



Annalise Braught / Bemidji Pioneer

Members of the “Old Bemidji High School Remembered” group pose in front of the historic Bemidji High School arch during a dedication ceremony on June 7, 2022, at the high school. Pictured from left: Suzanne Liapis, Sharon Freutel, Linda Lemmer, Norman Malterud, Kathy Callagan, Jerry Phillips, Sharon Hirt-Taschner and Andrea Kent. See story on Page 12.

WELCOME TO THE 2022 ALL SCHOOL REUNION

Greetings!

On behalf of the Committee, we would like to welcome you to the 2022 Bemidji All School Reunion. Whether you are living here in town or traveled to attend, we hope that you thoroughly enjoy your time at the reunion. The committee has worked hard to put together a schedule of events that would not only showcase Bemidji but that everyone can enjoy while they are here.

There are many new events and we encourage you to participate in those that interest you. The Street Dance that is downtown on Saturday night, following the All School Reunion Parade, will feature many bands on two different stages, some of which have come back together just for this occasion. Sid Sletten (Class of 1974) has worked very hard on arranging the street dance and we thank him. Bring a lawn chair and come out to enjoy a night of live music, reconnecting with old friends and dancing. Don't forget your Reunion Cup which is required for beverages downtown and included as part of your registration.

Please see the schedule of events for the times of all Reunion events. There are also community events that are scheduled as well. This will definitely be a busy weekend for everyone.

We would like to thank all of the dedicated members of the committee who have helped bring this together despite the pandemic. They are an amazing group of people and they have been invaluable throughout this process. We could not have done it without them.

Enjoy the 2022 Bemidji All School Reunion!

All School Reunion Co-Chairs,
Kay M. Murphy, Class of 1975
Char Blashill, Class of 1990



ALL SCHOOL REUNION SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

THURSDAY, JULY 21

▶ Registration and visiting with friends, noon to 6 p.m. at Bemidji High School

FRIDAY, JULY 22

▶ Registration and visiting with friends, 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Bemidji High School

▶ Coffee and Conversation with Bemidji School Teachers/Staff, 10 a.m. to noon

▶ Rehearsal for All School Choir Reunion Concert, 6 to 8 p.m. at BHS Choir Room

▶ Tours from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Catch the bus at Bemidji High School for the historic downtown tour. You won't want to miss seeing the restored historical Bemidji Carnegie Library. Individual elementary school tours have been canceled.

SATURDAY, JULY 23

▶ Registration and visiting with friends, 10 a.m. to noon at Bemidji High School

▶ BHS Sports Letter Winners Gathering, 10 a.m. to noon at Bemidji High School by Lumberjack Room

▶ Rehearsal for All School Choir Reunion Concert, 11 a.m. at BHS Choir Room

▶ All School Choir Reunion Concert, noon at Bemidji High School Auditorium, Open to the public

▶ All School Cornhole Tournament, noon to 5 p.m. at the Corner Bar and the Garden Grill & Pub in Nymore.

▶ All School Reunion Parade, 6 p.m. Parade route is east on 8th Street, south on Beltrami Avenue, west on Third Street and ends at the intersection of Third and Irvine.

▶ All School Reunion Street Dance, 7 p.m. to midnight, downtown Bemidji.



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BHS CHOIR MEMBERS TO REUNITE AND PERFORM



Bemidji Pioneer file photo

Chris Fettig conducts Bemidji High School's A Cappella Choir during a performance at a 2018 Bemidji Rotary Club meeting. All former BHS choir members are invited to join Fettig for a performance at the All School Reunion.

BY DENNIS DOEDEN

The Bemidji Pioneer

More than 50 Bemidji High School graduates who have sung under Chris Fettig's direction over the last 34 years will blend their voices for a special concert during the All School Reunion.

The All School Choir Reunion concert will be held at noon on Saturday in the BHS Auditorium, and the public is invited to attend.

The event is being organized by Josh Peterson, a former choir member who now serves as executive director of Visit Bemidji and has a seat on the Bemidji City Council.

"I'm really thankful to Josh for putting this all together," said Fettig, who has been the BHS choir director since 1988. "It's the biggest blessing."

The alumni choir will hold rehearsals from 6 to 8 p.m. on Friday and at 11 a.m. Saturday.

"We've never done this before, and we already have about 50 registered, going all the way back to 1988," Fettig said.

Among the songs for the concert are three longtime favorites that virtually all choir members have sung.

One is "The Night of Silence," a winter

concert special that goes along with "Silent Night."

"It'll be out of season," Fettig said, "but it's one we did every winter concert for the last 30 plus years. So everyone knows that, and even audience members might sing along."

Another is "Loveliest of Trees" by Richard Peasley, a song about a person in his 50s who is counting how many springs he has left to enjoy cherry blossoms. It's special because Fettig brings it out every four years or so, and two of his touring choirs (1995 and last year) performed the piece under flowering cherry trees on trips to Washington, D.C.

A third piece is "Adoramus te," which has been one of Fettig's favorites going back to his own high school and college choir days.

As Fettig nears the end of a stellar career, he is looking forward to reconnecting with students and learning about their lives after high school.

"The most enjoyable and the best gift as a teacher is the students," Fettig said. "I always feel like that's what we're in the business for, hopefully to have made an impact on kids' lives. And in turn, all of these kids who are coming back had a huge impact on my life positively."

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INDIVIDUAL CLASS EVENTS AT THE ALL SCHOOL REUNION

CLASSES OF 1954 AND 1955:

A joint reunion for the Classes of 1954 and 1955 is planned during the All School Reunion on Friday. We will meet at 5 p.m. at the Hotel Bemidji (across from Lueken's North). We will be providing hors d'oeuvres and punch or you may bring your own beverage as we will not have a cash bar.

CLASS OF 1957:

Thursday: North Shore Grill, Bemidji Town and Country Club. Handicapped accessible. Meet and Greet starting at 4 p.m. followed by dinner at 5:30.

Friday: North Shore Grill, Bemidji Town and Country Club. Meet and Greet starting at 11 a.m. Lunch promptly at noon. Also, the Class of '57 has rented a large meeting room at Country Inn Suites from 3 to 10 p.m. for more visiting.

Our Reunion Class Photo will be at 2 p.m. at the BHS Auditorium.

CLASS OF 1958:

Will get together on Friday at 4 p.m. at the Eagles Club. Dinner at 6. Choice of roast beef or chicken, cost of \$18.

CLASS OF 1959:

Our class photo will be on Friday at 12:30 p.m. (prompt!) in the BHS Auditorium.

Our belated 60th year reunion will finally happen this summer. There will be a special get-together for our classmates and partners on Friday beginning at 5 p.m. at CK Dudley's located at 6405 Bemidji Ave. N. As many of you may recall, it was the Oasis when we were kids and then Noel's. There will be a cash bar and then a buffet dinner. The price per person will be \$35 including gratuity and tax.

CLASS OF 1960:

We will be getting together on Friday from 1:30 to 4 p.m. at Headwaters Music and Arts, 519 Minnesota Ave. NW. A light lunch and beverages will be served.

CLASS OF 1962:

We will be celebrating our 60th Reunion with a banquet at the Bemidji Eagles Club. Registration and social time at 4 p.m. Class photo at 5; Dinner, Program, Dance at 6.

CLASS OF 1963:

Will meet on Friday at 5 p.m. at Grace Lake Bar.

CLASS OF 1964:

We will have a class photo taken Friday at 2:30 p.m. at the BHS Auditorium. Be prompt. Then join us for dinner at 5 at

Ruttger's. Also meet at Dave's Pizza at 1 p.m. on Sunday.

CLASS OF 1965:

Will be having a class get-together on Friday from 5 p.m. until midnight at the Rail River Folk School, 303 Railroad St. SW. This is an informal gathering and the class will serve pizza, with a cash/credit bar. Come join your classmates in a night of reminiscing and fun.

CLASS OF 1966:

Our Reunion Class Photo will be on Friday at 3 p.m. at the BHS Auditorium. Then head to Dale and Joann Maristuen's in Cass Lake for our class gathering. This is the former Tom's Resort. Appetizers, soft drinks, water and a light meal will be provided. The cost is \$20 per person.

CLASS OF 1967:

Join us for a picnic at Diamond Point Park on Saturday from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Free will donations. Registration is not required to attend the picnic.

CLASS OF 1968:

Our Class Reunion Photo will be on Friday at 1 p.m. at the BHS Auditorium. On Friday starting at 5 p.m. our class will get together at the Corner Bar in Nymore.

CLASS OF 1970:

Friday from 4 to 9 p.m. we will meet at the Diamond Point Park Pavilion and eat Dave's Pizza. BYOB. Free will donation.

CLASS OF 1971:

Will meet starting at 3 p.m. on Friday at the Eckles Town Hall for food and fellowship. If able, bring a dish or other item to share.

CLASS OF 1972:

Thursday starting at 4:30 p.m. an informal meet and greet at Corner Bar in Nymore.

Friday: 50th reunion at Bemidji Town and Country Club. 5 p.m. registration; 6:30 p.m. welcome and class photo. 7 p.m. dinner and program; after dinner music, dancing and fun.

Saturday: Class of '72 float for All School Parade. Meet at the Beltrami County Services Building parking lot to decorate the float. All classmates are welcome to join in and ride the float.

Sunday: Picnic gathering at Irvingboro Marina starting at 11:30 a.m. Bring your own lunch. Picnic tables are under a covered roof in the event of rain or excessive heat.

EVENTS: Page 5

The Bemidji High School Class of 1957

WARMLY THANKS
Class Members

Ron Desizlets
Glenna Dearholt Kellin
Rita Whiting Lauderbaugh
Cecelia Wattles McKeig

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EVENTS From Page 4

CLASS OF 1973:

Will meet on Friday at the Wilton Liquor Store beginning at 6 p.m. WLS is known for burgers and other pub food as well as ribeye steak (food and beverages on your own).

CLASS OF 1974:

Class photo on Friday at 4:30 p.m. at the BHS Auditorium (arrive by 4:15). Class get together on Friday at Ruttger's Birchmont Lodge from 6 to 10 p.m. in the meeting room past the restaurant kitchen. There will be a full bar available as well as heavy appetizers. The cost is \$15 per person to cover the food and room charges.

Our class will have a float in the parade on Saturday. Float decorating will take place at 4 p.m. in the Beltrami County Services Building parking lot on Irvine Avenue between Sixth and Seventh Streets.

CLASS OF 1975:

Class reunion photo taken on Friday at



4 p.m. at the BHS Auditorium. Then head to Wilton Liquor Store for our class get-together beginning at 7 p.m. The backroom and outside deck have been reserved for our group. Classmates are on their own for food and beverages.

CLASS OF 1976:

Join us at Lake Bemidji State Park on Friday. We have rented the lakefront cabin/lodge by the beach. Bring your family and enjoy a day at the park. A permit is required to enter the park – mention at the gate that you are part of this group and you will get a discounted permit at \$5 per vehicle. Tentative plans include Dave's Pizza to be served in the evening. Bring your beverage of choice. Signs will be posted.

CLASS OF 1977:

Open house gathering at the famous "Peanut Room" at CK Dudley's on Friday from 5 to 9 p.m. CK Dudley's full kitchen is open until 10 p.m.

CLASS OF 1978:

Classmates are invited to join Dale Thompson and Sue Bruestle-Thompson at their home, 4304 Cherry Lane NE, on Friday evening.

CLASS OF 1979:

Our class will meet on Friday at Ruttger's Pirates Cove (Happy hour from 3 to 6 p.m.). If you are interested in dinner, make your reservation in the dining room or patio by calling (218) 444-3463. We will be doing a White Elephant 1970s-era gift exchange on Friday at 9 p.m. Bring a wrapped 1970s item.

Saturday our class will be entering a float in the parade.

CLASS OF 1980:

The Class of 1980 will be meeting at Schummer's Backwoods Bar & Grill (Old Squirrel's Nest) on Friday evening.

CLASS OF 1988:

Our Class Reunion Photo will be on Friday at 3:30 p.m. at the BHS Auditorium. Be prompt. Then join our classmates at 4 to closing at the 1980s Decade Bash at Becida Bar; there will be an outdoor tent, music, food, cash bar, bonfire (just like the old days), and shuttles throughout the evening from the Green Mill and rustic camping is available. Donations at the door would be appreciated to help cover the expenses for this event.

CLASS OF 1990:

Join your fellow classmates for a social gathering at the Keg 'N Cork lower level on Friday from 5 to 10 p.m.

CLASS OF 1995:

Our Class Reunion photo will be on Friday at 1:30 p.m. at the BHS Auditorium. Be prompt. Then join our classmates from 5 p.m. to closing for our celebration at Fozzie's Smokin BBQ located on Third Street downtown.

CLASS OF 2001:

Family event at Lake Bemidji State Park on Saturday from 2 to 4 p.m. We'll be picnicking at the Dining Hall. Since children cannot come to the evening event, this will be a great time for them to be involved as well. If each family can pay \$10 on arrival, that will cover the park entrance fee and part of renting the Dining Hall. Class of 2001 Reunion will be Saturday from 5:15 to 7 p.m. at Minnesota Nice Cafe. We'll have the restaurant to ourselves, and the owner (Classmate Jacob Proulx) has prepared a meal for us. The cost will be \$5 per person at the door. The All School Reunion Street Dance begins at 7 p.m. right after, only a few blocks away.



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SPECIAL MEMORIES FROM A 1957 BHS GRADUATE



Cecelia Wattles, pictured here in 1956, has wonderful memories of her years at Bemidji High School.
Contributed / Cecelia Wattles McKeig

BY CECELIA WATTLES MCKEIG

Special to the Pioneer

I entered Bemidji High School in the ninth grade along with my classmates from St. Philip's School in the fall of 1953. They were a lively bunch, and although I became friends with an extended group, those early friendships lasted through all of high school and beyond. I competed with John Nathe for grades from grade school to graduation, and we were both the better for it.

I enjoyed the years at BHS, and I'm convinced that we had some excellent teachers. When I got to college, I had the tools I needed to succeed. Some of my favorite teachers were Ted Matuseski for speech and drama, Ingrid Fenger for math and academic counseling, and Hub Buenger for two years of Latin and a year of English. In addition to classroom studies, all three spoke of a larger world that I was eager to see and experience. Of course, the musicals shown at the Chief Theater such as "American in Paris," "Three Coins in a Fountain," and Leslie Caron in "Lili" all contributed to a dream of European travel.

My years at Bemidji High School were very positive and I am grateful for that. Because I lived about a mile away, I was able to walk to the school and to Bemidji State College for a variety of extracurriculars. I never appreciated that fact until much later, but living within walking distance was a definite advantage.

Bemidji felt very safe in those years and the only

obstacle to walking alone to and from the school was the extremely cold weather at times.

I was never particularly athletic, but most school sports were not open to girls in the 1950s. Playing half-court basketball in those horrible gym suits with GAA was not my cup of tea. The eligibility rules to participate in BHS-sponsored sports all began with "He must," or "He shall." Sponsored sports were football, basketball, wrestling, track, baseball, tennis and golf.

We girls, however, were avid fans of the high school basketball and football teams. Those were good years for Bemidji teams, and the town basically shut down when the team went to the state basketball tournament. The 1956-57 handbook stated: "Because Bemidji is a frequent participant in the state basketball tournament, the school calendar is so arranged that school is usually not in session during the state tournament." Staying in Minneapolis at the Hampshire Arms or Leamington hotel was a highlight of my high school years. We cheered, we cried, and we loved our teams.

Our moms did a lot of extra things to make our high school years fun. We had a group of about 20 girls who gathered before the games for a potluck supper, but the host mom did most of the work. Getting ready to make our best appearance at the game was all part of it. Makeup, hairdos and gossip were more important than the food.

MEMORIES: Page 7

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MEMORIES

From Page 6

Of course, the dances in the high school gym that followed the games were the culmination of the evening for most of us. Despite the fear of sitting at tables or on the sidelines for several hours, we all looked forward to the music and the hope that the right boy would ask us to dance. Years later, some of the boys said it was just as difficult for them to walk across that floor and risk being publicly turned down. Some like Paul Stennes and Sam Shoemaker from our class were great dancers and rarely sat out during a set. Smiles or tears often followed when the dance ended at midnight.

In ninth grade, Mr. Kerns decided that we should have a dance band combo that could play for the school dances. I don't know how I had the gumption to try out as a ninth-grader, but I showed up for the "audition" and became the piano player for the Blue Melodaires throughout high school and during summers while home from college.

We changed names a few times and were also known as the Blue Notes and the Commodores. Joe Forbes, Dale Dickinson, John Unger, Larry West, and Larry Schroth were some of the other musicians. Along with being an organist in our wonderful auditorium and the accompanist for most of the operettas on that huge stage, Bemidji High School fostered a lifelong love of music.

During the 1950s, we still had to wear skirts to school. Occasionally, we got to wear jeans for Lumberjack Day or a special occasion. This was before the "slacks revolution" when mothers and daughters demanded the right to wear slacks/jeans to Bemidji High School.

The business program at Bemidji High School was very

popular. We had the opportunity to take shorthand, typing and bookkeeping, and Jake Outwin helped many of us find part-time or summer jobs. In some



Contributed / Cecelia Wattles McKeig
Band members of the 1950s Commodores Dance Band. From left: John Unger (saxophone), Larry West (drums), Cecelia Wattles (piano), Joe Forbes (trumpet), Dale Dickinson (trombone) and friends Phyllis Miller and Jim Johnson.

cases, these jobs through the Vocational Training program guided us to career choices. He recommended a part-time job at the soda fountain in Glass Block during high school, and I used the business training to work a part-time job for West Publishing

later in life.

During the 1950s, it was still a serious transgression to leave school early or skip school. Students who wished to leave the building during school hours were required to secure a permit which included the teacher's initials, and a signature from a parent, dentist or doctor. But we enjoyed Senior Skip Day and got away with it. In our senior year, we girls all went to Rocky Point to get a tan for prom night.

We filled pop bottles with water and kept pouring the water on us so we would tan faster. We overdid it, and most of us looked like lobsters in our prom dresses. Ruth Boyer was so sunburned that she had to seek medical attention. Prom dresses had a lot of prickly netting, and that just added to our discomfort and embarrassment.

One of our favorite hangouts was the Mileage Café. We thought we were very cool if we could have a coke and smoke a smuggled cigarette in one of their booths. Luckily, I never liked the taste of cigarettes, and I couldn't inhale properly either, so I never became addicted to smoking. Other favorites were the soda fountains at Johnson Corner Drug and City Drug.

Many young people worked there after school, and we often linked up with friends at one of the two places. The city bus stopped at the corner of Johnson Corner Drug, so it was a popular meeting place. There was also a large scale where we could weigh ourselves for a bit of change. The smell of roasted nuts in the machine by the front doors was an enticement even for those who had just checked their weight on the scale.

My class ring was lost in a house fire; my yearbook burned as well. The poodle skirt is long gone as well as the saddle shoes. I've changed my hairstyle multiple times and put on a little weight, but I've kept the memories and the friends from those great days at Bemidji High School.

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L-R: Steve (class of 1969), and wife Sally Patterson,
Molly (class of 2006), and husband Jeff Miller.

BHS WAS MY HOME FOR MORE THAN 30 YEARS



Contributed / Sue Bruns

Sue Bruns (standing) became Bemidji High School's speech coach despite having no experience with it. This photo is from her second year as coach, and features two award winners from a tournament in Crookston: Sean Simondet and Jennifer Simmons.



Contributed / Sue Bruns

Some of Sue Bruns' ninth graders outside of the old BHS auditorium read "Romeo and Juliet" to celebrate Shakespeare's birthday.

BY SUE BRUNS

Special to the Pioneer

At the June 7 Bemidji High School arch dedication, when Mayor Jorge Prince raised his hand as a BHS graduate and invited others to chime in with their grad years, I held up my hand and shouted, "2010!" (my retirement year).

BHS was my home for more than 30 years, about eight times as many years as my own high school years in St. Peter, so much more time with so many more teachers and students that I sometimes forget I didn't graduate from BHS.

My career went from teaching and advising to administration; from the old building on 15th Street to the "new" one (already 21 years old) on Division Street; and spanned the technology revolution, taking me from my portable typewriter to early computers to this thing called the World Wide Web — transitions and concepts that were far easier for my students than for me.

STARTING OUT AT BHS

In the fall of 1974, I student taught in English with Daisey Norgart, a BHS legend. I started teaching ninth grade English at BHS in the fall of 1977 when the 15th Street high school (Building A) and the old junior high (Building B) housed grades 7-12 on one campus. My classroom was above the senior high library, far away from the other junior high teachers in Building B, and on the opposite side of the overcrowded building from the senior high English teachers. Outside my door was the Learning Center, staffed by special ed teachers who became my first friends and colleagues at BHS. With characters like Lyman Brink, Whitey Anderson, and Howie Schultz in the area, there was never a dull moment; and with role models like Deanna Nichols and Carolyn LeClaire, I had people to go to with questions.

When I accepted the position, Activities Director Bun Fortier and BHS Principal Dave Bucher told me I would also be the head BHS speech coach. I knew nothing about competitive speech, and shared this fact with Mr. Fortier. "You don't have to know anything about it to coach it," he said. Bun had been an exceptionally successful basketball coach, and I suppose my response was a bit cocky for a new teacher, but I remember asking, "Really? Is that what you tell your hockey coaches, too?"

I compensated for my lack of experience and knowledge by actively recruiting as many of my ninth grade students as I could — I think I ended up with a team of about 40

"speakers." BHS sent speakers to state every year I coached, so the team did well in spite of my inexperience.

COACHING AND ADVISING ACTIVITIES

Over the years, in addition to speech, I advised set construction for a few plays (for which I was neither trained nor talented), Touch group, football cheerleading, and the school newspaper. The Touch group was a theater group whose task was to educate second graders throughout the district about "personal body safety," the difference between good and bad touches. I worked with school nurse Caroline Renaud and Gail Hendershot, a child protection social worker who coordinated the group. We trained with the Touch group from Grand Rapids High School and actors from Illusion Theater out of Minneapolis. The students who were involved in Touch were empathetic, driven, and dedicated.

For two or three years, I advised football cheerleading. I had been a cheerleader for two years, but if girls sports had been offered when I was in high school, I'd much rather have been playing a game than cheering for one. The girls on my cheerleading squads were far better and more precise than I'd ever been; they did pyramids and lifts and tosses and all kinds of things I knew nothing about. They were self-driven and set high standards for themselves. With every extracurricular event, memorable students, incidents, and quotable lines were stockpiled in my BHS memories.

1981 TEACHERS' STRIKE

In 1981, I was on the BEA negotiations committee. I decided this would be a good way to become better informed about my contract. Little did I know that in early November, we'd be on strike. Fortunately, the strike didn't last long, and we were back in our classrooms before the snow fell. I'd learned a lot more about my contract — and other things — than I'd ever hoped to learn. I can't say that I would ever want to go on strike again, but the camaraderie that developed among teachers at that time stayed with me through the rest of my time at BHS.

After the Middle School opened in 1982 and space was freed up in Buildings A and B, I moved to the east wing of the high school and was finally in closer proximity with colleagues like Mary Lou Brandvik and Diane Sharpe. We became a first-floor English sub-group as well as close personal friends, friendships that continue today.

30 YEARS: Page 9

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30 YEARS From Page 8

I taught every writing class I could as opportunities arose, learned a lot about my students through their writing, and was proud when I could see improvement in their writing skills. Sometimes my students shared personal things that involved me on another level. One day, a very quiet ninth grade girl left a note on my desk at the beginning of class. As I was taking roll, she came up and asked if I could please read the note. She rarely spoke in class, and I sensed an urgency to her request that made me stop in my tracks and read the poem she'd written. It basically said she was contemplating suicide. Although teachers are never supposed to leave their classes unattended, I assigned a story to the class to read and asked the girl to come with me. We walked to Building B and I took her to the guidance office to work with a counselor. She missed two weeks of school and returned early in May. The Friday before Mother's Day, she left a long-stemmed rose and a thank you note on my desk. I still hold this memory as one of my most precious.

FROM TEACHING TO ADMINISTRATION

In the spring of 1997, I was offered a position as teacher on special assignment to implement the new state graduation standards. I knew that many teachers viewed the standards as just one more educational trend that would require a lot of work and then likely be out the door when the next came along. I'd had an exceptionally fun group of students that year (I'm still in touch with some of them), had felt good about the school year, and was more satisfied with my teaching than I'd ever been before, but it was a unique opportunity, so I accepted, never thinking I'd just finished my last year of teaching.

I shared an office with Larry Senger, counselor, in the old high school (in a room just above the arch that has recently been dedicated.) The one-year opportunity became a three-year job and led me into administration. During my third year on special assignment, I was asked to take

on some of the administrative duties of Assistant Principal Dave Morris, who had been appointed by Superintendent Rollie Morud to coordinate the move to the new high school.

In December of 2001, just before Christmas break, we took busloads of students to the new building and toured them around. (It's a joke to say we toured them around. None of us knew our way around and no one seemed to understand the numbering system of the classrooms.) The first day after break, students wandered around the new building, asking teachers and staff where to find room 1117 or 1202, or, heaven forbid something in the 4000 range. We didn't have a clue.

"WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE OF THIS?"

The transition from the old building to the new (now 21 years old!) was twofold for me, from teaching to administration. The assistant principal's office was a lot different than my classroom: I could plan for the next day — put meetings on the calendar, schedule teacher observations, block time for dealing with student attendance; but on any given day, something might happen that was completely out of left field — a theft or fight that had to be investigated, a meeting with parents about a suspension, accompanying a counselor and potentially suicidal student to the ER, other things that couldn't be foreseen or planned. I had to take whatever came up, think on my feet, and try to figure out the best way to deal with it, but the unpredictability and problem-solving the job demanded made me curious about what each

new day would bring.

On Sept. 11, 2001, the second week of my first year as AP, my secretary came into my office and said, "A parent just called and said an airplane just hit one of the World Trade Towers in New York." She and I looked at each other as if to say, "And what are we to make of this in Bemidji, Minn.?" A few more calls came in — parents saying they were coming to pick up their students and take them home. I stepped out of my office into the Commons; the Jumbo-Trons (huge built-in TV screens) were on and we watched the



Contributed / Sue Bruns

One of Sue Bruns' favorite projects at the new Bemidji High School was the creation of an outdoor classroom by a group of Advanced Construction Tech students.

tower burn. Other people came out of their offices and we all tried to process what we were seeing. Then a second plane crashed into the second tower and everyone's stomach turned. What did this mean? For the next 10 years, until the day I retired, I couldn't walk through the Commons without thinking about the biggest tragedy I'd ever seen playing out in real time on those Jumbo-Trons.

In my new role, I missed the connections I'd formed with students, especially in my writing classes and through extracurriculars, but some unique projects provided different rewards. Graduation rates were slipping as BHS was losing students to the ALC when they fell behind on credits, and many students weren't completing the ALC program. I proposed and initiated a program called Credit Recovery that allowed students to spend one class period at BHS, catching up on missed credits. Teachers on their preps worked with Credit Recovery students to help them make progress. BHS retained

and graduated more students and I was proud to have led the program.

For fun and relaxation in winter months, I initiated after-school Cabin Fever Coffeehouse sessions in the Commons. Anyone could come, socialize, jam, have hot cocoa or tea. One of my favorite projects was working with the school forest to help with tree-planting, trail building, and the creation of an outdoor classroom.

A group of Advanced Construction Tech students was looking for a special project one spring. We designed and built (they did all the labor) an outdoor classroom in a small clump of forest on the south side of the high school. They brought me two or three sets of plans and I kept nixing things and asking them to redesign with specific criteria I gave them. I could tell they were eager to start building, but I wanted the best design we could come up with. (They also got a taste of what contractors experience when working with picky customers.) Finally, I approved their revised plans and they finished up the project the last week of school.

It was raining when they came to my office, hesitant, probably fearful that something wouldn't meet my approval. We walked to the outdoor classroom together in the drizzle.

Our small talk stopped when we arrived. I stood behind the back row of seats, then walked up the aisle, checked out the podium. The young builders were completely silent. I turned around and looked at them. "Guys," I said, "this is fantastic!" I could feel their relief and pride in what they'd accomplished and shared their pride in the project. Their names were embossed on a metal tag on the site: Channing Boe, Brady Bergquist, and Jesse Echternach.

Whether teaching, coaching an activity, or working on a special project, whether in the classroom or in the assistant principal's office, I loved working at the high school, watching students grow and develop their talents, offering guidance, and seeing what amazing things they could accomplish and hoping I could help them along the way.

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A SHATTERING MEMORY FROM A 1978 GRADUATE

BY KELLY (CAMPBELL) REID

The Bemidji Pioneer

One night after a track meet I was waiting for a ride home. I was hanging out on the high school front lawn at the old Bemidji High School location on 15th Street. In track, I did the shot put, discus and ran.

Back then, we would carry the shot and discus to and from the track meet and then turn it into the gym the next day. With time on my hands, I decided to practice throwing the discus. I did a couple of easy turns and just slightly let loose to practice the spin.

Finally, I decided it was time to see what I could really do. I wasn't worried because as anyone who went to the old high school knows, the front lawn was a large space. I got in my stance and did my spins and released the discus.

Instead of this nice trajectory across the lawn, it sailed right through a window into a first-floor classroom. The sound of glass breaking "shattered" my elation of the release. I went into total freak-out mode and ran up the stairs to test the doors to see if I could get inside ... no luck.

My ride showed up, I got in and acted as if nothing happened. I didn't tell a soul because I decided I would fix this myself. The next morning I got up very early, jumped on my bike, pedaled 12 miles to town and arrived at school well before classes started.

I found the janitor and told him what had happened. I couldn't help crying while relaying the story to him. I was so afraid of how much trouble I was in. He was very understanding. He let me into the classroom and I retrieved the discus from the floor.

I remember him telling me since I had been so honest about the whole ordeal and had gone to great lengths to take ownership of my mistake that he wouldn't report me and they would get the window fixed.

I am sure my parents were told and I even wonder if they ended up paying for the window. But it was obviously something that stuck with me to this day.

This display at the Beltrami County History Center highlights Bemidji High School's first state basketball championship in 1936.

Dennis Doeden / Bemidji Pioneer



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BEMIDJI'S FIRST TWO HIGH SCHOOLS



Contributed photos / Beltrami County Historical Society

Bemidji's first high school opened in 1910 between Sixth and Seventh streets and America and Irvine avenues. It cost \$50,000. In January of 1919, the year following World War I, the high school was destroyed by fire. There was controversy as to where a new high school should be constructed, at the site of the destroyed school, close to Bemidji's "downtown area," or "up north in the woods" along 15th Street. The 15th Street site prevailed and by 1921, the high school opened.

The second Bemidji High School opened in the fall of 1922 on 15th Street west of Bemidji Avenue North. It closed in January 2001 when the current school opened.



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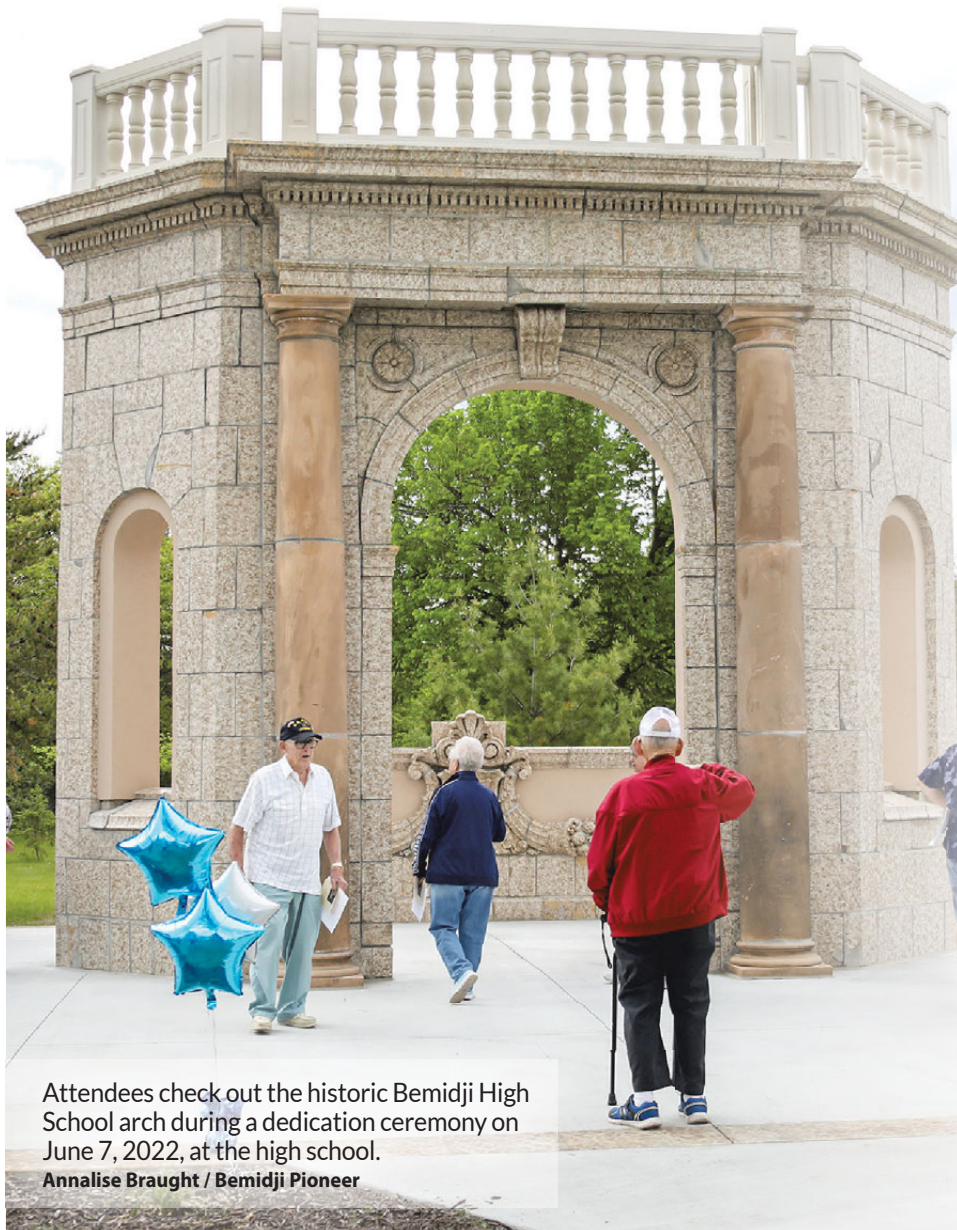
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RECONSTRUCTION OF OLD BHS ARCH BRIDGES GAP BETWEEN PAST AND PRESENT

BY DALTYN LOFSTROM

The Bemidji Pioneer



Attendees check out the historic Bemidji High School arch during a dedication ceremony on June 7, 2022, at the high school.

Annalise Braught / Bemidji Pioneer

On Sept. 12, 1922, the archway of the former Bemidji High School on 15th Street welcomed over 800 students into the halls and classrooms that would eventually hold 78 years of history.

One hundred years after its opening, that same archway has been reconstructed and memorialized on the current grounds of Bemidji High School, bridging a gap between the past and present.

At a public unveiling on Tuesday, June 7, BHS alumni and community leaders gathered to celebrate the bit of the “old BHS” that’s been preserved following its demolition in 2008.

“When the community learned the old high school building would be demolished, it was a big disappointment to a lot of people,” said Sharon Fruetel, a 1964 BHS graduate, during the dedication ceremony. “That was a building that the local paper called ‘one of the most beautiful in the state’ when it was first built in 1922. It served the community as the secondary school for almost 78 years or three-quarters of the life of the city at that time.”

The demolition of the school led to the creation of the “Old Bemidji High School Remembered” committee, a group of BHS alumni who worked out the logistics of storing the stone arch pieces, scouting a location for the project, managing donations, and naturally, reconstructing the arch itself.

“A few BHS alumni gathered and asked, ‘could some of the features of that building be saved and put to some use?’” Fruetel added. “They noted the two main entries and beautiful decorative

pieces along the very top. They thought one could be saved and would be worth doing.”

The committee had a short window of time — roughly two months — to salvage the pieces they wanted before the demolition would occur.

“This remarkable group, which had no legal or official authority, no salvage expertise and no money,” Fruetel said as laughter came from the crowd, “accomplished the following.”

The group salvaged the arch and decorative pieces they wanted, hired a salvage expert, raised \$15,000 — with grants from the George W. Neilson Foundation, All School Reunion Committee and individual donors — and recruited around 25 volunteers to transport the pieces to a temporary storage space.

Linda Lemmer, a 1965 BHS graduate, was tasked with housing over 300 stone arch pieces in a pole barn she had inherited from her godmother, and they had a home there for about 12 years.

“I was grateful that, when (my godmother) died, she left her storage pole shed and life’s estate to me so I wouldn’t have to worry about where I would put 300-some pieces of the old BHS archway,” Lemmer reflected with laughter.

During the archway’s time in storage, the committee went back and forth on which site the arch would eventually be housed, a process that seemed discouraging at times.

“Finding a site was difficult,” Fruetel said. “A few of them seemed promising and we pursued them vigorously. But one after another, they didn’t work out.”

BHS ARCH: Page 13

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BHS ARCH From Page 12

In the committee's meeting notes, Fruetel shared:

► May 2012: Our project was not included in the park design.

► 2013: It is reported that the old high school property is being sold to a developer.

► April 2016: We set a deadline of Sept. 1 to make a decision about continuing our project.

► September 2016 meeting notes indicate no such discussion took place (on discontinuing the project) and we persisted.

The committee landed on a location in 2018 — next to the Boys and Girls Club — which was deemed workable, though not ideal for housing the project.

This all changed in January 2020, however, when BHS Principal Jason Stanoch approached the committee to suggest the current high school grounds where the archway rests today.

"This was the fifth location we had discussed and it's the best in my opinion," Lemmer said. "It was just serendipity that we have a handicap crosswalk from the parking lot right over to the arch."

Each piece had been numbered and moved to the site in fall of 2020, during which the memorial's foundation had

also been poured and the blocks were covered with tarps for the winter.

When 2021 came around, the structure was built, benches were placed, some landscaping took place and replacement balustrade pieces were ordered due to damage to the original parts, plus a whole lot of fundraising.

Lemmer estimates the project cost around \$150,000.

"Fundraising is not the easiest thing in the world, and it's not my forte," Lemmer said. "But it's worth it with the celebration."

Fruetel expressed thanks to the 300-plus donors for their time, money and labor that went toward the project as well as Jacobson's Concrete and Masonry, the contractor for the project.

Beyond thankfulness, historical appreciation was another theme of speeches throughout the event.

"When I was a student, I didn't really appreciate history. But as I grew older and began to live that history, I began to appreciate it more," retiring Superintendent Tim Lutz said. "I remember the first time I walked through a classroom and was shocked to realize that the history the students were learning was once the news and current events I lived through."

Lutz displayed a 1922 BHS yearbook, the first yearbook after Bemidji's first high school burned down in 1921. This specific school had only opened in 1910.

Recognizing the 100 years since the second BHS building opened its doors, Lutz hopes the new landmark can connect generations young and old.

"A generation of youngsters who have no clue who Mr. Whipple was or the Maytag repairman or how much

good taste Charlie Tuna had — I trust that this historic landmark may just create the spark that attracts our next generation to a colorful history and legacy of the old BHS and of our community's support for education," Lutz added.

Bemidji Mayor Jorge Prince, a 1990 BHS graduate, spoke on the 22 years since the former BHS closed its doors in 2000 along with its subsequent demolition.

"When the wrecking ball came in 2008, a lot of us were disappointed. Not all of us sprung into action, but some people did," Prince said. "They saw the need to preserve our history and it seems appropriate that what's in front of me is another 20 years of history."

Completed in time for the Bemidji All School Reunion to be held July 21-23, the committee looks forward to the many photo opportunities the archway will provide as well as the free time that will open up now that the project has been completed.

Though the committee will disband, its efforts will live on in perpetuity.

"(The reconstruction) has been a long time coming," Fruetel said. "The story of the old BHS arch has been one of perseverance, disappointments, teamwork, community, generosity, serendipity and hope."



Bemidji Pioneer file photo

Workers began demolition of the old Bemidji High School on 15th Street Northwest in May of 2008.

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'HIGH SCHOOL REMINISCING' ON DISPLAY AT HISTORY CENTER



Photos by Dennis Doeden / Bemidji Pioneer

The Beltrami County History Center welcomes All School Reunion attendees with a new exhibit titled "High School Reminiscing."

The exhibit highlights different aspects of local high school life and history, much of which those who attended Bemidji High School will find familiar.

"We hope that people will feel a connection to it," said Emily Thabes, the historical society's executive director. "We're going to be showcasing all aspects of high school throughout multiple decades."

A second exhibit, "Century of Play," is in partnership with Minnesota's Historic Northwest, an organization that includes museums across the region.

The collaborative exhibit will examine childhood and play, and display the different toys and games people have enjoyed throughout the centuries and approaching the modern day.

"Each specific museum will showcase toys and games from their own collection, so we're really excited about that," Thabes said.

The exhibit will also incorporate programming and other ways to engage with history, from game nights to toys that museum visitors can interact with.

"We will have games and toys that folks can play with at the museum as part of the exhibit, and then we're planning some different game nights," Thabes said. "I think it's going to be a really cool exhibit."

The goal of these exhibits and their interactive nature is to foster a personal connection with history and to help visitors recognize their own connections to it.

"Sometimes people think about history as this far away thing, far behind them, something that they read about in a book or had to memorize in school," Thabes said. "We're hoping that this will engage more folks with history."

By focusing on childhood experiences and memories, Thabes also hopes that the exhibit will provide opportunities for older generations to connect with younger ones and form new memories.

"Experiences playing with toys and games for many people are experiences of joy and happiness," Thabes said. "I'm really hoping that people will gain from this a connection to their childhood and spark new memories with families and generations growing up now."



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A WELCOME FROM MAYOR PRINCE



Many BHS graduates will gather for the All School Reunion, and downtown will be buzzing.
Bemidji Pioneer file photo

On behalf of the city of Bemidji, and as an alumnus of Bemidji High School's graduating class of 1990, I want to welcome you to the 2022 Bemidji All School Reunion.

Whether your life story has taken you far away from our city or kept you close, we are excited to welcome you home to celebrate this special event together. As you can guess, our city continues to evolve and grow in many different ways. It is our sincere hope that you have the opportunity to explore all that you remember, along with all that is new.

Take a stroll downtown and visit an old favorite for lunch, visit Bemidji High School and reflect in front of the newly constructed "Old" BHS Arch, or simply enjoy the outdoors for which our community is famous but, above all, take this opportunity to reconnect with family, friends and classmates.

As many are aware, this event was originally scheduled for 2020, but health concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic caused its postponement. As our nation steps out from the more severe impacts of the pandemic, there is no better time to celebrate all that is good in our community.

Long before any of us were doctors, farmers, mechanics, lawyers, workers or elected officials, we were simply kids growing up in neighborhoods throughout our city.

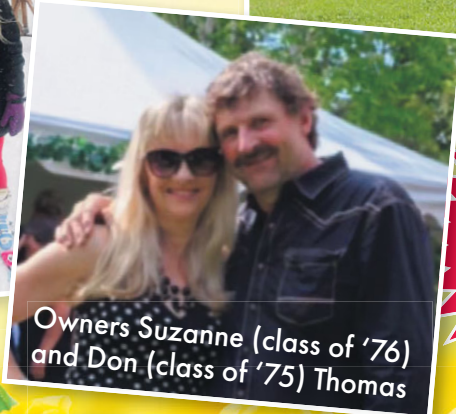
I encourage you to reconnect with that spirit during this reunion. Find that friend who could always make you laugh and share a memory, think of those who took the time to help you and offer them your thanks or create a friendship with someone new, because our city has always been defined by our relationships not just our geography.

I hope to see you on the street or at one of the many events as we come together to celebrate and afterward, always remember that Bemidji has a place for you. Because once a member of our community, *always* a member. Be safe, have fun and welcome home.

Sincerely, Jorge Prince, Mayor of Bemidji

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Plenty of former Bemidji High School students will take the stages on Saturday night for the All School Reunion Street Dance on Third Street.

Two stages will be set up as the three-day reunion winds up. Stage One will be at the corner of Third Street and Beltrami Avenue, and Stage Two will be at Third Street and Minnesota Avenue.

It all starts at 7 p.m. and goes until

midnight. Sixteen-year-old Katelynn Davids, who won the youngest age division at the Bemidji Sings! competition last year, will perform the national anthem.

Stage One will feature an All Star Band featuring former classmates from 7 until 9 p.m., followed by Smokehouse country band from 9 p.m. to midnight. The All Star Band will include former Power Play

members Dave Sand, Dave Bewley and Sid Sletten, along with Mike Naylor and Sletten's son, Mike.

"Power Play was around for 30 years," said Sid Sletten, who is coordinating the bands for the event. "Several others will join us for a song or two."

Stage Two will feature the bands Freeway and Crosswater from 7 to 9 p.m., followed by Fusion from 9 p.m. to midnight.

As part of registration, All School Reunion attendees will receive a commemorative reunion cup which will be their ticket for the event (refills in cup only). If you are not registered, you will be required to purchase a collectible event cup at the street dance from one of the bars located on the street at a cost of \$5). All beverages will be served only in event cups on the street.



Smokehouse is one of the bands that will perform at the All School Reunion Street Dance on Saturday.

Contributed

Katelynn Davids, winner of last year's Bemidji Sings! vocal competition, will perform the National Anthem to kick off the All School Reunion Street Dance at 7 p.m. on Saturday.

Bemidji Pioneer file photo



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