of 73 when I was three years old, and I do not remember him at all.

My Mom's parents had both died before I was born. So “Mooty” is the only dear grandparent I remember while growing up as a child.

At what times in your life were you the happiest, and why?



This may be the longest chapter in my book because there were so many happy times in my life and to some I may not be able to answer why because “they just were”!

I guess I should start back early in my childhood of things I can still remember as being special to me, and there were moments and incidents that my youngest sister, Bonita and I shared. From previous chapters, you know we moved to Evansville, WI when we were 3 & 2 years old, and although I never in my life felt poor, my parents couldn’t afford to give us presents at Christmas. But, the owner of the farm we lived on, who lived a great distance away, would send us a HUGE box at Christmas time filled with used clothes, toys or anything they thought we needed, and that is still so vivid in my mind today as to how happy and grateful we all were for their generosity. It probably only happened the first

couple years after we moved there, but it was very much appreciated.

We went out on our big front porch and found a bunch of colored, hard-boiled eggs all laid out in a wooden box filled with straw, and a bunny rabbit ran out from under the porch onto the lawn. Did I imagine all of this or was it real? No pretty basket filled with candy eggs like other kids may have gotten or what kids get today, but to me, seeing those hard-boiled, colored eggs that we could peel and eat later was very special to me at the time.

Fast forward a couple years, still living on the farm and was in 3rd grade at Furseth School which was about 2 1/2 miles from the farm. I was diagnosed with Bright's Disease, a kidney disease that one of my parents' relatives had died from years before, so of course my folks were very concerned for me.

The doctor told them I needed complete bed rest and could not even walk to the table to eat. You're probably wondering, "How this could possibly be one of your happy moments in life", right? Let me explain. I could not go to school for the last half of the school year which did not make me happy, but I was to spend all those months at my sister Nila and her husband, Purdell's farm right down the road from ours. Mom didn't have the burden of constantly watching me in case I would try to get up to walk. Mom was much too busy cooking, washing clothes and taking care of all the others who were still at home. Nila put a day-bed

in the dining room where she could keep a close eye on me, and Purdell would carry me to the table at meal time. Allan Dale, their first-born, was just a “little tyke” at the time, so I spent time entertaining him as much as I could.

Probably the reason I remember this time in my life so well is #1, I was never in pain and #2, I was getting all this extra attention without all the other kids around. Does that make sense? I do remember it as a happy time for me. I must have done my school work, because we moved to Janesville that summer and I went into 4th grade at Roosevelt grade school that fall. All turned out OK, I recovered with no terrible side effects except I wet the bed until I was (I don't know really how old I was) but if Bonita were alive she would probably tell you it was way too long, because we always slept together.

Moving to Janesville and being in a big school was a real eye-opener, although I met so many nice kids who stayed good friends through high school and beyond. My school years is a long happy story for me, so I'm going to save that part of my life in a chapter all its own, titled “School years after moving to Janesville WI. Were they happy and why?”

My story continues on in my life after the high school days, and there are many [more] “happy times”!

During the time I was in x-ray training in Rockford, IL, I met Ken, my future husband. Two high school friends, Nancy Cronin and Carol Kennedy, had invited me to go with them to a

Whitewater bar where the college kids frequented, although Ken was not a college kid at the time. We were partners in a euchre game and my grandchildren can attest to the fact that I'm a fairly good euchre player. Ken did OK and we had a good time. A couple weeks later, my friends went back again and Ken was there and asked them for my address. He wrote me saying he hoped to see me again sometime in Whitewater with my friends. I did see him a couple weeks later with my friends, and he offered to drive me back to Rockford the next day. Hurrah—no more bus rides! Our first real date, I'll never forget, we went to see "Gone With the Wind" in Rockford.

After finishing x-ray training, I got a job at Evanston Hospital in Evanston, IL. Ken had enlisted in the Army early so he would be eligible for the GI bill when he go out of the service. He was stationed in Germany after boot camp and we wrote each other daily, anyway, I did! He had wanted me to come to Germany to get married, but I still had months before I could take my boards to become a registered technician, and that was very important to me. I turned him down and thought if it's meant to be, I would be around when he came home. I passed my boards becoming a R.T. which made me extremely happy and Ken was discharged in September, 1956.

Ken enrolled at Whitewater State college (now University of Wisconsin - Whitewater) and started his college dream. We saw each other as often as possible on the weekends with me still in

Evanston and he was in Whitewater living with his grandmother. We fell in love and made plans to get married the following April during his spring break at school.

I moved to Janesville in Jan, 1957 and was employed by Dr. Thomas and Dr. Odland, two of the best orthopedic doctors in the area. [Aside from Brian: While typing this, I received a text from Mom saying: "Great orthopedic Drs. Dr Odland diagnosed your Legg Perthes, when the Naperville Dr was unsure."] I lived with my friend, Yvonne Finnegan's parents until we got married.

We were married April 13, 1957, Palm Sunday, at First Lutheran Church in Janesville. It was a beautiful day! We spent only a few days in Wisconsin Dells for our honey moon and were excited to get back to our apartment on Blaine Ave. which we rented the duration of Ken's college days. We had furniture to buy and wanted to be all settled before he had to get back to school after spring break.

I worked at the clinic and Ken also worked part-time repairing small appliances on Saturdays while going to school. Our college life was very happy together in our small, but nice apartment and most week=ends, Ken's high school friends would drop by to play cards and they would bring the beer.

Bonita and Rich were very special during this time in our marriage and the four of us played a lot of cards and drank beer together, and I remember Ken putting together speakers and a sound system for their record player.



Ken and Darlene at Bonita and Rich's wedding

In 1990, Ken & I ended up going to Germany with Bonita and Rich and some of their friends from Craig High School. The German teacher at the high school had organized the tour. My, what a wonderful and fun time we all had and the friendships made on this trip continued on for many years. Ken & I hosted a few reunions at Sky High years later and always enjoyed their friendship. The trip to Germany was the only overseas trip Ken & I ever took together. Fantastic, happy memories!



On May 17, 1960, Ken was in class taking finals when he got a call from my Gyn doctor, that I was about to deliver our first child three weeks early, who we named Brian David. He was a healthy 7 lb. something oz. with a tint of red hair, all 10 fingers and toes, perfect in every way. What a graduation present for Ken, huh?

Ken took a job at Argonne National Laboratory in Lemont IL shortly after graduation from college and that was a big move for us leaving family and friends behind.

We, of course, adjusted well and after a couple years, we bought our first house on Main St in Naperville IL. Naperville at that

time was only 8,000 people; a small suburb of Chicago, and is well over 150,000 as I write this chapter [in 2022].

On May 19, 1962, the police escorted us to the hospital because our second son, Eric Dale, decided to come in a really big hurry. He was a little over 7 pounds (perfect in every way also) no red hair but very, very light blond hair. The front desk rushed me to O.B., delivered the baby, and greeted Ken when he came upstairs after checking me in with, “Congratulations, you now have another healthy son.” Doesn’t get any better than that, does it?

I started working at this hospital, Edward Hospital, in Naperville, taking call as a x-ray technician which worked out really well for us. Ken was always home from work before I started call, so we never had to hire someone to watch the boys while either of us were working our jobs! I was very happy and grateful that it all worked out so well.

We had some great friends in Naperville and the boys had all kinds of friends to play with in the neighborhood. They joined Cub Scouts, I was a den mother for a few years, they played ball on a field not far from the house and it seemed there were always kids in & out of our house. Monopoly was a game we usually would play around the dining room table on Sundays.

Brian & Eric did very well in the Naperville school system which was one of the reasons I was reluctant to move to Portage WI in 1972. Also, the fact that we had remodeled our house in Naperville and were moving into a tumble-down shack at Sky

High campground. We had decided to buy out our partners at Sky High, which we had co-owned since 1965. Not a real happy time actually for me, but a very happy time for Ken and the boys. Over the years it all worked out for the best, and I came to love it as much as they did. Maybe in a later chapter, I'll add a history on Sky High that Ken wrote out in 1986. It's pretty interesting; I think you'll like reading it.



Sky High crew, L to R: Danny Zauberis, Dan Zauberis, Lauren Zauberis, Lady, Fran Zauberis, Ken Anderson, Brian Anderson, Darlene Anderson, Eric Anderson

Owning the campground and living there was a good thing and the biggest reward for me was meeting so many wonderful people who are still friends today. I went to a lady's 90th birthday party a month ago in Orfordville, Barb Klund, and she and her family were probably one of our first regular campers back in 1972 or '73. Claude, her husband, helped Ken out in a lot of ways like installing electric sites, sod around our new pool, and it's endless how much help and support we got from these new campers and friends made through the years. That is something to be truly grateful and happy about, but the stories could go on and on!

After 30 years of ownership, the boys graduated from college and on their own, we were both ready to sell the campground.

Lucky for us in 1995, Eric and his future bride, Barb, who had moved back to Milwaukee from Seattle, made us an offer we couldn't refuse. Happy days!

Our move to Saddle Ridge outside of Portage gave us the time to do things we thought we had missed doing while at the campground. We both continued working part-time at jobs, but did have time to do some golfing at Saddle Ridge, plus taking little day trips. Ken loved to take all the back roads to see the sights.

In 1998, Ken was diagnosed with esophageal cancer, but with his optimism and the will power to overcome all odds, we still made our road trips and made as many visits as possible to Brian &

Karen's in Minneapolis. In fact, we made that trip a week before he died on March 20, 2000. The boys and I were with him when he left us to go to his eternal home. A very sad time for me, but the good and happy memories are still there. Old friends will say to me, "do you remember when...?" such as, 1. celebrating Ken's 60th surprise birthday party on the lawn of the Capitol hearing the beautiful music by the Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra, 2. spending time on the Capitol lawn after his chemo treatment waiting for the concert to start, 3. Ken organizing a snowmobile club in Caledonia and our little trips to Merrimac for breakfast, 4. trying out our cross-country skiing at the campground with some friends, falling down into a mound of snow and laughing our heads off, 5. the wonderful campfires shared by many and the friends Brian & Eric made with some of these same campers' children, who come today and camp at Sky High. The Bartels and Klunds were some of those "special" friends. 6. the baseball tournaments organized by friends from Portage, Dan Brunt and Bob Daly. These tournaments were like family reunions for Ken and I. One team was made up of my nephews, but were called "Kenny's cousins", go figure! Always a very fun and happy weekend. There are many, many more happy events like these; too many to mention now, but they all bring a happy smile to my face remembering them.



Wisconsin Capitol Lawn – Wisconsin Chamber Orchestra



Sky High Softball Tournament



Sky High Softball Tournament

In 2003, I married John Prest and lived in Saddle Ridge for 6 months and in his condo in Sun City, Hilton Head Island, SC for 6 months. We started a pickleball club in Sun City which became very popular and membership grew very fast. I taught John how to play bridge so we joined a few bridge clubs. I met some wonderful friends there and still keep in touch with a “special couple”, Eileen & Jim Rossini who still live in Sun City. My hope is to see them this fall, 2022, if at all possible.

Obviously, these are the most happy and wonderful times in my life:

Marriage to Ken April 13, 1957, Brian’s birth May 17, 1960, Eric’s birth May 19, 1962, Brian & Karen’s marriage June 29, 1992, Tor’s birth May 20, 1993, Louise’s birth January 24, 2000, Louise’s adoption April 8, 2001, Eric & Barb’s marriage July 15, 1995, Stian’s birth April 19, 1996, Lars’ birth August 12, 1997, Hanne’s birth October 13, 1999.

These are the most important people in my life and I love each and every one of them very, very much. I pray that their lives will be filled with many happy memories and who knows, maybe they'll some day write it all down as I have tried to do. Thank you Brian and Karen for coming up with the idea and doing all the work to make a book possible.

What is some of the best advice your mother ever gave you?



My mother and I did not sit down and have mother-daughter conversation like I'm sure my daughter-in-laws have had with their daughters, my grand-daughters Hanne & Louise. Mom died when I was 13 years of age, so there wasn't much time to give me all that motherly advice that all kids need growing up. I remember things like "be a good girl" no matter where I was going or whose house I was going to visit. I tried to honor her advice as I was growing up, and I think I did a pretty good job! Growing up, "clean your plate" applied to all of us kids. Mom worked hard preparing a good meal for us, baking bread probably every day and canning all those fruits and veggies from the garden. When a pig or cow was butchered, she had to prepare all the meat to be canned in jars, put it in the pressure cooker to cook and be ready to store in the basement for us to eat in the

winter. Nothing from the table was ever be wasted, even for the dog.

There was never any doubt about going to church every Sunday, that was a given. The whole family attended every Sunday at a little white church in the country not far from the farm. The young ones went to Sunday school after church. On Christmas Eve there was always a bag for the kids filled with an apple or orange, peanuts in the shell, and maybe a piece or two of candy handed to us as we walked out of the church.

“Do a good job”, in other words, work hard and do the best you can no matter the job. I remember when we moved to Janesville I was around 13-14 and I did some housework for the couple who lived next door to us. She had bad arthritis in her hands and was unable to do some of the cleaning in their home. She hired me to clean her bathroom and kitchen and I remember her making me reclean the bathroom because I hadn't gotten on my hands and knees to clean behind the toilet properly. Also, she had me wash the kitchen floor on my hands and knees with 2 pails of water; one to wash the floor and the other to rinse the floor. She taught me very well in a kind way and to this day I clean bathrooms on my hands and knees and I certainly make sure I clean good behind and around the toilet. That lesson applied well when we bought the campground because people would comment on our clean restrooms even though some were outhouses.

I remember Mom cleaning a few afternoons a week at the Beverly Theatre in Janesville. I can't recall how long she did this, but I do remember us kids getting free admission because of her employment there. So "work hard" and "do a good job" just came naturally to her and she tried to pass this valuable advice on to her children, and for that I'm very, very grateful.

She was a loving and peaceful person to be around, and it's nice to be able to write these chapters and remember things I've long forgotten.

What is one of your favorite trips that you've taken? What made it great?



I guess the reason I am picking this trip is because it was the very first time I had flown on a plane. A few weeks after graduating from high school in 1952, a classmate and very good friend of mine, Patsy Birmingham and I got on a plane in Madison and flew to Ontario CA. My brother, Gilbert, and his wife Jean, lived in Rancho Cucamonga, so they picked us up at the airport.

Back then people usually got all dressed up to fly, so Patsy and I were all decked out in our Sunday best, even wore heels; can you imagine seeing that nowadays?

Our stay was scheduled for a week and Gib & Jean packed it fully with all sorts of fun things to see and do. They took us to Knott's

Berry Farm and to Disneyland a couple of times, which I think was fairly new in 1952. [Note: Disneyland didn't open until 1955, but Darlene provided the picture below, which looks like the Magic Kingdom castle.] We had a ball. We drove around Hollywood and saw some of the movie stars' homes. I think I even got a picture of the big HOLLYWOOD sign on the hill.



Darlene and Patsy in California - Mystery castle

We spend a couple days just sun bathing while they were at work. The longest day trip was to Tijuana, Mexico and I remember being somewhat scared being there. We went to do some shopping only, and roamed up and down a couple streets where the vendors were selling their goods. Gilbert advised us never to pay what they said it was worth. We were to bargain with them which was a new experience for Patsy and I. I ended up buying a beige colored leather purse (at least the man said it was leather) and I did use it for many years. I really can't remember what else was purchased that day—long ways to travel for only a purse!!

We left before it got too dark, and it turned out to be quite an adventure of us two naive, young girls. Gilbert had been stationed at Oceanside while in the Marines for boot camp, so he knew his way around fairly well.

Patsy and I just recently talked on the phone (June 1, 2022) reminiscing about this very trip. She now lives in LA area and has for many years, so it has been a long time since I've actually seen her. We both commented on what a fun and exciting trip it was for both of us.

What is one of the bravest things you've ever done, and what was the outcome?



I have never considered myself as being a brave person, but as a mother, we will do anything to protect our children the best possible way as they grow up.

This incident happened early in our partnership with Dan & Fran Zauberis when we bought Sky High campground. The year was around 1967 so Brian and Eric were 7 and 5 years old at the time. As was the custom, the women and kids stayed at the campground during the week while Ken & Dan worked at Argonne National Laboratory near our homes in Naperville. I was working at the hospital in Naperville, taking call as a x-ray technician, and my schedule was 2 weeks on and 2 weeks off routinely, so this meant Fran was at Sky High often alone with

her German Shepard dog [Lady] which she didn't mind at all. Fran informed me after the boys and I arrived one Monday morning that she had taken a reservation on the phone for 15 campsites and they were staying for 2 weeks. She said they were coming that afternoon, so Fran, the boys and I hurried up to Area A (now Hawk's Haven) to rake the leaves that were covering the campsites. We had just gotten a good start and in they rolled with their small campers, parking where-ever, digging holes to make their trailers level, and paying no attention to our instructions. Fran said to me, "They are gypsies." The only thing I had heard about gypsies was probably from my older brothers who tried to scare Bonita and I when we lived on the farm. They told us they would try to steal little kids.

I was scared! I told the boys to come with me to the house and I immediately called the sheriff's department and of course called Ken to come quick. The sheriff's department drove down the driveway and the young people and kids who were in the barn stealing us blind, ran like jack rabbits back up the hill to their campsites.

Fran and I locked up the barn and the shed where the tools and equipment were kept, as instructed by Ken.

They had not paid for their campsites but were hoping to make some money painting barns for area farmers. After Ken and Dan's arrival later that night from Naperville, they went up to the campground and made it clear that we did not operate under

those circumstances and they were to leave the next morning. Ken did allow them to stay one more day, and if they did not leave, he would be up to the campsites and pull them out one by one with our tractor and the help of the sheriff's department. They were escorted out by the sheriff's department headed north on I-90 through Columbia county. Through the whole situation, I tried my hardest not to show how scared I really was because my top priority was making sure the boys were safe.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?



I think there is a difference between perfect happiness and perfect joy. Let me explain - happiness is man-made, such as being happy when you buy a new car or when you purchase your first home, the home you always wanted. Any thing that's materialistic and that you are now able to afford, probably makes you very happy.

But perfect joy is something God has gifted to us by his grace such as good health, food to eat that we can share with others and a roof over our heads.

Perfect Joy for me was seeing my grandchildren born in an environment where they were wanted and loved and could feel safe knowing God was watching over them and guiding their parents to raise them in a Christian home.

Perfect Joy was a trip to Hawaii that Tor Faxvog, Karen's dad, and I took to see our granddaughter for the first time. She had

been born in China and was already 15 months old when Brian Karen and Tor, her soon to be big brother, traveled to China to bring her to the states for adoption. While Brian and Karen attended her citizenship appointment in Honolulu in an open-air office, Tor (Sr.) and I watched the kids. What joy to see this little girl enjoying the American food that Tor, her big brother, was sharing with her. I remember offering her a cookie but she insisted having one in each hand.





It was perfect joy going to the childrens' sporting events or music concerts and watching them perform with the excellence God had gifted them. They found great happiness being in that chair playing their instrument, or on the floor or field

performing their best, whatever the sport. For a grandmother it was perfect joy to be able to watch them.

Have you seen a beautiful sunrise or a glorious sunset? Then you know man could not design such beauty. Only God could create this beautiful horizon for all of us to witness, and God is pure joy, to me.



MY LIFE STORIES | Darlene Anderson



I have a plaque hanging in my apartment which reads, “Cardinals appear when angels are near.” And I know this first hand to be true. The day Ken died, Brian, Eric and I went back to the house and the boys were busy on their phones calling family and friends to notify them of Ken’s death. I’m sitting in a chair looking out the window, sort of in a trance, and spotted a cardinal in a nearby tree. That cardinal stayed there, I kid you not, until the boys were through with their calling and I was watching that cardinal the whole time. The cardinals often came to my bird feeder at the campground along with the hummingbirds and the grandchildren enjoyed watching them as much as I did—that’s perfect joy!

So for me, perfect happiness is temporary; the car needs repairs, the roof on the house is leaking and you need a new roof, and the outfit that looked great on you a couple years ago doesn’t seem to fit just right any more. The Joy we feel in our hearts is God’s gift to all of us and it’s forever; especially the love of family who are always there when you need them; that’s perfect joy to me. I love you all very much. Thanks be to God!

School years after moving to Janesville WI. Were they happy and why?



Starting 4th grade at Roosevelt Grade School in Janesville was a big, big change for me. My class had more students than the whole 1-8 grades at our country school we farm kids attended while living in Evansville.

A girl, Joan “E” Hill lived only a block away and became a good friend immediately. I would walk over to her house to pick her up for school and often she was still eating breakfast. Her mom would invite me to sit down and have breakfast with Joan E, even though I had already had breakfast at home. I remember this as a very kind and loving gesture on her part.

As I remember there were lots of kids in the neighborhood and our favorite game before dark was kick-the-can. Joan E moved to Berlin WI before we finished grade school but we still kept in touch. Another friend of ours, Patsy Birmingham and I were

invited to Joan E's house in Berlin the summer she moved. She had a slumber party the first night we were there, and had invited a lot of her new friends she had made since moving to Berlin. We had a wonderful time! The next day we went bowling downtown and met more of her new schoolmates. Great weekend!



Me and Joan "E" Hill

I and my four good friends, Patsy, Patty, Ruth and Helen left Roosevelt school to attend high school, which back then was located on Main St. not far from my house. The building is now an apartment complex which we toured on our 50th class reunion [in 2002].

We met other girls from different grade schools in Janesville and all became best friends. There were twelve of us and we were called the “dirty dozen”, but only in a good way. The picture you see of us in this chapter was taken one night after graduation, when we all dressed up and went out for dinner, probably knowing we were heading in different directions.



Seated, from far left: Nancy Marshall, Patty Munson, Norma DeFraties, Joan Cahill, Helen Allen & Ruth Onsgard. Back row starting on left: Carol Kennedy, Nancy Cronin, Carol Potratz, Patsy Birmingham, Darlene & Bea Gilberto.

I'm happy to say I still keep in contact with Bea Gilberto (Kuntz), Joan Cahill (Merrick) and Patsy Birmingham (Emmer) today in 2022. Joan went to our 65th class reunion with me and has informed me that she doesn't think she can make it this year for our 70th. I'll miss her.

Through our high school years, we did many fun things together as a group. The dances at the YWCA on Friday nights (back then jitterbugging was a big thing) football games, ice cream at Adamany's after school, although I didn't attend too often because of my job at Dell's Cleaners. Some of us were in chorus together and also in drama club either on stage or behind the curtain. It was all a great and happy time.

Our big togetherness was our week at Lake Ripley, probably the first week of summer vacation. We did this two summers. The first summer, a teacher from high school, Miss Mitchell was our chaperone, and another year, Sally, Joan Cahill's sister chaperoned us kids. We did a lot of sunbathing, in fact one year I got the worst sunburn I have ever had in my life. We were, of course, by the water and there was an overcast sky so we didn't even think about getting sunburned. Wow! It was bad.



Another fun tradition for a few years was going to Carol Kennedy's house before Christmas and decorating their huge tree. That was always a lot of fun singing Christmas carols (see pictures) and admiring the beautiful tree we had finished decorating.



Oh we had such wonderful times together and it brightens my heart to have these good memories to remember now.

Sadly, five of these dear friends have died already but writing this chapter has helped me realize what a fantastic group of friends I had while attending high school. No wonder I enjoyed my high school days so much. Go figure!

What do you consider one of your greatest achievements in life?



Making sure my son, Brian, did not grow up with one leg shorter than the other, is probably near the top of the list.

Before Brian was 3 years old, he was diagnosed with a condition that affects children (usually boys) between ages 4-10. He started complaining about pain in his left knee, especially when walking up and down stairs. I had worked for Drs. Thomas and Odland in Janesville as an X-ray technician during the years when Ken was attending college.

I had X-rayed a few kids who came in complaining of the same symptoms, Dr. Odland usually saw these patients and I remember a few of these kids between ages 5-8, who I had X-rayed, and who Dr. Odland diagnosed with Legg-Perthes, named after two physicians (now called Legg-Calve-Perthes (LEG-kahl-VAY-PER-tuz) disease). It is “a childhood disease

condition that occurs when blood supply to the ball part (femoral head) of the hip joint is temporarily interrupted and the bone begins to die.” If weight is applied (i.e., while standing or walking), the femoral head can flatten out and become deformed.

We made an appointment with an orthopedic doctor in Naperville, where we were then living, and he said “could be Legg-Perthes but not sure, come back in a month and we’ll re-X-ray the hips. Well I wasn’t about to wait a whole month, because a lot of harm could be done in a few months time. So I called Dr. Odland in Janesville. He said come and see me Saturday morning and I’ll take a look at the X-rays and let you know what I think. We did - he looked - and said yes, Brian has Legg-Perthes.

Dr. Odland usually admitted his patients into the hospital so that the nurses could train the kids to lay flat on their stomachs or backs and then sent them home when the child understood they could not get on their hands and knees, could not walk, could not sit at the table to eat or sit anywhere else for that matter. They were to stay in bed!

Dr. Odland looked at me and said, “I think you can train him yourself, Darlene, don’t admit him to the hospital.” We took this info back to our orthopedic doctor in Naperville and he went along with the plan. Unlike Dr. Odland, he usually put a body cast on his patients or else chained up their bad leg and they would

use crutches.

Dr. Odland knew that kids put their leg down and walked on it if no supervision was around. That's exactly what happened to a young boy at Naper school where Brian and Eric attended while we lived in Naperville. We saw him many years later and he had a 3 inch platform on one shoe because his hip joint did not develop correctly.

Eric was 9 months old so my sister, LaDean, took Eric for 2 weeks until I completed training Brian. We got a twin size hide-a-bed and set it up in the dining room, so he could be around everyone, bought a huge fish tank, stocked it with colorful fish, and put it at the foot of his bed, and surrounded him with books. Eric was just starting to walk, so he would walk around Brian's bed and keep him company.

Twice a day, I would massage Brian's legs, pulling the muscles down in the back and pushing his feet up so his feet would not atrophy. We bought a wagon, Brian would be lying down in it and Eric sitting up and off we'd go to the library, with a few other neighborhood moms and kids, for story hour.

After a year, the orthopedic doctor said the blood supply had come back to the femoral head of the hip and he could start walking again. He was like a little child just learning to walk and it brought tears to our eyes to witness these first steps.

Brian, thank God for his patience through the whole ordeal because he healed well. I think he said he has maybe a 1/4 inch

difference in his legs and also is getting a little arthritis in his hip as he is getting older. I'm very thankful that God directed me to Dr. Odland who knew exactly the right thing to do.

Who were the best cooks in your family?



I have to say my mom, because everything she made while I was growing up was always a good meal. There were always canned vegs and fruit on the shelf in the basement along with the canned meat which made the best gravy. In the summertime, of course, the vegs were brought in fresh from the big garden. Nothing fancy, but to me it was delicious and we were taught to always clean our plates.

The one thing that made her meals so outstanding was the fresh bread she made almost every day. I never tasted store bought bread until we moved to Janesville.

[My sister,] LaDean was an expert on preparing wild game meals. Squirrel, rabbit, deer, or whatever Jim brought in the house after hunting. The meat was so tender, the gravy very tasty, and she became very knowledgeable about how to prepare anything Jim shot.

Nila was the pie maker and often it was fresh fruit in season at the time. No matter what, her pies were always a hit. You don't see pie on a dessert table much anymore.

My siblings and spouses would get together every other month for a few years and share a meal at each other's houses. I remember Bonita would often make tuna casserole which was always creamy and delicious. Laila, Donna and I would probably bring a salad or some kind of dessert. Sharing those meals and being all together was very special.

The boys in my family, as far as I can remember, weren't much help in the kitchen.

How did you decide when to have children?



Ken and I knew when we got married that we eventually wanted to have children. We got married April 13, 1957 after I had taken my boards to become a registered technician (RT) and Ken had gotten discharged from the army.

Ken started college at Whitewater State College (now University of Wisconsin, Whitewater) the fall he was discharged and I had moved to Janesville from Evanston, IL to work for two orthopedic doctors. We got married during his freshman spring break. He was getting \$100 a month from the GI Bill, but that of course was not enough for us to live on. So I worked during his college days.

That determined our decision as to when to start a family and nine months before his graduation, we decided now was the time to try to get pregnant. I got pregnant immediately; guess I was as fertile as my mother though I'm sure their 13 children were not

planned and no birth control (was available).

Brian was born 2 weeks before Ken's graduation. I was breast feeding so of course my boobs looked like balloons on the graduation pictures taken that day. We decided to have kids a couple years apart and Eric was born 2 years and 2 days after Brian. They were good babies to raise, happy kids, easy to train and our little family was perfect!

We decided 2 was probably all we could handle and also at the time we had decided to buy the campground property in Wisconsin with our partners, and getting pregnant again with all the traveling back and fourth from IL to WI may have been a problem. The boys were 4 and 2 at the time.

I really didn't want to get pregnant after I turned 30 years old, so Ken, bless his heart, did something to take care of that matter by getting a vasectomy.

The Sky High story... from the beginning



This story was originally published in the 1994 edition of the Sky High Sentinel.

Many of you, while sitting in the barn will ask, “How did you ever happen to buy Sky High?”

Putting history on paper is very important, and nothing can bring that statement closer to home than to have a grandchild!!! This article is dedicated to Tor Kenneth Anderson, our grandson, who will be one year old May 20th, 1994.

These long wintry days and a movie I saw on TV last night really gave me the inspiration to write this article, plus the fact I was given a Grandmother’s Book, which will be given to Tor someday. In the book, I’m to give an account of my past, so this is a start with one phase of my life.

How SKY HIGH BECAME PART OF THE ANDERSON FAMILY’S LIFE really happened quite unexpectedly. We lived in Naperville,

IL, Ken worked at Argonne National Laboratory as a research technician, and I worked at the local hospital as an X-ray technician. We had bought our first home and were just settling into our new neighborhood, and the idea of buying some property in Wisconsin really wasn't in the budget.

It was May, 1965 (Mother's Day) and the Zauberises (our partners for 7 years) and the Andersons drove to Portage Wisconsin to look at this "farm for sale with a beautiful view". Indeed, we all did fall in love with the fantastic view. We never dreamed, that day anyway, that it would somehow become property we would own or care to own for that matter. The house looked like it was ready to fall down, the barn really needed a good paint job, and in general, it needed a lot of tender loving care.

The previous owner had bought it from the farmer and had a dream of making these acres into a campground, but died suddenly after a year of ownership. It had been deserted for over a year before his estate sold it—and yes—the Zauberises and Andersons were now the proud owners of some property on top of a high bluff.

We took ownership in July of that year, after begging, borrowing and searching every avenue of our resources to come up with enough for a down payment, not really worrying about how we would pay the bills that came later. After all, we had two young boys, Brian 5, Eric 3 and to take on an endeavor like this was

overpowering, especially to me! The men assured us it would just be a HOBBY - we wouldn't get too serious about this!!! The men continued their jobs at Argonne Nat'l Lab, and the women and kids manned the property alone during the week. We made the decision to make it into a campground also, and so the work began. I'll never forget those first weeks here—we would literally run out the door and greet the customer; we were so happy to see someone who actually wanted to camp here. It still looked like a deserted old farm, but it didn't take much convincing after they looked out over the valley and saw that view.

The next seven years were a lot of commuting (both families continued living in Naperville) and hard, endless work by everyone. Bathrooms had to be built, Area A (Hawks Haven to you newcomers) had to be developed, rocks buried, fences taken down, roads made and graveled, porches built on the barn—the jobs were endless, and remember this was still a HOBBY! It was beginning to look more like a commitment to me, but yes, Brian and Eric were enjoying spending their summers at Sky High and we were out of the city. They discovered Big Rock, their fort, and loved sharing it with all their camper friends, and horsing around with Rainy, our beautiful collie dog, who some of you, I know, remember. She would always lie right in front of the barn so no one could pass without first bending down to pet her.

After 7 years, it was apparent to us that Sky High needed full time operators living here, so the buy and sell deal came into effect. The boys and Ken wanted to buy and move here, and I really dragged my feet. We had just remodeled our house in Naperville. Brian now in sixth grade, Eric in fourth, the school system was great and they were doing wonderful. Den Mother, PTA, the whole nine yards, and I just didn't want to move to a house where you literally had to set out all kinds of pails when it rained, because the roof leaked so badly. No furnace, just an oil burner in the middle of the dining room and the glass would go up, but the sash stayed down when you opened a window. A porch was holding on by 3 (4 at the most) nails. Wish I had a picture to show you, but take my word, it was bad!! Not just me. but all our friends said "What - you're moving THERE? I THOUGHT THAT PLACE WAS JUST A HOBBY!!"

You know the old saying "A mother will do anything for her kids". Well, it's true. We moved to Sky High in 1972 when school got out and that is another beginning to this story.

We were fortunate to sell our house (a technician I worked with at the hospital bought it) and the profit went into building a below ground pool. We started the pool that first summer and what a summer—it rained and rained and rained, and needless to say, the job took much longer and was a lot messier than we had anticipated. The present large deck was added later when we built the Clubhouse years later.

The house started getting some attention—all new windows, a roof and a furnace were obviously essential right away. Every couple of years, we would remodel another room or rooms, and over a period of time, we finally made it into the comfortable, inviting home it is now!!

You must remember, when you're in business, what's needed outside or for the business always comes first, and there were many needs. We made the decision to take on seasonal campers, so an addition to the newer Area B (Whitetail Run) had to be developed to accommodate these bigger units. What a blessing this decision was—we have met so many wonderful people who have become dear friends, and who have helped us so often through the years. One of our first seasonal families, Jeannie and Cletus Klingele from Illinois came in 1974 and Clete is still with us. Along with all the blessings of knowing these seasonal people comes sadness also, because Jeannie died this past January after a short illness. We will miss her deeply, as we do the others we have lost from this dear group of people. Today, we have almost 70 families who open and close the season with us. We're so happy to see them in the spring and so sad to say good-bye in the fall.

So much has been done over the years (there's a brief history of Sky High in an earlier Sentinel). The latest addition is the new "Hickory Heights" area. This is Sky High's most scenic acreage, because of the view. This project just about came to a halt 5 years

ago. We had drilled a well (but no water) and then we found out Ken needed to have surgery, since a tumor was discovered in the lower left lung lobe (malignant). The surgery was performed in May, 1989—yes, the season had started already—but again our dear friends came to the rescue and helped us out. That was 5 years ago—5 years ago and Ken is healthy and the well has water. Since the surgery and radiation treatments were successful, the following summer 1990, we continued on the development of Hickory Heights, and now it's time to add on—the area is so popular.

I sit here thinking about all we would like to do in the future to make this an even more inviting campground, and can close my eyes and remember what it looked like 28 years ago. No power plant on the horizon, trees were a lot smaller, lots of rocks in all the fields, a rickety old house and a barn in need of paint. Fallen fences and paths still visible where cows walked. I am so grateful that Ken, Brian and Eric were able to see through all that, even though it meant lots of work ahead for all of us. The boys were such an important factor in our buying out our partners, because without their help in those beginning years we could not have done it.

They spent lots of hours on lawn mowers, pumping honey, a hammer or saw in their hands, but still had time to do well in school, play instruments, and build a huge tree house in the big oak tree in the back yard. (Brian just took it down in the spring of

1993).

Now we're thinking about selling this place, called Sky High, and it brings a tear to my eye thinking that you, Tor, might not have the opportunity to walk through the fields here with your dog, Woody, or build a tree house in the big oak tree in the back yard, or show Big Rock, your fort, to all your camper friends, but then again, this is only a place—it's the memories that count!!!

We're going to continue trying to sell Sky High and hopefully, good memories can be made by a new owner and his/her family. Sky High can be another place, another name—we can still find a Big Rock, a tree to build a tree house and a cow path to walk with Woody. I LOVE YOU TOR!! -GRANDMA

History of Sky High through 1986, by Ken Anderson



In 1960, Mr. Schmidt (the owner of the land) had to sell his herd of dairy cows in order to finance a good domestic water well. Having done that, he was able to sell this property to Mr. Forester for campsite development in 1963.

The dairy barn was built in 1910, as were many others in this bluff area. The large sandstone foundation walls were built from sandstone hauled up the bluff from somewhere in the valley below. A large job considering this was prior to motor vehicles! The oak framing timbers were cut from the forest here on the property and carpenters made the mortise and tenon joints with hand tools. The pine boards making up the sides, were purchased from a local lumber yard. The building is original except for the removal of calf pens and old concrete gutters to make room for

the “Cave”(now called the “Sandbar”) and modern rest room facilities and a new roof. Windows, entry way, deck, and solar system were added later (see chronology below).

1963 - John Forester purchased land and buildings from dairy farmer, Walter Schmidt, with idea of building campsites (top of hill only). Fences and old buildings removed.

1964 - Hilltop woods cleared and roads put in. The hayloft had floor put in and windows installed.

1965 - Anderson/Zauberis families purchased Sky High from the Forester Estate.

1966 - Restrooms and showers were in stalled first time in the basement of dairy barn. Added campsites to Area A. Temporary pool added.

1967 - Deck and entry added to barn. Electricity was added to Area A.

1968 - New camping area was started (Area B) for larger trailers. Parking lot enlarged for first time.

1969-71 - Area B was further developed with electrical hookups and water.

1972 - Ken & Darlene Anderson and their sons, Brian & Eric (cheap help, but good), age 12 & 10, bought out partnership &

moved here. Brian was Chief Honey Pumper for many years and Eric was the Lawn Mower Engineer. They both led field trips to “Big Rock” House remodeling was started. New permanent pool was started. Garage was moved to enlarge parking lot for second time.

1973 - A new pool was opened to the public. Twelve wooded sites were added to Area B.

1974 The “Cave”(now known as the (“Sandbar”)) opened in the lower barn.

1975 - A large new septic system was started. House was remodeled.

1976 The septic system was finished and put in service. New rest room facility was added to Area A. Twelve more sites were added to Area B. New 28 campsites in Area C were added.

1977 - The rest rooms in the Barn were remodeled and enlarged for the second time: A laundry room and year round heat was added. Open in winter to snowmobilers.

1978 - The dump station was blacktopped and the basketball court was installed.

1979 - Horseback Riding and Bridle trails were developed in the woods.

1980 - The "Cave" (now known as the "Sandbar") was remodeled sand blasted, concrete, wood heat, cross country skiing. Camper cabins were built.

1981 Chucker Golf Course installed. The Canoe Base moves to Sky High. Trees were planted in Areas B & C.

1982 - Riding Corral, stable, new shop were built.

1983 - A computer was purchased. The front of the "Rec Building was black topped.

1984 Twenty canoes were purchased along with a trailer and van to run a canoeing livery. The "Sandbar" opened (previously known as the "Cave").

1985 A new parking lot was added, along with a 40x 70 "Rec Center". The pool deck was enlarged, and an addition was built onto the Barn to house a solar heater for the pool, laundry, and showers. Black top area was enlarged.

1986 - Hiking Trails were developed from the former Bridle Path _ about 3 miles. Improved the "Rec Center"(see separate article). Area B was leveled and improved in sites 39-49, and in sites 14-28 of Area C. sites. Renamed camping areas and Rec Center.

NEW NAMES

Rec Center is now Camper's Clubhouse

MY LIFE STORIES | Darlene Anderson

Area A - Hawks Haven

Area B - White Tail Run

Area C - Sunrise Circle

History of the Sky High Softball Tournament



The softball tournament held at Sky High every year started in 1980 was always a highlight for our seasonals and for the families who participated in the games. This event was held the 2nd week-end after Memorial Day and was always a very fun weekend for everyone.

Two friends from Portage, Dan Brunt and Bob Daly (who died in 2019) had friends who were good ball players so they came up with the idea to have a Sky High softball tournament. Bob & Dan did all the organizing, contacted the teams who were interested in playing, got all the necessary equipment together, and all Ken and I had to worry about was praying for good weather and setting up the tent to sell brats & beer.

As I said, they contacted teams they were familiar with except for one—"Kenny's Cousins", but they weren't even Ken's cousins, but they were all my nephews and being from a family

of 13, I had a lot of nephews.



Back in 1980, the players had to be 30 or older to play on a team. My how things have changed over the years, but its all good. Bob's granddaughter, who was in college, played one year and Eric & Brian had also played on occasion.

It was a weekend of celebration and potlucks in the clubhouse were hosted for the families on Bob & Dan's team. Many of my nephews families would come for the day to watch their kids play, and we had our own potluck and reunion.

Lots of beer and brats were sold over the weekend and thanks to the many seasonals who watched the games and participated in buying from the beer tent, helped make it another successful weekend. Bob & Dan and their wives would take Ken and I out for dinner on Sunday night after everything was cleaned up and put away and we would celebrate another fun-filled ball tournament at Sky High.



Bob & Dan retired from organizing the games in 2000 but Eric & Barb thought it was such a wonderful family thing, they continued doing the tournament. The men on Bob & Dan's team, plus Kenny's Cousins were all getting older; too old to play in other words, so Eric scouts around for new teams every year and has continued the tournament, doing it twice a year, two weeks after Memorial Day and another in the fall. He built a new ball diamond; no longer are the teams playing around rocks and unlevel ground. It's really nice.

My great-nephew, Wade Boegli, from Orfordville brought up a team one year which included his 2 sons and their buddies who were in high school. Printed on their T-shirts read—“KENNY’S COUSINS 2020”. How about that?? To quote Wade, “it’s all about the memories for these kids to be here to play”. How sweet is that? It was very touching to me and I’m thankful to him to remind me of all the happy memories the ball tournaments meant to me.



Bob & Dan planted a tree in memory of Ken in 2000 at the old ball tournament site, but unfortunately it was injured by a lawn mower and never survived. My intention is to plant a tree in the new area in memory of Ken, who loved these ball tournament weekends more than anyone. May he Rest In Peace knowing they are still happening.

What is one of the strangest things that has ever happened to you?



I had to give this question a lot of thought, I guess I don't think things are strange no matter what happens to me, mainly because I just feel it's God's will and I should be content with the circumstances.

I did send a sympathy card to a neighbor of mine in Saddle Ridge many years ago who's wife had died a few months previous and was having a hard time coping with her death, according to another neighbor who told me about it.

Although we were neighbors, I had not met him, but sent the sympathy card out of support and told him in the note that I had some grieving books sent to me from Thrivent for Lutherans, which may be helpful to him.

He called and asked if he could meet me and he also requested the books I had suggested. We met at his house, sat and talked

about our deceased spouses with tears running down our faces. The friendship developed that summer into fall while playing a lot of golf together. I taught him how to play bridge and our relationship grew. He left the end of October to go to his winter place in South Carolina and wanted me to quit my job and come with him. We had only known each other a few months, so I said no, and assured him I would still be in Saddle Ridge the following spring when he returned. He called often that winter and sure enough when he came back we continued our friendship.

He signed me up to be his partner in the couples golf league, we played bridge every Sunday afternoon with the neighbor next door, went out for fish every Friday night, and best of all, we fell in love.

We went to SC that fall as a married couple and were married for 17 years until his death in 2020. So you never know what kind of happiness can develop by just sending a word of kindness to someone you don't even know. Strange? I thought so!



Tell me about one of the best days you can remember



There have been many “best days” that I can remember in my life and I have probably written about some of them already. But, one of the best days I remember recently was my 70th class reunion at the Elks Club in Janesville, WI on Wednesday, July 20th, 2022.

I hadn't heard ahead of time who would be attending, but was very excited and surprised to see many I had not seen since our 50th class reunion. Carol Kennedy, who was a close friend in high school, one of the 12 (Dirty Dozen) came from Edina, MN with her daughter, Andrea. It was so wonderful to see her after all the years; the last time being at our 50th. We have since talked on the phone and hope to see each other when I visit Brian & Karen some time, seeing Edina isn't too far from Plymouth where Brian and Karen live.



Me and Carol Kennedy

Although I was not on the committee that organized the reunion, I did volunteer to help in any way. As it turned out, Margaret Wixom (see pic), who I had talked to several times, asked if I would read a text the committee had received from one of our English teachers, Miss Hardy, who had taught many of us while in high school. She is now 95 years old and lives in Colorado Springs, CO. She said in her text that she was in good health and had many good memories of JHS. She married and became Joan Hardy Cook.

Seeing as I read the text, Margaret put me at the table with her and other committee members, including Bob Quinn, who was

our M.C. He and his wife Judy Bohemian who also was a classmate, came from CA to attend the reunion. Naomi Hackbarth was at the table along with Carol Kennedy and her daughter. At my left was Jerry Wells, a committee member who said the prayer and memoriam before we ate, and the two of us, as it turned out, had a lot in common to talk about. Jerry reminded me that he & I were confirmed together at First Lutheran church in Janesville, which I did not recall at all, but thought it was nice of him to remember.



Organizing Committee: Bob Quinn, Margaret Wixom, Jerry Wells and Naomi Hackbarth



Me with Carol Kennedy and Organizing committee

Jerry asked me if I knew Tom Jenkins from Portage who had the Chrysler dealership, because Jerry also had a Chrysler dealership in Janesville, and also knew that Tom had died. He knew Dwayne & Joan Meister who joined First Lutheran and I knew them because they were members at Bethlehem Lutheran and also lived at Saddle Ridge. The dinner conversation was very enjoyable, way more than I expected.

The meal was very good, the entertainment were 2 ladies; one who played the guitar, the other a music teacher who played the piano. They sang some oldies, the type of music that made you want to get up and dance.

I was going from table to table before the dinner taking pictures of everyone. I made hard copies and mailed pictures to some, and those who gave me their cell phone number, I texted them

pictures. I have received cards of gratitude from a few, so that's nice. I made hard copies for Jerry (see pic) (no cell phone) and he called me after receiving them and was very appreciative. We call each other a couple time a week and it seems we always can find lots to reminisce about. Jerry is a widower, whose wife died 4 years ago.

The reunion was the best ever and some of us are working on another next year, even if it's a gathering in Jerry's garage. At our age, we can't wait another five years.

The next day, Joan Cahill, one of the 12, came to Janesville from Rockton, IL, where she lives to have lunch with me. Her daughter, Nancy, drove her up and of course joined us for lunch at the Milwaukee Grill in Janesville. Joan didn't think she was well enough to attend the reunion, although I tried very hard to convince her to come. Joan and I had attended the 65th reunion together, but I wanted so much for us to be together at the 70th. Didn't happen, but getting together the day after was a good compromise.

We facebooked (??) our friend, Bea Gilberto, also one of the 12, in CA and I have texted her all the pictures.



Joan Cahill and Me



Me and Jerry Wells

If you have an opportunity to go to your class reunion, no matter what number it is, jump at the chance. Seeing friends at any age is great, but seeing old, dear friends at an old age is even better. God Bless them all!!

Have you ever given or been the recipient of a random act of kindness?



I am going to concentrate on the many acts of kindness given to me right now, and I've probably forgotten so many through the years, but here's a few.

In 1989, Ken who was 55 years old at the time, was diagnosed with malignant cancer in the left, lower lobe of his lungs. He went through the surgery, removing the lobe, but, of course, radiation was required afterwards to make sure all the bad cells were destroyed. It was the month of May, and that's when our busy time started at the campground. Memorial Day through Labor Day was the heart of our season.

Darrell Parker, a dear friend, organized a crew of men to come and cut the grass in the whole campground with lawn mowers furnished by Shultz's Small Engine before the holiday week-end. What an act of kindness; we were so very grateful.

Then the radiation treatments started for Ken. Every weekday for 7 weeks (35 treatments), which meant 35 trips to Madison and at the time, I was working full time at the Portage Clinic. Tom Udell and Topper Miller, seasonals at Sky High, recruited seasonals from the campground and made up a schedule to take Ken each day for his radiation treatments. A few Wednesdays, I would go also and then we would attend the “Concert on the Square” in Madison. That was an act of kindness by these dear friends who loved Ken.

That spring we had started building the rustic cabins (which are still being used after being added on to by Eric), but these cabins had not been completed before Ken got sick. Phil Walz, owner of Cascade Mt. Ski Resort and a good friend of ours, brought up a bunch of his employees and finished the project. That again was a random act of kindness.

Let us not forget Cletus Kringle, a seasonal, dear dear friend and a father figure to Ken. Cletus was always sitting on the bench in front of the barn by 8:30, waiting for Ken to get instructions on how he could help that day, something he did every day while they were seasonals at Sky High. He was Ken’s guardian angel here on earth, and kindness and love came natural to Cletus.

I, my friend, Yvonne, and her sister Pam went to San Diego, CA one year when Tor, my grandson, was attending graduate school at UCSD. We went to visit another x-ray friend. We had all worked together at one time at Evanston Hospital in IL. Tor, of

course, was at the top of my list of people to see, but not only did we get together to see each other, but Tor hauled us four old ladies around for 2 days showing us the sights of San Diego, the good restaurants, the seals and even spent a day driving us up into the mountains to Julian CA to have a piece of pie at the Julian Pie Co., which was delicious. We had a wonderful couple days spending time with him. That was a real act of kindness and I was thankful for the joy he displayed being with us.

A few years ago, my whole family went to the Palace theater in Wisconsin Dells to see the Christmas Show. It was a very cold night as I remember and John and I had ridden with Stian and Lars to the show, but had parked our car at the BP Station near Sky High. On our way home, I mentioned to the boys that my tire light had gone on and wondered if it was a problem to drive the car. Well when we got to the BP station, they insisted on checking the tire pressure on my tires, and like I said it was probably the coldest night we had had in a long time. They could have said, "You'll be OK Grandma, just check it out tomorrow", but no, they made sure John and I would be OK getting home that night. Act of kindness of love? Yes indeed!!

See the picture of the little girl with the doll? Well, at Rebecca's garage sale, she was selling a couple dolls all made out of cloth, soft and cuddly, and this little girl came in the arms of her Dad, and Mom was looking around but couldn't find anything she needed to buy. They were ready to leave and I asked the Dad if he

would mind if I bought one of the dolls for his daughter. I put it in her arms and immediately this huge smile came across her face. I guess that would qualify as a random act of kindness. I could see her hugging that doll all the way to their car and made me so happy to have given it to her.



I have also had the opportunity to give some happiness to Mary Mittlestadt, a friend and neighbor of ours in Caledonia who now resides in the dementia unit at the nursing home. She loves the caramel frappé from McDonalds, so whenever I go visit her, I stop and pick up one for each of us, and we sit and visit and enjoy our frappés together. Mary died in the fall of 2022.

My family and friends have shown me so much love and kindness over the years, it is difficult to write them all down in one chapter, but all of their acts of kindness have been very

much appreciated, that's for sure. God Bless them all!

Which fads did you embrace while growing up?



We did not have TV while I was growing up, but maybe listening to the radio would be considered a fad. I remember while living on the farm, we as a family gathered around the radio listening to programs such as: Fibber McGee and Molly, Jack Benny program, The Romance of Helen Trent (probably some program my older sisters enjoyed), Guiding Light and Life of Riley to name a few. There was one surprise weekly program that we all enjoyed, but I can't remember the name of it.

Poodle Skirts were a big fad, and I did have one along with some of my friends and it was probably our attire to most Friday night dances at the YWCA. Of course, saddle shoes were popular so they were our dancing shoes while we did the jitterbug. I think they are coming back again in 2022.

Also trying to do the Charleston was another big challenge for us, but we tried and had a ball at those Friday night dances. It seems that games that involved running and hiding were the games we played in the neighborhood before bedtime. Games such as “kick the can”, “Red Light, Green Light”, or simply playing hide and seek. When it became dark, we all went to our homes and probably were able to sleep real well after all the activity; Fond, Fond memories for sure. Usually these games were played at my friend Joan “E” Hill’s house (see picture in an earlier chapter). I have not seen her in many, many years but just recently reconnected by phone.

Hula Hoops were popular while growing up and as I recall, I don’t think I did too bad. It was good exercise if you could last a long time. A friend of our group of friends, Carol Kennedy, had a blue small convertible which we named the “Blue Goose” and on any given Saturday night, we would all pile in it and go to an outdoor movie. Some nights it was a buck for a car load and we all gave Carol a quarter for gas.

My, writing these stories brings back many happy memories I had actually forgotten about, and probably could think of more if I took more time, but I am very thankful for writing this story and refreshing my memory for the few I have written about now.

How did you feel when your first child was born?



Happy, delighted, full of joy and thankful that he was a healthy child, had 10 fingers and 10 toes and was able to breathe on his own.

Before the nurse put him in the incubator, I had her uncover him so I could see his whole body. Perfect!! Actually, Brian came two weeks early.

I had quit work on Friday thinking I had 2 whole weeks to get ready for the birth. On Tuesday morning, my water broke, but I had no labor pains, only some back pain. I called Bonita, my sister, to see if she would take me to the laundromat because Ken had already left for school that morning, when this all started to happen. Bonita panicked and said forget about the laundry, you have to go to the hospital, “you’re in labor”. My response “but I have no pain, just a backache”. Long story short, she took me to the hospital and Brian was born 1 1/2 hours later. Piece of cake! Of

course, back then you stayed in the hospital a week after delivery, unlike now going home the next day.

As I have written in a previous chapter, Ken was taking finals. He was notified by the professor that I was in the hospital but he did not get there in time for the delivery. As you recall from the same previous chapter, he also missed Eric's delivery because they had him at the desk registering me in and Eric was born before he made it upstairs to the delivery room. Lucky for me—fast deliveries without much pain and lucky for Ken, he could witness a healthy, good looking boy without holding hands with a moaning wife in labor.

I thank God daily for my happy and healthy family. God Bless!

What is one of the most selfless things you have done in life?



When I was in training at St. Anthony's Hospital in Rockford IL to become a X-ray technician, I met some really wonderful patients. A very special boy about 12 or 13, stands out very vividly in my mind. I had X-rayed his left leg and the radiologist read the film and dictated a report to his Dr. that he had a tumor below the knee, which turned out to be a malignant tumor. As I remember, and I may be wrong, but it seems to me he came to the department for radiation treatments and often I would set him up for these treatments. We became good friends and I would visit him in his room after I got off work.

On one of these visits he questioned me why I had not told him that he had to have his leg amputated. Even if I knew, I would not or could not tell him, so our conversation that night was very solemn, and I'm sure I did a lot of crying when I left his room.

The radiologist sat me down and told me I should not get so attached to patients because it might ruin my career in the medical field.

The boy indeed had his leg amputated below the knee, and this all happened on the tail end of my training. I had gotten a job at Evanston Hospital in Evanston IL, so I was leaving Rockford shortly. He and I wrote letters to each other, but the last letter I received was from his parents saying he was back in the hospital and the diagnosis was not good.

I took a bus or train, can't remember how I got to Rockford, but was able to see him before he died.

I wish so very much I had saved his letters to remind me what a brave kid he was through all his trauma, and how very special he was to me. I think it was he who showed me selfless love.

What are some of your special talents?



Talented I am not! I never learned to knit or crochet like so many of my friends. They probably learned these crafts, along with sewing, from their mothers.

My mother was a bread maker, and a very good one. I should have paid more attention to her bread making skills when I was younger. Ken and I bought a bread making machine many years ago, but that hardly counts as a talent for making bread.

I guess my greatest talent is meeting new people and making them feel welcome. This was very important when we started the campground, because we were certainly in the “people business”. In the early days, we had an above ground swimming pool with a picnic table near by, so mid morning, I would take out some coffee and donuts and when they got out of the pool, we would sit and visit. Some of these people are still friends today.

At church, and this is since John died, if I see a face I haven't seen before, I go up and introduce myself and welcome them to Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Is this a talent on my part? I hardly think so, but it gives me a good feeling for reaching out to them. Maybe playing cards (yes!!! —Brian), bridge being my favorite, but Euchre, five-hundred, sheepshead, pinochle were all card games I learned at an early age. Being from a family of 13, that was our Sunday afternoon entertainment. We had a large table in the sunroom off of the kitchen where whoever was home, played a game of cards.

I still play pickleball, a game John & I played in South Carolina and I believe I'm the oldest of the group I play with here in Portage. It's good exercise and I'm so very thankful I can still play with the group.

Now that I'm living at the Phoenix in Portage, I have been decorating the shelves at the end of the hall on the 4th floor. I change the decorations for each season or holiday, so that can happen about 5-6 times during the year. I do not consider myself as a decorator, but the residents appreciate the colorful displays and I enjoy doing it.

I love to sing in chorus at church and this year I joined the "praise team" which doesn't required much talent because we all sing the melody. Carla, our director, says, "bodies count". I never learned how to read music, even though I was in chorus all through high school, but I love it! I have talented people on both

sides of me, so it works out well. They haven't asked me to drop out yet, so that's good!

No talents—what you see is what you get.

What have been some of your life's greatest surprises?



The greatest surprise in my life so far at the age of 88, is the fact that I have outlived all of my siblings and their spouses, and I'm still going strong today. Seven years ago I had open heart surgery and unlike some of my sisters and brothers, I had the advantage of new medications and technology to lengthen my life. I am able to see, hear with the help of a hearing aid, able to enjoy food without someone feeding it to me, I can walk and talk and most of all, I have a heart that is full of love for others. For these things I am very very thankful to God.

Another big surprise was the evil and unexpected turn of events that John's (my second husband's) kids did to him and to me, by kidnapping him in 2018 and taking him from his own home where he wished to stay until his death. I trusted them to do for him what was best for his well being, but it didn't work out that

way. He died 13 months later in a nursing home, not in his home where he wanted to die. Great surprise, yes, but not a good one. But from bad, good prevails and that is finding love again at my age. Jerry and I talk to each other daily on the phone, he in Janesville and I in Portage, and we do try and visit each other whenever possible. This is the greatest and happiest surprise for me and where this friendship and love will lead us, no one knows. For now, we are enjoying each other's company and I'm again thankful for being loved by such a wonderful, caring Christian man. Thanks be to God!

Are you the same person you were as an adolescent, or very different?



Good question—I wish some of my siblings were alive so I could get inputs from them.

I think I'm a lot more outgoing and more confident of myself now than I was growing up. I talk to about anyone, no one remains a stranger for very long. Buying Sky High when Ken & I were in our 30's, it was essential that we talked to everyone and to be sociable so they would become regular customers. We wanted them to feel welcomed and some of them are good friends today.

I still have the same chuckle and laughter. It's rather loud at first and then becomes a belly laugh and much more quiet. I truly enjoy a good laugh! I was a real "scaredy cat" growing up, especially when it got dark outside. That is something that has stayed with me, especially if I'm alone. Doors are locked, and

rechecked before I go to bed. Nothing ever happened to me that would have caused the fear, maybe I had a big imagination about something always being around the corner, whatever, I'm sort of out-growing it at age 88.

I still like to eat just about anything, but of course, it was a given rule we clean our plate. Something we didn't have as a child was hors d'oeuvres and I could make a meal on them now. I like making them also and have many recipes given to me from friends.

I guess in many ways, I'm still the same person, enjoying life to the fullest!

What is one of your favorite children's stories?



All of the Dr. Seuss books were bought as soon as they came out, and Brian & Eric's bookcase was full of them. They loved hearing them and Ken & I loved reading the books to them. Would you believe all those books plus Ken's collection of Steven King's novels were some how lost in the move from Naperville to Sky High which really bummed me out. Those Dr. Seuss books always had a message for the kids and were fun to read.

Later reading books to the grandkids, especially Stian, Lars & Hanne who I would occasionally baby-sit, they liked "The Little Engine That Could" and "The Wheels on the Bus Go Round and Round". I can remember one night baby-sitting at their house, and we put the kitchen chairs in a row and pretended we were on that bus. We sang that song over & over and even made up verses. I wonder if they remember that?? There was another book (can't remember the name) about a cow and there was a

funny line in the book and they would want me to read it over & over and we all would laugh so hard. Fond memories for sure!

I can't remember the names of the books that Louise requested when I visited them, but I do remember reading to her before bed-time just about every time we came. She loved to be read to, and sat so still in my lap while I read. There was a white rocking chair in her bedroom where we would read her bed-time stories. Tor & I enjoyed reading together one of the Harry Potter novels and of course, I had a hard time pronouncing names, but not him. He knew all the characters. Reading to my grandchildren was a delight—loved every minute.

What are some of your family traditions?



Many of the family traditions that I remember have to do with Christmas or during the holiday season.

As a child growing up on the farm, we always had a big pot of oyster stew on the stove and that was our meal when we came home after the Christmas Eve service at church. Oysters were pretty cheap back then and my Dad really liked oysters. I never ate them, but did like the broth they simmered in, which was lots of butter and the milk from our cows. It was pretty yummy with oyster crackers floating on top.

Ken & I and the boys would feast on steak and shrimp for our meal after the Christmas Eve service when we were living at Sky High. We couldn't afford it often, so it was special at Christmas time.

After moving to Sky High and making friends through our jobs and our camper friends, we would host a Glug party during the

holiday season. Glug is a Norwegian holiday drink made with red wine and brandy and is served warm. The highlight was putting a match to the batch after adding the brandy and watch the flame for a few seconds before putting the lid on the pot. June Swan would play the piano and we would gather around and sing Christmas carols. It was always a lot of fun and started off the holiday season for everyone.

Years later it became a tradition to attend the Wentland Christmas Eve afternoon gathering. They always had a huge spread of delicious food and the wonderful Tom & Jerrys made by one of the Wentland kids. We always stayed until the last minute before it was time to go to the Christmas Eve service. This tradition went on for many years, even after Brian & Eric were married and their kids even attended and still remember the event. Wonderful memories thinking back on those special times.

When Brian & Eric were in Jr & Sr High, I usually went to Eulberg's to buy them underwear because they like the brand being sold there and usually ordered pants, sweaters, or whatever from Land's End or L.L. Bean for Christmas. Dropped the underwear buying as they got older and even the clothes. It's a card with a check now. Much, much easier for me!

Ken & I started a Butt reunion after buying Sky High, and the whole family was invited and many attended these reunions back then. There was always lots of food and of course horseshoes was

played by many of the men. Its was held at Sky High for a few years but seeing most relatives lived in the southern part of the state, it was changed and is now held at the Evansville Park in Evansville, WI. Usually it's the first weekend in August on a Sunday and the attendance varies depending on the weather. Yeas ago, we would have 80-85 attending when my siblings were still alive, but that has decreased a lot over the years. I try to make it every year; it's always great to see some of my nieces and nephews I have not seen for awhile. Thanks to Amanda, Dan and Barb Loften's daughter & her husband Josh for doing such a good job of sending out a text, note, etc. to notify everyone. They have also, the last few years anyway, provided some good hot meat of some kind, for sandwiches. We all bring a dish to pass so there's always a lot of food for everyone. We have a contest with the bean bag throw game and that makes our gathering a fun and wonderful time for all. Hope it continues way after I'm gone! Wonderful memories!!

What advice would you give your great grandchildren?



Instead of answering this question in story form, I'm just going to make a list.

1. Enjoy each beautiful sunrise and sunset that you can see.
2. Wake up in the morning and thank God for this beautiful day of life.
3. Get a good education or learn a trade.
4. Go to church after you are confirmed.
5. Save part of your paycheck each pay period.
6. Show kindness to everyone.
7. Always be honest with your partner whom you love.
8. Don't be a bully.
9. Give to the poor, even a little bit helps.

10. Volunteer to participate in any church event, especially a talent show.
11. Love your family and thank them for what they do for you.
12. Always, always, “buckle up”.
13. Exercise and eat healthy.
14. Forgive people who say unkind words against you.
15. Don't use your cell phone while driving except for a real emergency.
16. Just say, “Help me Jesus” when you need help. He is always near and waiting for your prayer.
17. Join a church choir.
18. Don't use drugs unless prescribed for you.
19. Learn to dance.
20. When you come of age - VOTE.
21. Don't drive under the influence. Call Mom or Dad to come and get you or don't drink at all.
22. Phone Grandpa and Grandma or visit them whenever possible; they love hearing about what's going on in your life.
23. Read a good book instead of watching T.V. in your spare time.
24. Sit quietly near the trees and bird watch.
25. Feed the birds, then you can see them close up.
26. Have a PROUD WALL of your grandchildren's pictures.



What inventions have had the biggest impact on your day-to-day life?



Probably the electric coffee maker. I'm not talking about those high-tech machines that do everything, but just a plain old electric one where the water drips through the grounds and makes a good cup of coffee.

Mom and Dad had the percolator type that you put on the wood burning stove and it would take some time for the water to boil through the grounds. They did come out with electric percolator coffee makers which I remember having growing up, but the drip type is faster and no grounds in your coffee.

I remember driving and learned to drive on a stick shift car, so a car with an automatic transmission is a big deal for me. My car has a back window windshield wiper which I had never had before, and that's great!

I could do without an electric dishwasher, but an electric washing machine and clothes dryer has made a big difference in our lives today. When we lived on the farm, wash day was named correctly because it did take all day to wash the clothes and it was usually done on Monday. There were two separate machines; one for washing and another to rinse the clothes. The rinse machine had a big roller on top to “wring out” the clothes. Then it was outdoors to hand up the clothes to dry on the clothes lines. That could take awhile depending on the weather. Most clothes to be worn had to be ironed, and the iron was a heavy piece of steel shaped like an iron that needed to be heated on the wood burning stove in the kitchen. Quite a process. I don’t know how my mother did it with our large family.

My cell phone has been a fantastic tool for me to use, although it’s a simple one compared to many. There’s a lot I don’t use on it, because I don’t know how, but I sure do appreciate it, and it goes where I go, which is a nice feature.

I’m thankful to have all of these new inventions. It sure makes my life so much easier. Thanks be to God!

Revisiting places from my youth in Janesville, WI



In September 2022, I visited Janesville places with Jerry Wells who I had reconnected with at my class reunion the previous July. Jerry and I had talked a lot together at our reunion, in fact he ended up driving me to Rebecca's house after the dinner. We called each other a couple times a week after seeing each other that night, and I asked him if he would drive me around Janesville some time to see all the places of interest to me that I had not seen for quite awhile. I thought they would make for a good story so here it is along with pictures of these places. The time and date was set for September; here's the adventure I had with Jerry the four days I was in Janesville.

I made arrangements with Kay Gnong, Bonita's best friend, who had become my friend through the years, so I stayed at her house. Brian and Karen had picked me up in Portage and we drove to Lake Geneva to attend a wedding reception for a

daughter of Karen's college friend and fellow flute player. Beautiful garden reception in one of Lake Geneva's parks, right on the water. We went back to Janesville, picked up Jerry and headed for the Duck Inn in Delavan for dinner. Great food and a fantastic evening.



Sunday morning, Jerry picked me up and we went to First Lutheran church, where Ken and I had been married, for the service. There had been many additions since then, so Jerry gave me a good tour of the church. It is as beautiful now as I remember it in 1957 when Ken and I were married there. After church, we met my niece, Barb Loften, her daughter Amanda, and granddaughter Clara behind the old Woolworth's store and it turned out to be the perfect spot to meet. The downtown has changed a lot since I lived there and the sculptures along the riverwalk were beautiful.

MY LIFE STORIES | Darlene Anderson



The next step was to see if I could find my parent's cemetery plot at Oak Hill cemetery where they were buried. I'm ashamed to say I had not visited there for many years, but would you believe with God's help, we drove right to it. We came back the next day because I wanted to bring fresh flowers and Jerry trimmed around the stone. It's something I want to do a couple time a

year from now on while I'm still able. It was a beautiful sunny day, very pleasant and Jerry saw markers where several of his friends are buried.



The next day, we went to the mausoleum where Jerry's wife is buried and also saw the vault where Bonita and Rich are buried. I had never been in a mausoleum before, so it was quite interesting to see. It's located in the beautiful surroundings of Milton Lawn cemetery. After lunch we went to Riverside Park and went by the house where I stayed with Yvonne Finnegan's folks before Ken and I were married. We especially wanted to see the new pickle ball courts in the park, so we sat a couple hours and watched people play. I didn't have my racket or proper shoes on to play, but the next day (Tuesday) Jerry had made arrangements with some church friends to meet them at the courts to play.

MY LIFE STORIES | Darlene Anderson

We had started our tour of the grade schools where I and some of my good friends had attended, so on Sunday we did go to Roosevelt School which was my alma mater along with Patsy Birmingham, Patty Munson, Ruth Onsgard and Helen Allen. So that accounts for 5 of us out of the Dirty Dozen who were best friends in high school. Jerry took a picture of me at the front door and I also took a picture of the new addition. What fond, fond memories came flooding back after all these years.





On Monday, we again continued our tour of the grade schools, Wilson school being next, where Joan Cahill and Norma DeFratris went and also where the Monterey Stadium was located.



The football games were held at that stadium and my graduating class of 1952 was the only class that had an outdoor graduation ceremony there.



Adams school is where Jerry went, along with Nancy Marshall and perhaps Carol Potratz, who died at a very young age after high school. Bea Gilberto went to Grant School, which was torn down many years ago.



Carol Kennedy attended St. Mary's grade school through 8th grade, and Nancy Cronin attended St. Patrick's grade school also through 8th grade. As you can see we were a diverse group of

girls who all came together in high school and became very good friends. I am happy to say, I still keep in contact with a few of them.



The high school was on Main St. back then and had grades 8 through 12. With 8th and 9th being Jr. high. Jerry and I are standing on the steps in front of this building in the picture

MY LIFE STORIES | Darlene Anderson

below. It is now an apartment building for senior citizens and on the right, a new addition which is a performing arts center. Unfortunately, the building was all locked up, so we were unable to do a tour, which would have been fun.





We had lunch at the Brodhead chess factory and had delicious toasted cheese sandwiches. We decided to come back on Wednesday so I could buy some cheese to bring home with me.



We then drove on Hwy 14 between Evansville and Janesville trying to find the road that would lead us to the farm where my family lived when we moved to Wisconsin from Nebraska. We couldn't find it; I should have asked more questions before all my siblings died. Jerry, the dear soul and patient guy, didn't want to give up, so we tried again another day, but no luck. We saw a stand of beautiful trees along the road and couldn't resist taking a picture on that sunny, perfect day.



We went to Orfordville that evening and met Barb and Claude Klund in a bar for a bite to eat and a drink. Jerry had arranged for me to play pickle ball with a church friend and some of his friends on Tuesday, and the four of us had a wonderful time.

They were about in my league so I didn't make a fool of myself. We had a great time and hope to do it again someday with them. Jerry thought I did good, although he doesn't play pickle ball. He said he was real proud of me, isn't that sweet?



Afterwards, we went to see Duane and Joan Meister at Oak Park Place in Janesville. They moved there three years ago and I knew them when they lived at Saddle Ridge. They also attended Bethlehem Lutheran church and Duane played golf with John at Saddle Ridge. Duane and I sang in the choir at church together, so it was nice to have a visit with them in their new apartment.



We went to the Milwaukee Grill a couple nights for supper—delicious soups and bread and a glass of wine for me.



Took pictures of the house where I lived with my family when we moved to Janesville and I was in 4th grade. Back then it was East Street, but now it is called Atwood Street. It was painted white when I lived there but now it is a dark brown, which I don't like

as well.



On Blaine Avenue, we found the house where Ken and I lived after we were married. It was an upstairs apartment and you can barely see the outside stairs going up in the rear of the house. We lived there while Ken was attending Whitewater State College (now UW Whitewater) and I was working for the orthopedic doctors Thomas and Odland.



Of course I took a picture of that building located on Court Street which is now offices of a law firm.



Jerry drove me home on Thursday and we went to the Asian Cuisine restaurant for a late lunch before he departed for Janesville. We had a wonderful five days together and we look forward to the next time we can be together.

Who is the wisest person you've known? What have you learned from them?



What came to my mind right away after reading this question was probably my husband, Ken, who had the insight and courage to buy out our partners at Sky High Campground. He saw the potential that I did not see, but it turned out to be a good move for us. We had 30 years there, raising our sons who helped us a lot those beginning years, met many wonderful friends, so I would consider it a wise move. Another statement that Ken said to me only a couple days before he died was, “Find a good man and marry again” which I did three years later to John Prest. John lived in Saddle Ridge also and I have written about our meeting in a previous chapter. Anyway, John had this 8x10 picture of his deceased wife on the fireplace mantel which really bothered me while we were dating. I went to Pastor Dick at Bethlehem Lutheran church where I attended and explained to

him the discomfort I had seeing that picture displayed so openly while we were dating. Pastor Dick did not at all sympathize on my part and said to have patience and it would soon disappear. He was right and had I discussed the situation with John, our relationship might have taken a different turn. Good advice from Pastor Dick.

The radiologist, Dr. Lange, at St. Anthony's Hospital in Rockford where I trained to become a X-ray technician, told me many times not to become too attached to the patients and their illness. You couldn't help but become attached to some of the young patients who were getting radiation treatments, so it became hard at times (to follow this advice). His words echoed in my mind at times and I'm grateful for his wise advice.

The wise advice and support from my family on many occasions has been very comforting. Most recently, being my relationship with another man in my life in 2022. We're both 88 years of age, but they're telling me "Go for it, Mom, Be Happy." What better advice could anyone give to someone, but "be happy, have faith and be thankful for each day"?

What are your earliest childhood memories?



I really don't remember at age 3, the car ride from Nebraska to Wisconsin when we moved to the farm near Evansville, WI. I have heard and read so many stories about that trip, I guess I could use my imagination and come up with a pretty good story. What I do remember about that farm is the big house with a porch all along the front of it. The Easter Bunny would hide under that porch and on Easter morning when Bonita and I collected our colored, cooked eggs, he would come out and run fast across the lawn to prove his presence.

Mom, with the help of us kids, I'm sure, always planted a huge garden across from the driveway. She planted every veggie she knew we would like and then some, and spent a lot of time canning fruits and veggies for us to eat in the winter. We never went hungry, that's for sure.

I also remember milking cows. It wasn't a job I did every night, but on occasion maybe when the older kids were gone or else working late in the fields. I really didn't mind milking, maybe because it wasn't a regular chore for me every night.

Celebrating birthdays, anniversaries, you name it, we would all get together to celebrate, whether it was a one year old or 70, we would move the dining room table to make room for dancing and singing. Burnell Dammen, brother-in-law, played the accordion and a friend of the boys played the guitar and we would have a ball. There was always plenty of food for everyone, because, of course, the neighbors were always a part of any celebration and they would come with hands full of food. Always a good and fun time, especially for a 6 year old who had brothers who would dance with me. I was a pretty good dancer at one time, but with age, that has disappeared.

Walking the 2 miles (at least) to school in rain, snow or sunshine was sometimes a challenge. A one-room schoolhouse (Furseth School), grades 1-8 and our family alone accounted for half of the students. Bonita and I only went to this one-room schoolhouse through 3rd grade and then we moved to Janesville. No indoor bathroom, of course, we had an outhouse near by, which I remember got tipped over one Halloween night. I don't remember any names of the kids I went to school with those early grades. Sure wish I did now!

If you could choose any talents to have, what would they be?



Number one would be to play the piano. I do envy anyone who has the musical ability to play any instrument, and, I guess that's why I tried getting my sons interested in music at school at an early age.

When we were living in Naperville, we bought a piano and I started taking lessons, but we bought Sky High and that ended my lessons. I didn't even get to the point where I could read music. We did move the piano to Sky High with us and it did get used there. Kerry Dull, band director at Portage High School, would come out along with Bill Wentland who played trumpet, Julie Wentland who played flute, Brian on saxophone and Eric on drums. Mr. Dull, of course, was on the piano and they would practice because this group played a few times in the barn for our campers. (For performances, Kerry Dull was replaced by Dana

Jenkins, a classmate of Brian and Julie.) Ken even built a stage in the barn for the band to use. As I recall, the group didn't last too long, but it was exciting while they did play.

The piano also was played by our friend, June Swan who would sit at the piano playing Christmas songs at our annual Glug party. She knew them all and was very talented playing the piano. Doreen Wentland and I and often more would join us and we would sing all the Christmas carols we knew. The last carol was The Twelve Days of Christmas and I would break people into groups to sing one of the days. Of course, people would forget what day they were or the words to the verse, but after a couple tries, we had it down perfect! What fun and lots and lots of laughs.

I did join the Bethlehem Lutheran Church choir many years ago, and loved it, but my voice is getting very warbling and doesn't sound good any more, so I have decided to quit this year. I still cannot read music, but Angela and the other sopranos helped me along. But all wonderful things have to come to an end sometime and this is one of them.

My boys have very good singing voices and Brian sings in his church choir at Mt. Olivet Lutheran in Plymouth, MN. Also, I guess I would have liked to learn how to sew. (But that's another story!)

What are your favorite memories of each of your children growing up?



I'm going to begin by telling things they did together, especially after moving to Sky High.

“Big Rock”, which I had climbed more than once with the boys and their camper friends, was always a draw to show off the skill of rock climbing at an early age. As the years progressed, Big Rock became smaller and smaller, but I think it is still a place of interest to the younger campers, even today.



Brian & Eric with some of their special friends they climbed Big Rock with many years ago.

When they were a little older, they built a tree house in one of the big trees in the back yard. This developed over a couple summers. They had devised several different ways to get up there, but finally built a rope ladder. I had never climbed that ladder to see what went on up there, but I'm sure it wasn't all good. They would even sleep up there occasionally. The tree house was torn down by Brian in 1993 when we were trying to sell Sky High, and it sort of came down in one piece. It was built pretty sturdy, so maybe we should have kept it; it might have added value to the property.



As I've said many times before, the school system in Naperville was fantastic and the boys did excellent at Naper School (and Washington Jr. High in Brian's case). In first grade, Brian's teacher, Mrs. Becker, had an assignment to write a story along with pictures about what their father liked to do. Brian's story and picture was of a beer can and the story read, "My Dad likes beer. My Dad drinks beer". His printing was fantastic and Mrs. Becker thought he had done so well, she called us into her room one parent-teacher evening to show it to us. Brian was an excellent reader and loved to read, so in 5th grade his teacher would have him record books on tape so the younger classes could listen to them. He also went to some of the classrooms and read to the younger ones. It benefitted both Brian and the kids. He sang in the Naper School choir and they had special performances throughout the school year. They were always done very well and were great to attend. They even had maroon

choir robes for these young kids.

When Eric was maybe 2 or 3, he fell down our back steps and lost one of his front teeth. Luckily, he was not hurt. We looked all over for the tooth, but decided he must have swallowed it. He was a toothless boy for awhile until his 2nd teeth came in, but he didn't seem to mind. He was always proud, as were we, that he was in adulthood before he ever got a cavity.

Eric's kindergarten teacher was Mrs. Hilenbrandt and she informed us at a parent teacher conference that she had never before seen the attachment that Eric had with one of his female classmates. They always wanted to sit next to each other, always did projects together, and she said he was very protective of her. I can't remember the little girl's name, and I doubt if Eric does either. At the time, Mrs. Hilenbrandt thought it was pretty cute.

I recall when Eric was in 1st grade, he invited a boy classmate of his to come to Sky High with us for the weekend. This was when the roof was still leaking, the windows needed replacement, but there was no way to convince Eric to invite the friend sometime later. Of course it rained that night. The three boys who had slept together, woke up to a wet bed where the roof obviously had leaked. There were some precious moments to the child's visit and I wish I had a picture to show it. I had been busy staining the porch we had built on the back of the barn, and hadn't paid much attention to what the boys were doing, but finally looked up and saw the boys, along with Rainy, our collie, walking up through

the knee high weed covered field.



They had walked down through the woods, down a gully almost to Petro (truck stop at the base of the bluff) and back again. They were happy little guys, who had been on a long hike and didn't have a concern about being gone for so long. Why wasn't I worried? When I think about it today, I get shivers up and down my spine.

When we moved to Sky High, the boys were starting 5th and 7th grade. Brian had only one other student in 7th grade (actually there were about seven of us - Brian) at Caledonia School that year, and I considered it a lost year for him. Eric had maybe 5 or 6 in his 5th grade class, so he had some competition. That year, Eric was honored as "outstanding student in American History", an award given out by the Daughters of the American Revolution—DAR for short. The ceremony still takes place each year at Fort Winnebago National cemetery on Military Road

outside of Portage, and is held Memorial Day weekend. There are only 50 graves and after World War I, no more have been permitted. There are two Revolutionary War soldiers buried there [probably Civil War, since Fort Winnebago was built in 1828, 50 years after the American Revolution], families who worked at Fort Winnebago, plus a few World War I soldiers.

I'm so very grateful for God's help in raising my boys. I'm so very proud of them today, not only for their accomplishments, but also for the wonderful Dads they became to my grandchildren.



Visiting old friends in Sun City - Hilton Head, South Carolina



In November of 2022, Brian, Karen and I took a trip south to Sun City Hilton Head, South Carolina to visit some dear friends. After John and I got married in 2003, we spent our winters there living in a lovely villa John owned for many years.

John and I started the pickleball club, as indicated from an article published in 2009 (excerpt included at the end of this chapter). We met many Sun City residents during this time and Jim & Eileen Rossini became very close friends of ours, not only playing pickleball, but also we would get together to play bridge. We had a very favorite restaurant in Bluffton where we would often go to have breakfast. Their youngest daughter, Megan, and her children, visited Jim and Eileen often, so Megan's kids held a soft spot in my heart. Her husband, Stephen, was a career serviceman, but we did have occasions to see him. John and I

moved back to Portage the winter of 2012, no longer “snow birds” in Sun City, so this trip south gave me the opportunity to see my old friends Jim and Eileen again.

After dropping me off, Brian and Karen continued on to Savannah, Georgia where they stayed in a historic inn, met friends from Jacksonville, Florida and with Brian’s cousin, Rodney Yaun & his wife, Lin who had just moved to the area. They enjoyed touring and seeing the sights in this historic city.

I spent the four days relaxing and reminiscing with Jim and Eileen about our fun times together while living in Sun City. One day, Eileen invited our Wednesday morning pickleball partners, Nancy and Sally and their husbands for an afternoon coffee. We seldom missed our 8 AM pickleball games!





We haven't changed all that much, have we! WE sometimes played with the temperature only in the upper 30's, but never with dew or rain on the court. Oh, we had such a good time that afternoon all being together again.

Eileen had arranged a breakfast outing on Saturday morning at Squat & Gobble in Bluffton, our favorite place, and had asked Nancy, my duplicate bridge partner / euchre player friend to join us. During our two hours reminiscing about the years past and gone, Nancy mentioned the euchre club was playing that night and invited me to join them. That was fine with Eileen, in fact she insisted I go, so I did! Saw a few more old friends, but most importantly, met the daughter of a man I played euchre with ten years ago. He was in his 90s then, but had passed away recently, and was an excellent euchre player, as was his daughter. I ended up winning a prize, a gift certificate to a Sun City ice cream shop. I gave this to Jim who texted me to say he enjoyed a delicious

malt there and even had enough credit for an ice cream cone at a later visit.

Jim, Eileen and I had enjoyable evenings watching the Hallmark Christmas movies and visiting with Megan and Kids on Jim's phone. Eileen had just gone through repeat surgeries on her left hip not too long before, but had assured me she was fine and was looking forward to my visit. It was such a relaxing and enjoyable visit. Just spending time with them was so special. Hopefully they and Megan and her family will come to Sky High sometime. Stephen is supposed to complete 22 years in the service on March 1, 2023, so it could be a possibility. I'm sure pushing for that to happen.

Our sad departure occurred at a McDonalds not far from the highway we were to get on to head home.



Jim and Eileen had volunteered to drive me there to meet Brian and Karen so they wouldn't have to back track to pick me up.

That's the kind of people they are—always helping out in any way they can, and that was so true when John and I still lived in Sun City.

When John's dementia was worsening, Jim would come and pick him up and take him to Squat & Gobble for breakfast, and I would go play pickleball with the girls. We still call each other often.

Brian, Karen and I had a wonderful time on the trip. On a previous road trip to visit Tor and Amie in Connecticut in April, I mentioned a friend of mine in the Phoenix who was writing a book using Storyworth. It was a story of her life—a chapter a week and at the end of a year, they publish the book. Ta Da! Karen gets on her phone, signed me up and said “happy Mother's Day”, you are now becoming a writer and by next April, your book will be published. A writer I'm not, but it has opened my mind and my heart to my past and for that, I'm so very very grateful to be able to write this story.

Excerpt from Bluffton Packet, Tuesday, March 28, 2006.

“When John and Darlene Prest painted the lines on Sun City Hilton Head's first pickleball court, they were the only people in the community who knew about the game. A year later, Sun City has a pickleball club with over 100 members, plans to build new courts and growing interest among residents.

After they got permission to set up a makeshift pickleball area on a paved, half-sized basketball court, the Prests used chalk to measure out the court's dimensions, then painted permanent lines over the chalk.

They had bought a pickleball starter kit online, consisting of a net, a few of the plastic Wiffle-type balls and a set of paddles.

It turned out they had a great location for building interest in the game. The court is located near horseshoe pits, a softball field and a walking path.

"We'd get out there a lot of times and people would ask, "What is that you're doing?" John Prest said. "And we'd get them to play."

That's how Ron Petroff got introduced to the game.

He had been throwing horseshoes when he saw the Prests playing pickleball and went over to ask about it.

Petroff gave it a try and took a liking to the game. Now he's a member of the pickleball club's board.

"I think this game is such that it's easier on the body," Petroff said. "It's a court game that demands positioning rather than strength. You don't need to have a whole lot of power, like in tennis." It's for that reason that the game has gained popularity in several retirement communities..."

TUESDAY, MARCH 18, 2008



www.bfropacket.com

The Spread COVER STORY Feature

Pickleball craze is catching on in the Lowcountry

By Tom Williams
The Pickle Baller
 When Mike and Debrae Paine passed me on an early morning jog, I was puzzled. They were dressed like joggers, but they were carrying a racket and a ball. I asked them what they were doing, and they said they were going to play pickleball. I had never heard of the game, but I was intrigued. I asked them to show me, and they did. It was a simple game, but it was fun. I had never seen anyone else play it, and I was curious to see if it was as popular as they said it was. I asked them to show me, and they did. It was a simple game, but it was fun. I had never seen anyone else play it, and I was curious to see if it was as popular as they said it was.

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Quick primer
 Pickleball can be played on a tennis or badminton court. During singles play, players alternate with the right to receive. In doubles, the same rules apply to the right and left positions on the line as the serving side (and you can swap). The first side to score 11 points with at least a two-point lead wins the game.

The net and net system
 The net and net system are used to divide the court into two halves. The net is 36 inches high in the center and 34 inches high at the ends. The net system includes a net, net posts, and a center line.

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 The net is 36 inches high in the center and 34 inches high at the ends. The net system includes a net, net posts, and a center line.

Ball length 1 1/2 inches
Ball diameter 2 1/8 inches
Ball weight 0.85 ounces

ON THE BEAT:
USA Pickleball Association
 www.usapickleball.org

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 www.usapickleball.org

From left, Mike Paine (wearing white) and Debrae Paine (wearing blue) play pickleball on a court in Baton Rouge, La. Photo by Tom Williams.



A group of people playing pickleball on an outdoor court in Baton Rouge, La. Photo by Tom Williams.

PICKLEBALL 101
 known as Pickle, but the game took on the name shortly thereafter.
Who invented pickleball?
 The game was invented by three Americans: Wally Rattler, Joel Pritchard, and Bill Bell. They created the game in 1959 on a tennis court in Bethel, Maine.
What kind of ball and paddle are used in pickleball?
 Pickleball is played with a plastic ball and a paddle. The ball is 1 1/2 inches in diameter and weighs 0.85 ounces. The paddle is 15 inches long and 6 inches wide.
Why is it called pickleball?
 The name is a combination of the words 'pickle' and 'ball'. The story is that the game was played on a boat, and the ball was often lost in the water, so it was called 'pickleball'.

What is the farthest you have ever traveled?



My longest trip overseas was in May of 1990 when Ken and I had the opportunity to go to Germany with Bonita and Rich, along with some teachers from Craig High School in Janesville, Wisconsin. Dave Martinson, the German teacher at Parker High School organized the trip. Our main destination in Germany was to attend the Oberammergau Passion Play which is held every 10 years in the little town of Oberammergau.



It was fantastic and was one of the highlights of our trip. Wood carvers were abundant in this little town, so of course, I brought home a few unique and beautiful pieces.

We visited Eagles Nest which was Hitler's get away during the war. It was a treacherous and scary climb up the mountain to get there, but oh, what a beautiful view once we reached the top. We were able to tour part of Eagles Nest and what caught my eye was the gold plated elevator. You can see in the pictures below the picturesque view we were able to enjoy.





It wouldn't be Germany if you didn't enjoy the noise and beer at some of the beer gardens. It was amazing to see these bar maids carrying 5-6 mugs of beer in each hand. We were also able to do some dancing at a few of the beer gardens. We all had a ball—lots of fun.



MY LIFE STORIES | Darlene Anderson

Seeing it wasn't too much out of the way, Dave our tour organizer had our bus stop at the barracks where Ken was stationed while in the service. Ken was delighted to see the place again and it was a very thoughtful gesture on Dave's part to make it happen.



We witnessed on one of our outings, a church group singing on the street in a town square. Gene Polzin and I went across the street to join them in their singing and they were so gracious and happy that we sang with them. The rest of our group was across the street cheering us on before they entered the restaurant where we were to have dinner. It was the little things like this that made Dave Martinson's trips so special.

Another side trip we took was to a glass blowing demonstration in a small but unique shop just over the border in Austria. They had a lot of crystal jewelry, beautiful wine decanters and such, and of course, I came home with a long crystal necklace and earring set, which I do not wear that often, but it is a beautiful set.

We had a few days to just relax and do our own thing, and this gave Ken and I an opportunity to get to know our group better. The whole group got along and enjoyed each other's company so well, that Ken and I expanded our friendships by hosting a couple weekend outings at Sky High. One was a canoe trip down the Wisconsin River, and Phil and Adele Walz hosted a ski trip to Cascade Mountain the following winter.



Another day trip in Germany was a boat ride down the Rhine River and stopping along the way at a few villages. We were able to get off the boat and do some shopping in the little shops along a very narrow street. From the boat, we could see all the well

kept vineyards on the hillside, which was astonishing because the terrain looked pretty steep. Another relaxing and interesting outing for the day.

Thanks to Jill and Dennis Anderson for holding down the fort at Sky High while we were gone, so we could join this wonderful group to Germany.

What simple pleasures of life do you truly enjoy?



1. Bird watching
2. Reading a good book
3. Watching my grandchildren in any of their events at school
4. Class reunions
5. Watching a beautiful sunrise or sunset
6. Family reunions
7. Listening to the Osseo High School Orchestra CD in my car.
8. Getting an unexpected phone call from my family, especially one of my grandchildren.
9. Playing euchre with my grandchildren.
10. Baking a loaf of banana bread to give away to someone I know will enjoy it.

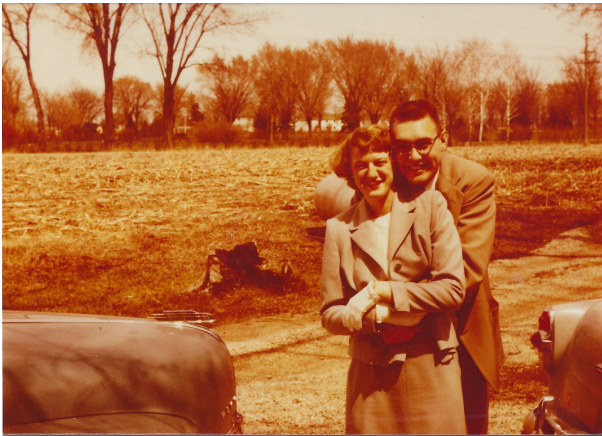
How has your life turned out differently than you imagined it would?



This chapter begins when Ken and I got married on April 13, 1957. We spent the first years in an apartment on Blaine Ave. in Janesville. I worked for Drs. Thomas and Odland and Ken was going to college.



Brian was born a couple weeks before Ken's graduation. Ken got a job at Argonne National Lab in Lamont IL and his friends all helped us with the move (to Illinois). After a year or so of living in apartments, we decided to buy a house in Naperville. Eric was born at Edwards Hospital in Naperville where I eventually started working as a X-Ray technician taking call at night and every other weekend. It worked out fantastically for us because Ken was home to watch the boys while I was on call, and I was with them during the day. They never had to attend a day care or have a baby sitter, which was great for all of us.



April 21, 1957 - one week after we got married

I never imagined that when the boys were 3 & 5 years of age that we would go into partnership with another couple and buy some land in Wisconsin, which was started as a campground. The four of us continued to develop the property into a campground and

called it Sky High Campground. Seven years later, Ken and I bought out our partners and moved to this property permanently and lived there until 1997. Eric & Barb bought Sky High then and still own and operate it. This also wasn't something I ever imagined, but Eric, after graduating from college and moving to Seattle for work, said to Ken and I several times that someday he would like to come back to WI and buy the campground.



In 1987, Ken had a malignant tumor (lung cancer) in his lower left lobe, which was removed surgically right before the camping season was to begin for us. With the help of many dear friends, we were able to open, plus they organized the rides to Madison for the 35 radiation treatments Ken had to have. Against all odds, Ken survived the lung cancer for 9 years, but unfortunately he was diagnosed with esophageal cancer in 1998. He was a fighter; never complained and (was) a friend to everyone. Doing this book, I looked through a lot of photos of Ken and I, and one thing

stood out to me: There are always big smiles on our faces, which says a lot, I think!

We had 43 adventurous years together, maybe not the way I imagined it to be at the beginning of our marriage when I thought Naperville would be our home forever. I'm thankful for a very good and happy life with Ken, even though it was cut short by his death on March 20, 2000.



The question to this chapter being, “How has your life turned out differently than you imagined it would?”, I certainly didn’t expect to fall in love with another man and get married again, which I did on October 19, 2003. John had a villa in Sun City Hilton Head where we spent the winter months until 2012. His dementia became too difficult to drive the distance any more so he sold the villa. We met wonderful friends there during our time there. John and I started the pickleball club, I learned golf and croquet, joined bridge and euchre clubs and John and I would

find time to golf together. It was a life I never imagined, and I'm happy to say, I still correspond with some of those dear friends today.



Brian and Karen drove me down there in November 2022 to visit and it was wonderful to see some of these old friends again. John died in Feb, 2020 so I moved into an apartment in downtown Portage. My life sort of turned upside down for awhile, but with the help of family and friends, I finally adjusted to my new surroundings. I became involved working some part-time jobs, getting back into my bridge clubs, playing Mahjong and once again playing pickleball.



July 20, 2022 was my 70th class reunion in Janesville. I was really looking forward to attending and to my surprise, my friend and one of the “dirty dozen”, Carol Kennedy, was brought to the reunion by her daughter, Andrea. Carol doesn’t live far from Karen and Brian in MN. We had an occasion to get together when Carol and Andrea came to Brian & Karen’s advent service in December, 2022. It was so wonderful to spend time with her as it had been years since I had seen her before our 70th class reunion.

Another surprise at our reunion was getting reacquainted with another classmate who I sat next to at the table. His name is Jerry Wells and by the way, he reminded me that we were confirmed together at First Lutheran church many years ago. I had forgotten that, but he remembered. I thought that was pretty sweet.



We sort of connected right away talking about people he knew in Portage, some I also knew, things we had in common like our

new aortic valves. You get the picture, we didn't have trouble enjoying our conversation together. That was almost 8 months ago and we talk on the phone every night and try to see each other as often as possible. The winter months have made that a little more difficult. We enjoy the time spent together when possible and where it will lead, only God knows the answer to that, but for now, I'm very thankful for his friendship and love. Finding a sweetheart at age 87 (I turned 88 shortly after) has definitely turned my life around differently more that I could have imagined only a few years ago.



This is the last chapter of my book and I'm sure I have repeated myself on some subjects or questions, but this has been a year long project and maybe my memory wasn't as good as it used to be. I'm grateful to my daughter-in-law, Karen, for giving me the gift of this book, because it opened my eyes to things I hadn't

thought about in a long time. Looking back, it made me realize how much love and support I have had from my family and how very very much I love each and every one of them.

I hope you have enjoyed reading my words in this book and my love to all of you who were a part of it.

