



Onward!

Issue 5

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Ladies of the Language Arts

J. Berlyene Miller— "Teacher"

Contributors: Jill (Swanson) Jenner '63, Helen (Hansen) Grossman '79, Lori (Johnson) Bluse '79, Al Sundine '62, Connie (Johnson) Herman '81, Kris (Arcand) Sunne '64, Steve Adamini '63, Diane (Collins) Koski '64

Miss Miller, Auntie Ber, Berlyene, Jenny Berlyene, J. Berlyene Miller or J.B.M., whatever name you addressed her by, if you were a student attending Negaunee High School and enrolled in college prep English and/or speech between the years of 1954 and 1985, the name is certain to conjure up in your mind some distinct memory of this woman who truly represented the word "TEACHER." In an article written for the Marquette Mining Journal, at the time of Berlyene's death on August 8, 2001, Jan (Sivula) Anderson, a former student and colleague of hers said, "Berlyene was involved in every facet of the school. Teaching was her life." During her tenure at N.H.S., while she taught, coached, advised or directed students, she insisted on excellence, setting high standards and providing the support for her students to achieve those standards.

Berlyene was born on April 27, 1929 and grew up in Norman, Oklahoma. She was very proud of her Native American heritage; her mother was one-half Chickasaw and half Choctaw. An imposing figure, Miss Miller could be intimidating at times. In her early years, her jet black hair was pulled back tightly into a bun; in later years her look softened with curls surrounding her face. Perched on



her nose were the big glasses with dark rims. She always spoke with precise diction and grammar, frequently gesturing to make her point. Jill (Swanson) Jenner remembers her, "Elegant hands." She left an impression; Auntie Ber was memorable."

"Teacher" – How did Berlyene's career define that word? It was different for every student that entered her classroom. Helen (Hansen) Grossman, stated, "She was the top dog."

I was nervous and afraid when I was scheduled for her College Prep English class, because I knew she was going to "hold my feet to the fire." Lori Johnson Bluse, remembers that, "Berlyene developed in her students a great appreciation for literature; when reading plays, short stories, etc., she would act out each part. She was very theatrical and animated. To me, she seemed bigger than life." One of her major goals was to prepare her students well for the rigors of college; when writing and speaking, students were taught to cite their sources and to use correct grammar. Al "Butch" Sundine recalls, "The big red circles on writing

assignments and profuse comments; she was demanding, tough and set high standards. Yet, she was kind and caring, taking small-town shy kids and saying, 'You can do this; take this on.'"

A champion of women's rights, Berlyene provided a role model for young women. She was Assistant Title IX coordinator for the Negaunee School District. In a letter written shortly after this appointment, she stated, "It is important at this time of great change for women, that the Negaunee Public Schools has a person who can supply the 'women's touch' when making decisions in regards to Title IX which passed in 1972." Committed to challenging young women to reach their greatest potential, Berylene had high expectations for the females with whom she came in contact at NHS. Kris (Arcand) Sunne stated, "Berlyene inspired me, built my confidence and made me feel mature. She spoke to us like adults." For many of us, she pushed and encouraged us until we did our best.

Berylene died at age 72 on August 8, 2001, at St. Joseph Hospital in Ann Arbor. She had been hospitalized since June 24, after being overcome by smoke during a fire in her Negaunee home.

The quotation chosen to be written on the card for Berylene's funeral service succinctly summarizes Berylene's life.

"A teacher affects eternity;
no one can tell
where her influence stops."
-Henry Adams

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NHS Alumni Staff

- Joan Coduti
- Patty Gagnon
- Brian Peterson
- Lani Duquette
- Norma Greenwood
- John Ennett
- Milly Balzarini

And all those who have volunteered in the mailing of this issue.

Thank You!

Notice!

If you are having a class reunion in 2011 please notify us via e-mail at nhsalum@maresa.org

All reunion and alumni get-together information is posted at: <http://www.negaunee.k12.mi.us/alumni>

Class representatives can send address updates to nhsalum@maresa.org. We

Betty Zesiger by Renee Prusi '76

Betty Zesiger made a difference in my life. She made a difference in the lives of a great number of students during her years teaching at Negaunee High School.

In fact, for a few years, there were three of her protégés working at the Mining Journal. Dan Weingarten, who is the Journal's wire editor and computer expert, Jim LaJoie, who was assistant sports editor and now works at Marquette General Hospital, and me. We sometimes reminisced about Mrs. Z and the way she instilled in us an interest in journalism.

Mrs. Z was my freshmen English teacher at Negaunee High. Although people who know me now might not believe it, I was quite shy back then. My parents had unconditional faith in my ability to accomplish whatever goals I set. But as a typical young teen, I had doubts about everything

and I mean EVERYTHING. Mrs Z was someone special for me because she saw a hidden talent that she encouraged me to develop. That talent was writing.

So Mrs. Z started to bring me books that she knew I would enjoy. As a teacher, she emphasized the better things I wrote but offered constructive criticism about those works that needed improvement. And she gently badgered me to become involved on the yearbook, the extracurricular she advised. If she hadn't, I wonder what direction my life might have taken.

Mrs. Z was the kind of advisor who believed that students should have control over the stories they wrote, the pages they designed and the photos they shot. Her students knew their ideas mattered. She also preached responsibility and compassion as prime characteristics of journalism.

She stressed that the yearbook is a publication that tells the story of all stu-



dents in the school, not just the particular few who dominated the most popular activities. Mrs Z expected us to capture the stories of the unsung people in the school, too. Those were invaluable life lessons.

Mrs. Z wasn't everyone's favorite teacher and that didn't bother her in the least. She never viewed life as a popularity contest but instead believed in the value of remaining true to your own soul. And she wasn't afraid to challenge a student to defend his point of view. She respected others' opinions, but wanted each person to really reason out what they thought and how they acted.

Many of us never take the time to let people know when they've made a difference in our lives. I hope Mrs. Z knows how much she enhanced my life. She will never be forgotten.

Betty Holman by Scott DeLongchamp '69

I first met Betty Holman when I was 16 years old and starting my junior year at NHS. Little did I know this woman would make a permanent impression on my life. Betty loved the English language, a fan of both written and spoken. She was extremely dedicated to both teaching and performing. She taught me the love of language and the love of performing and is very much responsible for instilling in me the drive to succeed.

Betty was not your normal teacher or coach. She took an individual interest in every student and worked hard to find what motivation each needed to succeed. She often spent her own time to either tutor students or to coach them in debate and forensics. She was often rewarded for this activity by making good friends with many a former student.

Betty was an intense debate coach at a time when there was an ongoing rivalry between many U.P. high schools. She so loved the art of argumentation and was very good at teaching her students how to use logic and reasoning. Her teams frequently won U.P. championships.

These are just a few tidbits about a fantastic person and a wonderful friend. When she passed in 2001 I realized that I had known her for a little over 30 years and I would miss our lively conversations, our observations on life and most of all her kindness, good nature and excellent sense of humor. Betty lived a good life and helped a lot of people along the way. I'm sure I'm one of the many that has these wonderful stories to tell. I am a better person for having known her.

Negaunee High School Alumni Scholarship 2010

This year's \$500 Alumni Scholarship was presented to Michelle Makela. Michelle is furthering her education at Northern Michigan University. Due to the generous giving of the NHS Alumni, the Association was able to give out its 3rd annual scholarship to a graduating senior. Michelle is the daughter of Alan and Brenda (Pyykkonen) Makela of the class of 1988.



Sylvia Saari by Kitty Kososki

Student teaching is the final step for most would-be teachers in becoming certified. I had the honor of being assigned to Negaunee High School for my “practice” in the fall of 1969 under the guidance of Sylvia Saari. During my semester at NHS, I was able to learn from three grand ladies and master teachers: Betty Zesiger (the Grand Dame), Berlyene Miller (Mama San) and Sylvia Saari (the Tidy Bowl Lady). From them I saw different approaches to teaching, all effective, and was encouraged to find my own. All three taught me to value and challenge my students. I went on to teach for many years at a nearby school and feel whatever success I had came from Sylvia and her compatriots.

One particular experience comes to mind when I think back. The “crop” of student teachers the preceding semester had been a bunch of “whippersnappers,” spreading themselves willy-nilly all over the teachers’ lounge without proper respect for the ownership of particular chairs and cushions by the old guard then on the faculty. Our group was duly informed that we had access to the lounge conditional on our exhibiting recognition of our place in the pecking order. I learned really fast, but it was quite some time before I felt comfortable walking through the lounge door without first throwing in a white flag.

I was a graduate of Ishpeming, student taught in Negaunee, and taught at Westwood. I know the three are intense rivals. That’s as it should be. However, whenever I hear people criticize one school and laud their own, I smile, for I have had a unique experience in being intimately involved with all. They all care about their students and do the best job they can to prepare them for their futures.

Marilyn Flannigan by Lori Johnson Bluse '79, Connie Johnson Herman '81

We had the pleasure of growing up next door to Marilyn Flannigan. She was a wonderful neighbor and great friend of our family. Marilyn was an inspiration to all of us. She was a successful “single working mom” raising four children on her own, working full time and taking college classes. Her house on Arch Street in Negaunee was always a busy place... and she had cookies in her cookie jar when the neighbors came to visit!

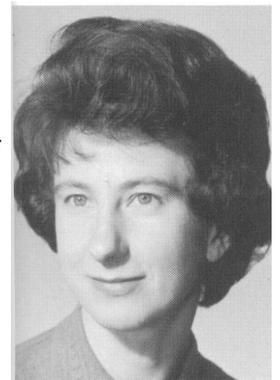
Mrs. Flannigan began her teaching career north of Duluth before becoming an English teacher in Negaunee. Many students were introduced to the “classic novels” in Mrs. Flannigan’s class. She did her best to help us appreciate the rich language and valuable lessons about life that we could learn through books. We were expected to keep up with our reading and be ready for a “pop quiz” a few times a week. Mrs. Flannigan was very wise... and had a sense of humor.

Most students may also remember an occasional “visitor” in the building. Mrs. Flannigan’s beloved golden retriever, McGee, would occasionally break free of his leash and make a mad dash from home to school. McGee would sit outside the school door, hoping for the door to open, and then wander the halls until he was discovered. We would then hear “overhead announcement” in our English class that McGee was loose. When he passed away, no one was more heart-broken than Mrs. Flannigan.

Irene Daumitz Payan by Jan Krieger '70

I remember that Mrs. Daumitz-Payan French was impeccable. She would vacation in France and Canada and tell us stories and describe the places we were studying in our French textbook. In my second year of French she would do this in French. She was one of my favorite teachers, if not my favorite. Personally, she was quite unique and wore clothes from the 50’s, such as those flannel skirts appliquéd with a poodle.

What I loved about her was that she was not afraid to be her own person. She also encouraged and challenged me that there was a big world outside of our little community and that I could be a part of it if I chose to; it was not closed to me. What impressed me most about Mrs. Daumitz-Payan is that she held herself to a high standard of excellence and expected no less from her students.



Negaunee High School Open House

When: Friday July 8, 2011

Time: 11:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Gathering in the High School Commons (cafeteria)



Can you believe it? The senior class that enters the doors of Negaunee High School in the Fall of 2011 will be the 25th class to do so! Yes, that's right! The "New" Negaunee High School will be 25 years old. It opened its doors to its first students in 1986. We, the Negaunee Alumni Association, would like to honor this event by having an open house during Pioneer Week. Please come and join us. While at the "Open House", take time to stop by the NHS Booster Club's "Sideline Store" and purchase an alumni t-shirt. Other Miner items will also be for sale.

If you have any questions please contact us through our e-mail address at: nhsalum@maresa.org or by calling Joan Coduti at 906-475-9863 or her cell at 906-360-1048 Her e-mail is jocoduti@charter.net

Please DO NOT call the Superintendent's office or the high school as we are the responsible party for this event with the information.

Contribute to Your Association!

Would you like to make a donation to the NHS Alumni Association?
Your monies will help us publish our yearly newsletter and continue to fund the scholarship for a graduating senior at NHS. Donations are non-tax deductible. For more information, email us at nhsalum@maresa.org or on the web at <http://www.negaunee.k12.mi.us/alumni>



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All checks should be made payable to the Negaunee Alumni Association.

Please mail your donation to:

NHS Alumni Association, c/o Negaunee Public Schools, 101 S. Pioneer Ave., Negaunee, MI 49866