



Julie Tunheim, Class of 1975

The Saga continues....

by Julie Tunheim

I am currently a librarian at Pelican Rapids Public Library and enjoy being surrounded by books and associating with people who love books. I specialize in cataloging items that enter our collection. For extra cash I drive a school bus and love being around young people, even if I have to get up really early and use my teacher voice to discipline them occasionally.

A lifelong gardener, I am in charge of our community garden, which moved to a new location last year and involves nearly 20 families, including many from diverse backgrounds – immigrants from Bosnia, Mexico and Somalia. This spring we are adding an underground watering system.

For many years I worked as a writer, first for the school newspaper, then for the hometown paper and eventually for the Pelican Rapids newspaper. I edited a couple of trade magazines for several years. Now my writing is limited to a newsletter for a local non-profit organization, The Welcome Place, where I serve on the board of directors.

I earned an education degree from Concordia College, Moorhead, and taught and coached at Sauk Rapids High School for several years until statewide budget cuts in education eliminated my position and those of many of my co-workers.

I remember friends and teachers, organizations and sports from my years at Marshall County Central.

I remember being way too shy for my own good, but I gradually seemed to become less bashful. I remember participating in track and field in 10th grade when girls' sports first started. We even hosted a track meet on our grass track surrounding the football field. The northwest corner was often wet and gopher holes were hazards. We ran in our mustard-colored gym suits and gym shoes – nothing fancy!

I remember being very embarrassed getting a technical foul (our team's first-ever) for slamming

the basketball a little too hard after being called for an offensive foul when I thought for sure the scrappy Kennedy girl hanging on me should have been cited! My coach calmly pulled me out and told me to tell her when I was ready to go back out on the floor.

I remember getting real uniforms for basketball my senior year, scrapping the mustard-colored, one-piece, skirted gym suits. That was exciting! No more taunts from opposing fans about seeing our underpants!!!

I remember having male cheerleading squads for basketball during the first two years of the girls' program. The boys in their football jerseys may have been a bigger draw than our team, as their cheers were classic!

I remember having to wear dresses in elementary school and in junior high. At some point the school board allowed us to wear dress pants if the temperature was low enough—10 below, I think, was the cutoff. We tuned into KTRF to hear the temperature announced while I chomped on my Cheerios in my pajamas. I thought the dress code was unfair since guys could wear any old pair of blue jeans.

I remember singing in choir and playing in band, being nervous for contests and excited to be in pep band for tournament games.

Since my mom was a teacher, I caught a ride with her most mornings if I was ready. As a senior I ran to school many times and had a few tardy slips! Mom wasn't pleased, so I ran faster and somehow avoided the shame of detention!

When I fell in a mud puddle on the walk to school in third grade and my favorite Log Fort Adventures library book appeared to be ruined, I remember Mom encouraging me to tell my teacher what had happened. Valborg Huglen solemnly listened to my story and apology and then thanked me for being so honest and then gave me a big hug. I went from being scared I would be shamed and punished to being praised for being honest. I have since tried to emulate her in my adult life.

I enjoyed being challenged by teachers, even though I wouldn't admit it at the time. Ron Ueland directed many discussions in social studies and did it well, generating lively conversations and making sure our opinions were heard and respected. Kate Campbell encouraged me as a writer and reader and made our English classes fun. Valborg Huglen was a gem and we sang happy songs with her nearly every morning as we started our day. (I once called her "Mom" in third grade in front of another teacher and blushed my deepest shade of red.) Karen (Leverty) Lorinser, who established the girls' athletic program, was a good coach and helped make us competitive in the mid-1970s. Playing competitively increased my confidence and taught me to keep my emotions under control. I'm grateful our Superintendent Gene Busch and school board gave us a head start by having track and field starting in 1973 and basketball that fall. Girls' sports weren't required by Title IX until the 1974-75 school year.

When I was growing up on the edge of town, we played outdoors with our friends nearly every day all summer. When the noon whistle blew, we went home for dinner. When the supper whistle blew, we went home to eat. We played baseball, ante-I-over and kick the can. We wandered around in the woods and along the river, went fishing for shiners and chubs, staged our own plays, skated as far as we could on the river in November before the deep snows came, snowmobiled and sledged after it snowed, and generally spent many hours outdoors. If I got mad at my best friend, it didn't last long and soon one of us would be riding a bike back and forth in

front of the other's house.

All of the grownups looked after us and didn't mind reprimanding us. If we illegally cut across someone's lawn, Mom knew about it before we got home!

Church and school were very important to us as children and they remain important to me as an adult. I enjoy supporting our school and am blessed to be a part of an awesome church, Trinity Lutheran Church, where I currently serve on the mission and social concerns board. Mission trips to Uganda, East Africa, deepened my faith and strengthened relationships. I got to meet the boy I sponsor in Gulu. He became orphaned as a result of war and terrorism by the Lord's Resistance Army and is being raised by the Watoto Child Care organization.

I enjoy getting together for class reunions with my friends from the Class of 1975. Early on, I realized I wasn't as shy as in high school and could actually talk to my male classmates without blushing!

The women in my class gather at Lake Lizzie every summer for a day of laughter and fun. I look forward to it each year.

When I had breast cancer a few years ago, my classmates were very supportive and I realized that our relationship is a rare blessing.

In the last few years, Facebook has allowed me to reconnect with many alumni, something that has been fun.

Random memories pop back at odd times.

I recall smashing into Danny Magner at second base during a neighborhood baseball game, getting bruised and wanting to cry. And, I was out.

I remember often breaking my glasses playing boomerang in elementary school. (Glenn, Wayne and Keith threw exceptionally hard!)

I remember the annual operettas and the highly anticipated elementary school picnics at the Old Mill.

I remember being scared of the principal, Elaine Roering, and then realizing she was a fine sixth grade teacher. (She once barged into the girls' bathroom after physical education class and told us we all needed to start using deodorant!)

I remember long bus rides for basketball and track and singing in harmony. We made up lyrics to old tunes; sang old stuff we had learned from older girls on the swimming lesson bus and popular rock songs.

I remember scrimmaging the wrestling team—in basketball, of course, before the district tournament senior year. We played shirts vs. skins. (Yes, we were the shirts, although Karen remembers the boys wanting to be the shirts!) The skins sweat a lot and I remember grabbing a rebound and sliding down someone's back. Eeww!

I remember Ruth Milsten patiently teaching me how to use a sewing machine; other girls had sewn for years, but I hadn't done much more than thread a needle to embroider. I can still operate my sewing machine!

I remember questioning Ethel Torgerson about the relevance of geometry, wondering why we had to memorize so much. She assured me that learning how to solve problems was a life skill. I didn't like to hear it at the time, but thinking and solving problems is a good life skill.

I remember being involved in a sit-in staged by some older kids in high school, but I can't remember what we were protesting!!!

Marshall County Central gave me an excellent education. I love returning for visits and now in my old age I realize the importance of having a good educational foundation. Good teachers and good coaches impart invaluable lifelong lessons and make us better people.