



UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN-LA CROSSE

CLASS NOTES

JULY 2023

CLASS NOTES SUBMITTED MAY 15 - JUNE 15, 2023

'75

Gary Gernetzke, Forest City, Iowa, retired in 2014 as an international sales manager for Winnebago Industries Inc. in Forest City.

'76

Jon "Randy" Wray, West Bend, finished 43 years of teaching high school chemistry in June 2022. He spent 33 years in West Bend and seven in New Berlin school districts, with three years at Arrowhead, Whitefish Bay and Kewaskum high schools. His wife, **Bethany B. (Thiede) Wray, '82**, works for the Germantown School District.

'79

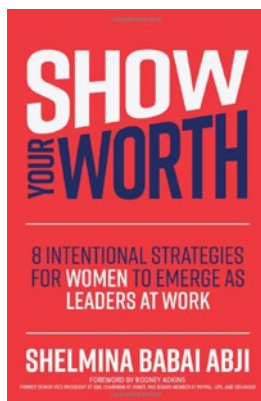
Scott R. Gilbertson, Houston, Texas, and his wife, Michelle, have moved to the University of Houston campus as Faculty in Residence. Their daughter is a senior at the University of Texas-Austin, and their

son is a chemistry major at Trinity University in San Antonio.

'84

Laurie L. Marsh, Galesville, has retired after 39 years of teaching. Marsh taught at Galesville Elementary as a paraprofessional, at St. James Catholic School as an English language teacher, at G.E.T. High School as a long-term substitute teacher in special education and at Blair-Taylor as a special education and Title I teacher. Marsh also coached Odyssey of the Mind and High Quiz Bowl at B-T, where the team won the St. Mary's High Quiz Bowl. She has been at Cochrane-Fountain City the past five years teaching as an interventionist and exploring healthy choices teacher for four years, teaching K-6. Teaching in her own second grade classroom this past year was "the cherry on top" of her career, she says. While at C-FC, she implement-

ed an elementary-wide social emotional self-regulation tool of the week using isometric and regular exercises, mantras and yoga. She also celebrated "Start with Hello" and "Say Something" weeks with the Sandy Hook Promise anti-bullying and anti-suicide materials. She also led the students in raising money in the American Heart Association's Healthy Kids Challenge. In retirement, Marsh hopes to learn Spanish, play electric guitar, travel and enjoy more time with loved ones.



'85

Shelmina Babai Abji has written a best-selling

book, **"Show Your Worth: 8 Intentional Strategies for Women to Emerge as Leaders at Work."**

The book is promoted as "A proven blueprint to accelerate career success and fast track into leadership roles — especially for women who are underrepresented in their fields." Abji is a **TEDx speaker**, board member, former vice president at IBM and an angel investor. **Order it and see more.**

'96



Dean Leisgang, '96

Dean Leisgang, Seymour, will be inducted into the Nevada Broadcasters Association Hall of Fame as part

of the Class of 2023 in September. Leisgang worked at KRNVT-TV in Reno, Nevada, from 1999-2006 as the station's sports anchor and sports director. In addition to his TV duties, he worked as a sideline reporter for Western Athletic Conference football games and as an analyst for WAC men's basketball games. Leisgang was a Heisman Trophy voter, a featured columnist for the Reno-Gazette Journal and led KRNVT's coverage of the 2002 Winter Olympics from Salt Lake City. Additionally, he earned three Edward R. Murrow awards for excellence in broadcasting and collected the 2006 Associated Press Mark Twain Award for best sports reporting. After 25 years in broadcasting, Leisgang now works in educational communications for the Cooperative Educational Service Agency 7 in Green Bay.

Kyle Yackley, Kenosha, is a teacher in the Kenosha Unified School District.

'97



Ryan Festerling, '97

Ryan Festerling, Pewaukee, has been named chief executive officer of QPS Employment Group, a Wisconsin-based staffing firm. Festerling joined QPS in June 2019 as president and chief operating officer. He has more than 20 years of experience at department store chain Kohl's, where he held leadership roles such as executive vice president and head of human resources.

Rebecca (Slama) Schwertfeger, Cedar Rapids, Iowa, is the senior human resources director for the University of Iowa Health Care, Iowa City.

'00

Erin Reddy Wolff, Livingston, has started her own company, E Reddy Wolff Photography, subsidiary of Mental Pictures, LLC. After a nearly 17-year journey through recovery of severe complex PTSD, more than a year in trauma therapy treatment and more than five years of rebuilding, she stands up for others. She has been doing one-to-one assistance with the families of sexually assaulted children by other students at school to help them survive and adjust to new lives. She has intervened in many different systems to educate and advocate for best practices in the school system and to advocate for reform. She and others have begun discussing formalizing and widening assistance to other families in the region experiencing similar crises. She has also expanded a photography hobby into a business, doing photography for 28 area high schools' athletic programs. She

loves the job because she gets to know many athletes and their friends, and it provides her the opportunity to let them know she is a safe person if they need help. She feels fortunate to have had the foundation laid at UWL to create her own way of making a difference in people's lives. "Thank you to all of my fellow students and the faculty of the Community Health Education program from 1996-2000," she says.

'01

Danielle (Johnson) Werner, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is the chief operating officer of Clinical Practices at the University of Pennsylvania/Penn Medicine in Philadelphia. On March 18, she was appointed to the Council of Regents, the legislative body of the American College of Healthcare Executives, an international professional society of more than 48,000 health care executives who lead hospitals, health care systems

and other health care organizations.

'02

Kennedy J. Richards, Woodruff, is a year post-grad and will attend law school in the fall. Richards is still deciding which law school to attend and has been accepted to Vermont Graduate & Law School and the University of Massachusetts School of Law-Dartmouth.

'03

Alison M. (Pechan) Hoffman, Verona, is a product owner for Humana Inc., Louisville, Kentucky.

'10

Erin Gillitzer, Madison, is a legislative operations manager for the State of Wisconsin Senate Chief Clerk's Office in Madison.

'12

Michael Mitchell, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is an assistant U.S. attorney with the

Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
for the Western District
of Pennsylvania in
Pittsburgh.

'19



Jordan Appel, '19

Jordan Appel is a second-year dual-degree student in the doctor of osteopathic medicine program and master of science in anatomy program at Des Moines University. He was selected this spring by DMU's College of Osteopathic Medicine for its prestigious osteopathic manual medicine fellowship program.

Alec A. Paplham, Bradenton, Florida, is a senior financial analyst with Associated Bank, Green Bay.



Honored flyers

Two retired professors were on the Freedom Honor Flight in May. From left, John Cleveland, professor emeritus of psychology, and Joe Heim, professor emeritus of political science/public administration, were among the veterans making the trek from La Crosse to Washington, D.C., on Saturday, May 13. The flight sends veterans to the nation's capital to visit veteran memorials.



Colfax kudos

Tim Devine, '84, with Colfax High School senior Maci Harvey, who plans to attend UWL to study pre-pharmacy in fall 2023. The two were at the senior banquet in May, where Harvey was recognized for academic excellence. Devine was recognized by being roasted for announcing his retirement after serving 39 years in the district.

In Remembrance

Alumni

- 1946 – 1947 – Deloris (Jandt) Britt, Onalaska.
1948 – Joan (Henry) Zutz, Brillion.
1950 – Caroline (Lindahl) Bakkestuen, Westby.
1950 – Clair Rood, Onalaska.
1951 – George Sladky, Madison.
1952 – Dorothy (Downing) Mossholder, Westby.
1953 – Carolyn Anderson, Madison.
1954 – Mary (Schroeder) Bradley, La Crosse.
1956 – Virginia “Ginny” (Gittens) Dockweiler, La Crosse.
1956 – Betty (Lee) Dyer, Pleasant Prairie.
1956 – Shirley (Olson) Wehrs-Rogge, West Salem.
1958 – Marjorie (Levendoski) Olson, La Crosse.
1961 – Dale Davig, Surprise, Arizona.
1961 – Robert Dean Smith, Hudson.
1961 – Arleen Speich, Kenosha.
1962 – Eileen Devore, Viroqua.
1964 – Warren Bjorge, Onalaska.
1964 – Diane (Solberg) Effinger, Wisconsin Dells.
1966 – Loren Wardwell, Yukon, Oklahoma.
1967 – Ann (Schye) Drew, Butte, Montana.
1969 – Kathy (Dummer) Morley, Mesa, Arizona.
1969 – SueAnn “Sue” (Bausman) Olson,
Bunkerville, Nevada.
1970 – Patricia (Muehr) Stilp, Ettrick.
1970 – Edmund Waffle, Reedsburg.
1971 – Sheila Bowler, Cudahy.
1972 – Upton Becker, West Bend.
1973 – Edward Neuman, La Crescent, Minnesota.
1974 – Sandra Summerfield, Oconomowoc.
1974 – James Weisse, Phoenix, Arizona.
1975 – William “Bill” Coleman, La Crosse.
1976 – Robert “Bob” Monk, La Crosse.
1976 – David J. Strasser, La Crosse.
1978 – Douglas “Doug” McConaghy, Holmen.
1982 – Betsy (Bingham) Davis, Wilsonville, Oregon.
1982 – Dana Pongratz, La Crescent, Minnesota.
1982 – Carolyn Wiggins, Longmont, Colorado.
1983 – Heidi Fischer, Madison.
1984 – David Crotteau, Rice Lake.
1989 – Phyllis Sonsalla, Darlington.
1991 – Paul Gasch, La Crosse.
1990 – Rodney Mowbray, La Crosse.
1994 – Stephanie Stannard, Rogers, Minnesota.
1995 – Judith (Rice) Johnson, Onalaska.
2003 – Amanda Hinds-Rood, Holmen.
2004 – Aimee (Paradis) Wallace, Reedsburg.
2013 – William “Billy” Mayer, Fond du Lac.



Faculty & Staff

Nancy Navar

Nancy Navar died April 7, 2023, in Wickliffe, Ohio. Navar joined the Department of Recreation Management and Therapeutic Recreation in 1986, retiring in 2014. During her tenure, Navar served as department chair and led the initiative to change the therapeutic recreation concentration to a major. She received numerous awards, including the NTRS Distinguished Service Award, UWL Excellence in Education Award, TR curriculum from ATRA, Who's Who in American Education, Who's Who Among America's Teachers, Who's Who in Medicine and Healthcare, and the Bush Leadership Fellow Award.

William "Bill" Pemberton

William "Bill" Pemberton, 83, died June 1, 2023, in Half Moon Bay, California, after battling Parkinson's for several years. Pemberton grew up in southern Oklahoma and received a Bachelor of Arts at the University of Oklahoma, followed by a master's and doctorate in history at the University of Missouri. He began teaching at UWL in 1966, teaching world history and recent American history, with a specialty in the modern presidency until retiring in 1998. His analysis, teaching and published biographies, especially of Harry Truman, and everyday commitment to students and programs like the precollege programs of the '70s and Hmong immigrant adults of the '80s, exemplified

his life. Pemberton also took a lead in restructuring the UWL Office of Minority Studies to the Office of Multicultural Student Services in the early 1980s.

Clair Rood

Clair Rood, 94, died May 29, 2023. Rood earned a bachelor's degree in elementary education at UWL in 1950. He continued his education at UW-Stout, earning a master's degree, and in 1966, he joined UWL as an instructor in audio visual education. In 1971, he earned a doctorate in instructional development and technology in education from Michigan State University. He worked on campus until retiring in 1995. [See his complete obituary.](#)

Richard L. Snowberg

Richard Snowberg died March 19, 2023, in La Crosse. Snowberg joined UWL in 1975 as an associate professor to teach media and supervise the media center. After 25 years in the Media Services, Educational Media and Extended Education offices, he retired in 2000. Snowberg was a clown enthusiast and is remembered as "Snowflake." In 1981, he established the largest international clown arts program in the world on campus, directing Clown Camp for 30 years. It continues today. He was inducted into the International Clown Hall of Fame in 1999.

[See his complete obituary.](#)



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The deadline is the 15th of the month prior to the month of quarterly posting.

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