

## LUVERNE AND ROCK COUNTY TO CELEBRATE AMERICA'S 250TH BIRTHDAY JULY 2026

On July 4, 2026, our nation will commemorate and celebrate the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

The journey toward this historic milestone is an opportunity to pause and reflect on our nation's past, honor the contributions of all Americans, and look ahead toward the future we want to create for the next generation and beyond.

### THE CELEBRATION IS CALLED: AMERICA250.

In late 2024, representatives from the Rock County Fair Board, Luverne Initiatives for Tomorrow, Luverne Area Chamber and the Luverne Convention & Visitors Bureau came together and agreed that a celebration needs to happen in Rock County.

**AMERICA250 – ROCK COUNTY** will be a county-wide celebration worth happening and held during the annual Rock County Fair, the last week of July 2026. Special events, activities and programs will be held throughout the week culminating in special events like: America250 Parade, America250 Party in the Park, Fireworks, and etc.

The America250 Rock County Planning Committee believes that celebrating during the fair is the perfect time to celebrate and honor that our county's strength comes from the values, hard work, dedication and determination of those who have come before.

Specific dates, times and details to be released within the next calendar year.

We invite you to make plans to join us to celebrate Rock County – our past, present and future. **Plan your class reunions, get-togethers and family reunions** when there are lots of things to do ... people to meet and places to be! To list reunion plans in ALUMNI NEWS or for help with planning contact [luvernechamber@co.rock.mn.us](mailto:luvernechamber@co.rock.mn.us) or call 507-283-4061. The Chamber offers to do free mailings with reunion information for LHS classes.

It's going to be the RED, WHITE AND BLUE celebration of the century ... right here in your hometown of Luverne!

*Information shared by Jane Wildung Lanphere*



# Honor Roll of Alumni News contributors

Compiled by Johnna Ahrendt

During this past quarter ending Dec. 31, 2024, the Alumni News received money in the form of memorials, and gifts totaling \$27,030. In the memorial section below, the individual being memorialized is printed in bold print, followed by the individual or individuals who made the gift. Contributions given by graduates and friends follow the list of memorials. THANK YOU, READERS!

## NOTE:

If you have recently made a contribution to the Alumni News and your name does not appear on this page, please let the staff know. Chances are your contribution was received after this page was compiled. Please watch for the next issue, April 2025, for additional names of Alumni News contributors.

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Memorials and contributions may be sent to:  
*Alumni News*  
709 N. Kniss Avenue  
Luverne, Minnesota 56156

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## Financial summary

Balance 09/30/24: \$39,334.08

**Donations:** \$27,030.00

Interest: \$107.36

Expenses:

Postage: \$2,664.94

Printing: \$962.39

Labels: \$729.43

Office Supplies: \$132.90

Paypal Fees: \$5.82

**Balance 12/31/24:** \$61,975.96

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## Memorials

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**Ramona (Boisen) Beug '49**  
Evelyn (Beug) Steffel '58

**Karla (Brummer) Tildahl '57**  
Robert Rogness '57

**Steve Ellsworth '64**  
Curt Laudon '65  
James '59 & Gloria  
(Aanenson) '63 Rolfs  
Richard '64 & Cammy  
(Martin) '64 Iverson  
Sam '65 & Joycelyn  
(Aanenson) '65 Hansen

**Gloria (Schlapkohl) Siekmeier '50**  
Thomas & Gloria Siekmeier

**Bill Braa '58**  
Stanley Bagbey '58

**Donald Abild '52**  
Joyce (Turner) Sexton '53

**Melvin Viessman '58**  
Stanley Bagbey '58

**Lloyd Johnson '52**  
Judith (Steiner) Top '67

**Eleanor (Rober) VanGuilder '59**  
Dick Cronberg '59  
James '59 & Gloria  
(Aanenson) '63 Rolfs  
Jane (Wildung) Wildung-  
Lanphere '71  
Kathie (Rober) Erickson '64

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**Helen (Haggard) Rollag '54**  
Joyce (Turner) Sexton '53

**James McClure '55**  
Class of 1955  
Larry Engel '56  
Mavis Hamann - Friend  
Yvonne (Lind) Halter '55

**DyAnn (Olson) Emery '61**  
Martha Olson

## Contributions:

Carol (Steiner) Beck '66

Dennis McIntyre '60

James '59 & Gloria  
(Aanenson) '63 Rolfs

Joyce (Turner) Sexton '53

Melinda (Blashill)  
Ohlenkamp '96

Tom Skattum '69

**Orland Sievert '56**  
Class of 1956

**Edgar VerMeer '61**  
Patti (Kirby) Pierson '63

**Ronald Mulvihill '56**  
LHS Class of 1956

**Marlene (Kindt) Mann '64**  
Richard '64 & Cammy  
(Martin) '64 Iverson

# Remembering our classmates

Compiled by Carol Schumacher Serie

## 1940 – 1949

### Eva Lou (Beers)

**Aanenson '43** died October 11, 2024, in Phoenix, AZ. Eva Lou and **Curtis '44** Aanenson were married on August 18, 1949, in Minneapolis and they continued to live in the area. Eva Lou was a huge supporter of her children's activities and enjoyed many activities of her own, including golf, bridge, bowling and dancing with Curtis. In the late 80's the couple began visiting Arizona during the winter and traveled extensively, including a trip around the world on the Concorde. Eva Lou and Curtis moved into assisted living in Phoenix where they continued to make many new friends.

Eva Lou is survived by her husband, **Curtis '44**; children Gloria Aanenson and Jim (Kelly) Aanenson; 6 grandchildren; 2 great-grandchildren; and daughter-in-law Kathy Aanenson.

She was preceded in death by brother **Roger '50 (Gayle '51)** Beers, and son David Aanenson.

### Doris (Gullickson)

**Gath '47** died August 30, 2024, in Laguna Woods, CA. Doris' family moved to Buffalo, MN, after high school graduation. In 1949 Doris married **Elmer '44** Gath in Buffalo where they lived for several years, and Doris worked as a secretary. They moved to Anoka where they became owners of a Mister Softee ice cream truck business. In 1967 they went to work at the Twin Cities Ammunition Plant where Doris was a secretary.

After the plant closed, she worked as a secretary at a county extension office until her retirement in 1987. The couple moved to Albuquerque, NM, and then became snowbirds for 20 years, with homes in Hardwick and another in Laguna Woods, CA, near family.

Doris is survived by her son Eldon (Clara), Santa Ana, CA, and her daughter Cheryl (Thomas Wiedmann), Kenneth.

She was preceded in death by her husband, **Elmer**, her son Jimmie, her brother Arthur Gullickson, and her sister Mae Gullickson.

## 1950 – 1959

### Gloria (Schlapkohl)

**Siekmeier '50** died October 1, 2024, in Denver, CO. In 1954 Gloria earned a teaching license from the University of South Dakota and moved to Denver to begin her teaching career at Phillips Elementary. She married Don Siekmeier in Luverne on July 30, 1955. Gloria was a substitute teacher for Denver Public Schools for nearly 50 years. She completed an M.A. in Special Education at the University of Northern Colorado in 1988. Gloria was involved in a myriad of activities at every stage of her life, including PTA, Scouts, Kappa Alpha Theta sorority, politics and volunteering. She was an avid ice skater, tennis player, skier, hiker, and runner.

Gloria was married to Don for 64 years until his death in 2019. They had four sons, Tom (Claudette) of Littleton,

CO, John (Diana) of Yankton, SD, Stuart (Jane) of Centennial, CO, and Luke of Denver, CO; 13 grandchildren; and six great-grandchildren.

### Twyla (Van

**Nieuwenhuyzen) Wildung '54** passed away on November 19, 2024 in a nursing facility in the Twin Cities. She was married to Harold Wildung (LHS Class of 1952) and later divorced. The couple had two daughters, Cathy (deceased) and Laura of St. Louis Park, MN.

### Mary (Hansen)

**Schindler '52** of Bloomington, died on December 13, 2024. Mary pursued business school for accounting and worked for Farm Hand for 14 years. She married Frank Schindler in 1973 and became a stay-at-home mom and seamstress, sewing and altering many wedding gowns and formals. Mary was an accomplished accordion player and taught lessons to many children.

Mary is survived by her daughter Karen, brother **John '56** (Delores), and sister Suzie (Rick).

She was preceded in death by her husband Frank.

### Helen (Haggard)

**Rollag '54** died October 7, 2024, in Litchfield Park, AZ. On September 1, 1956, she was united in marriage to Dwayne Rollag. Helen was instrumental in helping Dwayne achieve

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his PhD in Civil Engineering by caring for their young children and supporting him in his studies. They made their home in Brookings, SD, where Helen worked in administrating assisting for Brookings Abstract Company, and then serving many years at South Dakot State University. After retiring, Dwayne and Helen split their time between Sioux Falls and Goodyear, AZ.

Helen is survived by three daughters; Susan (Joe) Bowar, Litchfield Park, AZ, Mary Liggons of Litchfield Park, and Lisa (Dan) Ostlie of Fargo, ND; 5 grandchildren; one great-grandchild; sister **Winifred '50** Haggard of DeSmet, SD; sister-in-law Sharon Snuttjer of Clive, IA, and sister-in-law Rhea (John) McBride of St. Paul; and other extended family.

She was preceded in death by her husband Dwayne, brother and spouse **Dale '52** and Sonia Haggard, and great-grandson Kyrie Davis; in-laws Donavan and Catherine Rollag, Doris and Diedrik Nelson, Darlene and Gene Vandekop, and David Rollag and Jerone Snuttjer.

**Beatrice "Betty" (McClure) Hamann '54** died December 6, 2024, in Luverne. Betty married **Milo '55** Hamann on October 7, 1956, in Luverne. They were the first members to be married at Grace Lutheran Church. Betty was involved in many church activities. She had a beautiful soprano voice and performed for many weddings and funerals.

Betty is survived by her five children: **Douglas**

**'78** (Carolyn) Hamann, Edger Springs, MO, Deb (Ken) Dixon, Luverne, **Tim '83** (Carol) Hamann, Becker, **Gerry '85** Hamann, Luverne, and **Terry '86** (Veronica) Hamann, Luverne; 8 grandchildren; 4 great-grandchildren; and a sister, **Georgia '66** Caley, Yuma, AZ.

She was preceded in death by her husband, **Milo**; an infant son, Jimmy; daughter-in-law Connie Hamann; and son-in-law Greg Snyders.

**Ron Mulvihill '56** of West Point, NE, died on October 4, 2024. On September 28, 1968, Ron was united in marriage to Jeanne Anderson at Coeur D'Alene, ID. He worked for Boeing in Seattle, WA, but soon relocated to West Point, NE in 1968 to work at the new IBP plant there. Ron was employed with IBP until his retirement. He also operated Mulvihill Siding for several years.

Ron is survived by his wife, Jeanne; daughters Jill (Mark) Mallet, of Bloomington, NE, Missy (Jeff) Hunke of Snyder, NE, Lisa Mayer of Valley NE, Connie (Brian) Berseth of Fridley, MN, and Darcy Mulvihill and Bryan Sandwick of Rogers, MN; daughter-in-law Suzanne Boles Mulvihill; 13 grandchildren; 10 great-grandchildren; brothers **Larry '58** of Luverne and **David '65 (Della '67)** of Luverne; sisters **Barb '62** Priesz of Sioux Falls and **Joan '66** (Angelo) Radice of Colorado Springs, CO.

He was preceded in death by his son, **Gregg '78**.

**Douglas D. Peterson '56**, of Austin, MN, died

October 13, 2024. During his childhood, Douglas lived in both Luverne and Worthington, but eventually graduated from Worthington High School. In 1957 he enlisted in the US Army where he was trained as a military policeman. He served in Okinawa until his honorable discharge in 1959. In 1961 he began a career in law enforcement as a Minnesota Highway Patrolman, and later the Minnesota State Patrol assigned to the Austin area until his retirement 31 years later.

Douglas married Linda J. Young on October 20, 1962, in Worthington. They made their home in Austin until her death in 2003. On November 27, 2004, he married Donna J. Henamen in Lyle, MN. Both retired, they split their time between Austin and McAllen, Texas.

Douglas is survived by his wife, Donna; son Brett (Tina) Peterson of Lakeville; daughter Melissa (Michael) McMillan of Victoria; and five grandchildren.

**Orland Sievert '58** of Lone Tree, IA, died on September 25, 2024, in Iowa City, IA. He married Beverly Christensen; they later divorced. He married Marisue Yates on January 18, 1975. Orland worked for Tony's Foods and later they purchased a resort on Leech Lake where many memories were made. During his semi-retirement years, Orland drove a tour bus. He loved people and woodworking.

Orland is survived by his wife, Marisue; sons, Perry

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(Sheryl) of Calmar, IA, and Troy (Heidi) of Nichols, IA; daughter-in-law Kathy of Rowlett, TX; 5 grandchildren; 8 great-grandchildren; brother **Harland '52** of Minneapolis; 2 brothers-in-law, Joe Yates of Waterloo, IA, and Terry (Mary) Yates of Hampton, IA; and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his son Todd on July 10, 2014, two sisters and three brothers.

**Melvin Viessman '58** died December 24, 2024, in Sioux Falls, SD. Mel joined the Navy in July 1958 and served until November 1961. He married Beverly Schmuck on May 24, 1963, in Kenneth. After working at a gas station, Hanson Silo and Raven Industries, he began a 31-year career at IBP in 1963. In 1979 the couple started Bow Wow Village at their acreage in Luverne. In 1990, Mel and Bev purchased the Luverne Paint & Glass store, which they owned for 10 years. In 2000, they sold the store and began enjoying their retirement. The couple traveled and Mel enjoyed his many hobbies.

Mel is survived by his wife, Beverly; daughter **Chantel '85** Connell, son **Scott '88** (Tricia) Viessman; 4 grandchildren; 4 great-grandchildren; sisters Alice Brandt of Beaver Creek and **Betty '60** Mulder, of Luverne; and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by sister Henriette and brother-in-law Leonard Remme; brother John and sister-in-law Charleen Viessman; two brothers-in-law **Boyd '50** Brandt

and Ronnie Mulder; son-in-law **Terry '82** (Butch) Connell; and a nephew, Gary Brandt.

**Kathleen "Toby" (Medill) Day '57** died November 6, 2024, in Dubuque, IA. On January 26, 1963, she married Roland Otto Day in Hardwick. Toby worked as a nurse for 38 years. She was the director of nursing at Mary Jane Brown Home in Luverne; a director of nursing at Slayton Hospital, a charge nurse at Moberly Missouri Medical Center, and at Olathe Medical Center. She was a fiercely independent woman who found joy in simple pleasures like bingo, cards, and cooking.

Kathleen is survived by two daughters, Deborah (Terry) Kendall and family, of Lakeville and **Danielle '85** Day of Dubuque; a son, Roland (Rhonda Thurow) Day and family, Gretna, NE; a foster son, **Rickard '70** (Cerise) Jensen of Florida; three sisters, Sherri (Allyson Ashley) Viland, Nixa, MO, **Charlene '61** Recker, Glenwood, IA, and **Linda '65** (Jim) Zirnhelt, Iowa City, IA; and a niece, Jacqueline (Conan) McPherron.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Roland, in 1991.

**Jim Wiese '57** died at home in Brooklyn, New York on December 20, 2024. He's survived by his wife, **Gail Pierson Wiese '57**; his daughter, Anne Pierson Wiese and her husband, Ben Miller, as well as his daughter, Allison Kay Wiese and her husband, Wendell Kling, and their

daughter, Merle Lucky Kling-Wiese.

**Marilyn (Kiebach) Carlson '58** died on December 27, 2024, in Tracy, MN. Marilyn married Lyle Carlson on September 9, 1959, in Luverne. They lived in Maryland and Alaska while Lyle served in the U.S. Army. Following his discharge in 1962, they moved to a farm north of Lake Wilson. In 1984 they retired from farming and moved to an acreage near Chandler. Marilyn worked at Fey Industries in Edgerton and later at Huisken Meat in Chandler. In 1998 they moved to Lake Wilson. After Lyle's death, Marilyn moved to Prairie View Healthcare in Tracy.

Marilyn is survived by three children, Valinda (Brian) Aubert of Pipestone, Jeff (Ramona) Carlson of Hadley, and Leonard "Lennie" (Lisa) Carlson of Lake Wilson; 7 grandchildren; 14 great grandchildren; siblings, **Nancy '64** (Norman) Overgaard of Luverne, **Dale '69** (Pat) Kiebach of Harrisburg, SD, and **Joyce '71** (**Bob '70**) Saarloos of Norwood Young America; sister-in-law Jenny Kiebach of Luverne; brothers-in-law Darrell (Sheila) Carlson of Tracy and Stan Suedkamp of Landfall; and several nieces and nephews and family members.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Lyle; grandson, Aaron Aubert, great-granddaughter, Ceona Mitchell, great-grandson, Joshua Carlson; and sisters-in-law Jeanne

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(Craig) Zimmerman, Audrey (Gerald) Voss, and Shirley Suedkamp.

**William Braa '58** of Sioux Falls, died on November 15, 2024. In September 1959, Bill married **Carol '58** Rohlck, in Hardwick. Bill worked for Northern States Power (NSP) in Sioux Falls. The couple lived in Lennox for several decades, where Bill became involved with the Ambulance Squad, the local Boy Scouts, and served on the Lennox School Board. Bill retired from NSP after 37 years but continued with his carpentry skills and passion for outdoor projects.

Bill is survived by his daughter, Debra, of Sioux Falls; his son, Jeff (Rhonda) of Champlin, MN; three grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his wife, **Carol**; and sisters, **Darlene '51** Spease and **Shirley '53** McQuoid.

**Eleanor (Rober) Van Guilder '59** died November 9, 2024, surrounded by family. As a teacher, Ellie imparted wisdom and guidance with a rare combination of patience, encouragement, and genuine care. She inspired countless students. But it was not only in the classroom where she made her mark. As a mother and grandmother, Ellie built a legacy of love, warmth, and strength – values that will live on through her children, grandchildren, and the many lives she touched.

Eleanor is survived by children Kyle Van Guilder and Leah (Michael) Van Guilder

Berkland; 4 grandchildren; and sister **Kathie '64** Erickson.

She was preceded in death by her husband Ronald.

## 1960 - 1969

**Edgar Vermeer '61** of Brandon, SD, died on October 29, 2024, in Sioux Falls, SD. Ed joined the Army National Guard, serving from 1960 to 1964. On December 5, 1964, he married **Lila '63** Beyer in Luverne. Ed farmed, worked at A.R. Wood and retired from Luverne Truck Equipment in Brandon. He enjoyed being out in nature, feeding the birds, tending to flowers, fishing, camping and spending time with family and friends.

Ed is survived by his wife, **Lila**; daughters Lisa (Tom) Johnson and Amy (Mike) Maher; five grandchildren; siblings, **Anna '57** Huiskes, Mary (Dave) Harris, **Burt '68 (LeeAnn '73)** Vermeer, **Jane '68** (Gene) VanderWolde, **John '70** (Mary) Vermeer, and **Barb '72** Nankivel; and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his son, Douglas; grandson Carter Johnson; and sister **Marty '73** Vermeer.

**Carol "Tootie" (Egan) Hartog '62** of West Plains, MO, died November 8, 2024. Tootie and John Hartog were married on March 6, 1964. They lived in Adrian for many decades. The couple owned a popcorn wagon and located it at the Adrian ballpark for the summer and into the fall months. In 1978 they bought their first restaurant in Rock Rapids, IA, and Tootie ran it until the Adrian Home Café was purchased. John was

relocated to Emporia, KS and then to West Plains, MO with his job where they purchased the Bargain Mart and finally TJ's Hickory House where Tootie could use her fabulous cooking skills. The restaurant was a staple for over 30 years.

Carol "Tootie" is survived by her husband of 60 years, John; daughters Linda of West Plains, Lisa (Tony) Aksamit of Duenweg, MO; 3 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren; and many nieces, nephews and cousins.

She was preceded in death by her grandson, Creighton Harring; two brothers, **James '58** and Jerome Egan; and one sister, **Marilyn '60** Goembel.

**Steven Ellsworth '64** of Rock Rapids, IA, died on November 23, 2024, in Sioux Falls, SD. Steve attended Northwestern College in Orange City, IA, graduating in 1968 with a BS degree in Education. He married **Jeanne '65** Viland on October 5, 1968. Steve taught Science, English, and Spelling at Central Lyon for 36 years. He also coached middle school football and track for 25 years. He was a recipient of the Presidential Award for Excellence in Science Education and the Don Taft Award for coaching in the state of Iowa. Steve was inducted into the Central Lyon Athletic Hall of Fame in 2016. He loved fishing, playing pinochle, and trips to Florida, Texas and Arizona during winter months. He also loved attending his children's

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and grandchildren's school and sporting events.

Steve is survived by his wife, **Jeanne**; daughter, Peggy (John) Metzger of Rock Rapids; son Jason (Tonya Muller) Ellsworth of Brandon, SD; three grandsons; sister Becky Arp of Sioux Falls; and many nieces, Nephews, and extended family members.

He was preceded in death by brother-in-law, Jerry Arp; and brothers-in-law, **Rodney '68** and **Jim '68** Viland.

### **Lynn (Blessing)**

**Anderson '64**, of Brandon, SD, died October 4, 2024. Lynn married Ronald Anderson in Sioux Falls on May 14, 1977, and they raised two sons. Lynn began her career at State Farm Regional office in Roseville, MN. Other employers were Rock County Veterinary, Metropolitan Life, Christopherson, Bailin and Anderson, and lastly, at Tri State Insurance (later Continental Western) in Luverne. She was very involved in the National Association of Insurance Women as President, Vice President and Treasurer.

Lynn is survived by her sons Todd (Jacqueline) and Michael (Tara) Anderson; 9 grandchildren; 8 great-grandchildren and numerous cousins, nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her sisters Carol Hollander, Becky Schmeckpepper and brother **Don '59** Blessing.

### **Edward Lynch '68**

died December 14, 2024, at his home. Ed served his country in

the U.S. Air Force from 1969 to 1973. He then attended Renton Technical College in Renton, WA. He married Linda Weber on April 6, 1979, in Luverne. The couple lived in Washington until moving to Tea, SD, in 1982. In 1986, they moved to their forever acreage southwest of Luverne. Ed worked in the Bio-Medical Engineering Department at the Sanford USD Medical Center in Sioux Falls, retiring in 2012.

Ed is survived by his wife, Linda, Luverne; three children, **Jennifer '99** (Steve) Bostrom, Hartford, SD, **Nicole '02** Bonsma, Prior Lake, and **Matt '07 (Casey '07)** Lynch, Luverne; nine grandchildren; and a sister Kathleen (Darrell) Kapaun, Luverne.

He was preceded in death by a brother, **Michael '65** (Corrine) Lynch.

### **1970 - 1979**

**John Vermeer '70** died November 7, 2024, in Sioux Falls, SD. John married Mary Doyle on October 12, 1996. John farmed and later worked for Marv's Sanitation as well as the City of Valley Springs. He was known to be a helper and friend to many.

John is survived by his wife, Mary; siblings, **Anna '57** Huiskes, Mary (David) Harris, **Burt '68** (Lee Ann) Vermeer, **Jane '68** (Gene) VanderWolde, and **Barb '72** Nankivel; as well as numerous nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his brother **Ed '61** Vermeer, and his sister, **Marty '73** Vermeer.

**Linda (Mollberg) Rust '76** died September 27, 2024, in Luverne. After high school Linda completed a two-year course of study at Worthington Community College. She was united in marriage to Jon Rust in Luverne on July 24, 1981. The couple lived in Rapid City, SD, Mitchell, SD, Thomasville, GA, Estherville, IA and eventually Rock Rapids, IA, in 1988. Linda worked as a bank teller and eventually a clerk at Dollar General and Todd's station where she made many lasting friendships. Linda enjoyed first and foremost her grandkids and their activities. She was a true sports fan. She also loved reading and the outdoors.

Linda is survived by her husband, Jon; children Andy (Amanda) Rust, Theresa Rust, and Alex (Lexi) Rust; 6 grandchildren; siblings **Diane '67 (Terry '67)** Gonnerman, **David '68** (Linda) Mollberg, and **Mary '69 (Terry '68)** McDowell; brother-in-law **Jeff '70** McClure; sister-in-law Carol Mollberg; mothers-in-law Connie DeVries and Gloria Rust.

She was preceded in death by her parents, **Arnie '43** and Shirley Mollberg; her sister **Barb '71** McClure, her brother **Tom '75** Mollberg and father-in-law Albert (Bud) Rust.

**David Christensen '79** of Alexandria, passed away on November 12, 2024. David worked as a dispatcher for Rock County prior to attending Law Enforcement training in Hibbing.

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## Luverne to celebrate Nutcracker Fest this summer

It's official. Luverne and the Just for Nuts Committee will celebrate the **WORLD'S BIGGEST NUTCRACKER** on July 11 and 12, 2025!

Thanks to the work of the Just for Nuts Committee the dream to brand Luverne "THE NUTCRACKER CAPITOL OF THE WORLD" is well on its way to reality.

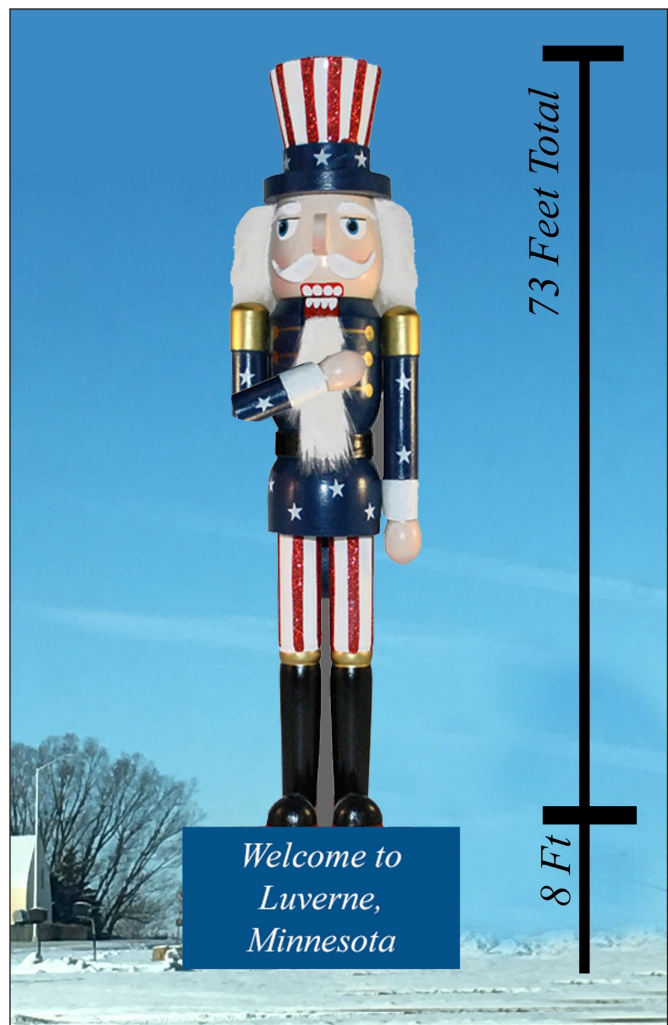
14 foot tall boots are currently standing on the south side of the property of **THOSE BLASTED THINGS**. The legs are here waiting for placement and the rest of the giant nutcracker will soon be on its way from the fabricator in Provo, UT.

Luverne Initiatives Destination Branding Committee is planning the event in partnership with Vance & Becky Walgrave of Those Blasted Things & Luverne Monuments, Just for Nuts Committee, Luverne Chamber & CVB, Redbirds, Take 16 Brewing Company, Dave Duffy and other community supporters.

The celebration will officially welcome this 65-foot-tall giant patriotic nutcracker standing tall on an 8-foot-tall concrete pedestal ... rising a total of 73 feet above the prairie at the corner of I-90 and US Highway 75 – the gateway to Luverne.

Luverne's first **NUTCRACKER FEST** will be held on the Friday and Saturday (July 11 & 12, 2025) following our 63<sup>rd</sup> Annual Hot Dog Nite held on Thursday.

Events planned over the weekend include a Redbird baseball game complete with nutcracker jerseys called the "Nutcracker Base Race"; the release of Take 16's signature nutcracker themed beer – "Wooden Soldier"; and the first annual dance party with live band at Redbird Field following the baseball game called "Sounds at the Mound" scheduled for Friday. Saturday events include an adult and kids "Dave Duffy's Nutcracker Half Marathon/Relay"; the official dedication/welcoming



of the world's largest nutcracker; and other community-wide events.

Make plans to join in the fun and witness how the "world's largest nutcracker" will make a huge positive impact on the economy in your hometown at Luverne's **FIRST ANNUAL NUTCRACKER FEST!**





City support for a local pool in Luverne dates back to June of 1922, when the fire department deepened the riverbed by the dam to create a swimming pool. Improvements included a spring board, lights and dressing room quarters. That summer there were 400 to 600 daily swimmers.

## Public support for recreational swimming in Luverne dates back to 1922

*This story originally appeared in the Oct. 24, 2024 Rock County Star Herald as a sidebar to an in-depth story about the city of Luverne's decision to invest long-term subsidies in the the Luverne Aquatics and Fitness Center.*

### By Lori Sorenson

City government has been supporting a community pool in Luverne for more than 100 years, according to research shared at the Oct. 15 Luverne City Council meeting.

During a presentation of the pool and fitness center's recent financial audit, City Administrator Jill Wolf shared that the city has been investing in swimming recreation since 1922.

In June of 1922, the Luverne Fire Department used a hose and nozzle to swirl and deepen the riverbed by the old dam to create a swimming pool.

She said the city then added improvements such as a spring board, lights and dressing room

quarters, and that summer there were 400 to 600 daily swimmers.

"The park was used so much they hired a fulltime park policeman to oversee the safety of the bathers during the summer," Wolf said.

### Outdoor pool in 1938

In February 1938 residents petitioned (with 900 signatures) the city council asking the council to consider constructing a municipal swimming pool.

Then Mayor A.O. Moreaux supported the effort. "A swimming pool and recreation center is a duty the city owes the children and young people of our community," he said.

The council approved the request later that month, and in March 1938 the city purchased 15.5 acres of land on the west side of the river just south of Main Street for \$3,000.



A 120-by-50-foot pool was 3 feet deep around the edges with a 9.5-foot diving pit in the center. The pool opened June 23, 1939, and the city appointed a board to oversee operations.

## Luverne pool history/continued from page 9

The council hired a Minneapolis landscape architect to design the pool and brick bathing house, and dikes along the river elevated the site above flood level.

A 120-by-50-foot pool was 3 feet deep around the edges with a 9.5-foot diving pit in the center.

The pool opened June 23, 1939, and the City Council appointed a park board to oversee general operations and set the hours and rates.

Three lifeguards were hired, and the pool was open from 9 a.m. to noon and from 2 to 10 p.m.

Rates were 5 cents per child swimming fee, with a 5-cent basket fee, 5-cent towel fee and 15-cent bathing suit rental.

Adult swimming fees were 15

cents and a locker rental was 10 cents.

A July diving show that summer attracted 500 spectators at the pool to watch.

### **Indoor pool built in 1975, fitness space added 1991**

In 1975 the city of Luverne and Rock County signed a joint powers agreement to build the Rock County Community Pool.

It opened in the summer of 1975 with 2,012 registrations on the first day.

There were 600 swimmers on that first Saturday and 675 on Sunday.

In 1982 the city began subsidizing the pool operation with \$52,000.

That subsidy gradually increased through the years as improvements continued.

In 1991 fitness space was added and later in the 1990s a new pool liner, heater and mechanical equipment were purchased.

In 2007 the joint powers agreement dissolved and the city took sole ownership.

Wolf's history presentation ended with the recent \$6 million expansion, completed in 2022.

"It was kind of fun to learn about the value Luverne has placed on swimming in the community," she said.

"For the past 100 years, the city of Luverne has provided swimming recreation and valued it."

*“It’s important to have laughter and be silly. They’re kids.”*

## **Luverne High School 1985 graduate reflects on 35 years of teaching**

*This story originally appeared in the Rock County Star Herald in August of 2024.*

**By Lori Sorenson**

When Luverne Elementary School students return to classrooms this fall, one of their favorite familiar faces will be missing.

Lucinda Rofshus retired this spring after 34 years of teaching, and she said she’ll miss her students and co-workers as much as they’ll miss her.

“I’ll miss joking around and being in students’ lives,” she said. “You go to their hockey games or their t-ball games. ... They gave me purpose too.”

She said she appreciated the tradition of high school seniors parading through elementary hallways on their last day of school.

“I got a couple hugs,” she said. “It’s good to see them grow up and move on. ... We were kind of like their second mothers. We care when their dog dies, we care when their baseball team loses.”

Rofshus (maiden name Madtson) graduated from LHS in 1985 and attended Worthing-



Lucinda (Madtson) Rofshus ‘85 retired this past year after 34 years of teaching, most of them in Luverne.

ton Community College where she played basketball and volleyball.

She earned a degree in elementary education with a minor in special education at Mankato State University and later received her master’s degree from Southwest State University in Marshall.

Rofshus taught for three years in the Alden-Conger district before returning to her hometown and alma mater.

“I loved my teachers in high school, and I wanted to be like

that,” she said.

“I wanted to have kids enjoy school. You see the kids who go on to teach, and a lot of them want to come back because they have such great memories ... of pep fests, homecoming, sports ...”

She said teachers help set the tone for rewarding school experiences, and she said it’s a compliment when graduating seniors pursue education degrees.

“Somewhere along the way, many of us inspired them,” she said. “They thought this was a noble profession and they want to do it as well.”

Rofshus said she tried to make learning fun for her students.

“It’s important to have laughter and be silly,” she said.

“They’re kids.

They remember things differently – academics isn’t important to them when they’re 7, you have to make it relate to their lives.”

And it was a thrill when important lessons hit home.

“It’s just fun when you do an activity, and they all go, ‘Ohhhh!’” Rofshus said.

“It still gives me goosebumps, that ‘aha’ moment where all the stuff you talked about comes together. That’s fun.”

**ROFSHUS RETIRES/PAGE 12**

### **‘Covid was rough’**

Rofshus said the pandemic was a formidable challenge in her teaching career.

“Covid was rough. Kids missed that one-on-one face time with teachers,” she said. We had to wear masks, so those kids missed phonics. Kids missed out on essential building blocks. I don’t think they’ve caught up yet.”

She said it was difficult as a teacher to know she wasn’t reaching students.

“There was no time to reteach. You just presented, and if they got it, great. If they weren’t on task, they weren’t on task. There was nothing you could do,” she said.

“Their attention span decreased because no one was walking around the room to make sure they paid attention.”

### **‘I’m here for you’**

An increasing challenge in the classroom is children’s mental health.

She said it’s hard to see fourth-graders struggle with anxiety. “They get so worked up about a test,” she said. “That’s concerning.”

And it doesn’t help that teachers are supposed to avoid physical contact.

“Back in the day, we could hug them. They need that physical contact, because they might not get it at home,” she said.

Instead Rofshus would lightly touch students on their backs if they were struggling.

“It was just a touch to let them know you were there,” she said. “It was a sensory reminder that ‘I’m here for you,’ and it had a calming effect.”

In light of increasing student anxieties, Rofshus encourages parents to step up and put their phones down.

“Social media is a big part of that,” she said. “Kids are bringing their phones to school earlier.”

She said she’s increasingly aware of teachers’ influence on children.

“Keep loving the kids ... it takes a village. It really does. Parents, teachers, coaches, churches ...

“Everyone is doing the best they can, and there are just more and more kids who need more time and more love.”

*“Keep loving the kids ... it takes a village. It really does.*

*Parents, teachers, coaches, churches ... Everyone is doing the best they can, and there are just more and more kids who need more time and more love.”*

— *Lucinda (Madtson) Rofshus*  
*LHS Class of 1985*  
*Retired Luverne teacher*

### **Take care of yourself**

All this, Rofshus said, requires emotional energy of teachers who need to also take care of themselves.

“Take time for self-care. Because you do care about each student. ... this kid is tardy, this kid is gone, this kid’s dog died ... sometimes your cup feels empty. You have to make sure you’re caring for yourself.”

Rofshus said the work is often emotionally exhausting, and longtime teachers eventually know when it’s time to retire.

“It’s time for someone younger with new ideas and more energy,” she said. “It’s time to pass the torch.”

She advises new teachers to build relationships with their colleagues.

“I’ve always had a great team. They’re your sounding board and your cheerleaders,” she said. “They’re like my family. They really are.”

Rofshus said she’s grateful to have had the opportunity to live and teach in her hometown.

“I wanted to get back home because Luverne is such a great small town to raise a family,” she said.

She and her husband, Mike, have been married 34 years. Their son Collin and his wife, Alyssa, have two boys, Crosby and Dax. Their son Cody and his wife, Alissa, have one son, Rurik.

In addition to spending more time with her family, Rofshus said she plans to travel — to a bucket list destination in Belize this fall and then find her next passion in retirement.

## Luverne Dollars for Scholars ... Did you know?

### Endowments allow scholarships to be given every year — forever

A gift of \$2,000 or more, referred to as an “endowment,” given to the Luverne Dollars for Scholars program becomes a perpetual scholarship.

Only the income earned from the endowments is given to a student in the form of a scholarship.

The uniqueness of an endowed gift is that it allows a scholarship to be given each and every year, forever, to a fresh, qualifying LHS graduate.

Initially, the donor has the opportunity to attach a name to the endowment. Then each year a selected graduate receives a scholarship bearing that name.

Once a perpetual scholarship is established, additional dollars – no matter what amount – may be added, at any time, to the endowment.

These additional dollars increase the size of the endowment, which in turn increases the amount given as a scholarship to qualifying graduates in

future years.

During this past calendar year, three new perpetual scholarships were established with the Luverne Dollars for Scholars program:

Marlene Mann Memorial Scholarship

Marlin Spangrud Scholarship

Sandra Stoakes Hohn Scholarship

If you would like to contribute to, or receive more information, please write:

Luverne Dollars for Scholars

PO Box 822

Luverne, MN 56156

Email: [luvernedfs@gmail.com](mailto:luvernedfs@gmail.com)

Call: 507-227-4030 (Johnna Ahrendt)

Or visit: [www.luverne.dollarsforscholars.org](http://www.luverne.dollarsforscholars.org)

#### Memorials/*from page 2*

**Barb (Mollberg) McClure '71**

Terry '67 & Diane (Mollberg) '67 Gonnerman

**Sheryl (Roemeling) Remme '71**

Dave Remme '69

**Thomas Mollberg '76**

Terry '67 & Diane (Mollberg) '67 Gonnerman

**Linda (Mollberg) Rust '77**

Class of 1977

Joyce Thode '77

Terry '67 & Diane (Mollberg) '67 Gonnerman

**David Christensen '79**

Brenda (Christensen) Everson '81

Sandi (Christensen) Czichatzki '80

**Eugene Cragoe - Magnolia High School '53**

Hal '60 & Donna Paulson

**Norma Gangestad - Friend**

Dave Gangestad '64

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Visitors view the Luverne Automobiles on display in the History Center showroom on Nov. 18.

## Luverne Thirty and a Luverne Big Brown are ‘home’ in History Center in Luverne

By **Lori Sorenson**

The Luverne Automobile Company history was spotlighted during the Rock County Historical Society’s annual meeting on Nov. 18 in the History Center in Luverne.

History Center director Wendel Buys led the meeting, which attracted more than 60 people, in the new storage room that was recently constructed on the west end of the existing building.

He reminded the group that the project was completed with a Minnesota Historical Society grant and local support.

“It’s amazing to me that we can have this in such a short time and have it paid for,” Buys said.

Following the business meeting Nov. 18, Buys and Historical Society volunteers presented a history of the Luverne Automobile Company and background on the two cars now on display in the History Center.

The showroom has a Luverne Thirty and a Luverne Big Brown, both built in Luverne and have made their way back to the community through volunteer efforts and donations.

“Here are the only two Luverne automobiles that we know of that are still basically like they were when they came out of the Luverne Automobile Company,” Buys said.

“There was rumor of some two-cylinder runabouts in a history written by Jim Leicher. These two luxury cars represent a manufacturing business with great staying power, ever adapting to keep a strong business, and remaining in Luverne until 1984.”

Many members of the Leicher family were in attendance at the Nov. 18 meeting, and Tanya Light visited with Buys at the head of the crowded room to share details about the Luverne automobiles found their way back “home” to Luverne.

# REUNIONS IN THE MAKING



## CLASS OF 1985 TO CELEBRATE 40 YEARS!

**JULY 10-12, 2025**



**THURSDAY | JULY 10TH | HOT DOG NITE**



**Gathering Downtown & Ending at Take 16**

**FRIDAY | JULY 11TH**

**Socializing & Fun at the Howling Dog Saloon starting at 7 pm**

**SATURDAY | JULY 12TH**

**Reunion Socializing & Meal | Green Lantern Bar & Grill | 6 pm**

**More info to follow: Connie Vande Velde ([cjvande1@gmail.com](mailto:cjvande1@gmail.com))**

To list reunion plans in ALUMNI NEWS or for help with planning

Contact: **LUVERNE AREA CHAMBER**

[louvernechamber@co.rock.mn.us](mailto:louvernechamber@co.rock.mn.us) 507-283-4061

Chamber offers to do **FREE MAILING** with your reunion information for your class!

## Remembering our classmates/continued from page 7

He retired after 26 years as a police officer in Redwood Falls.

David is survived by his mother, Bernice; children Andrew and Rachel Morrow; sisters Sandi Czichotzki and Brenda Everson; and four grandchildren.

He was preceded in death by his father, Don.

### **1980 - 1989**

#### **Craig Becker '87**

died December 13, 2024, at the University of Minnesota Fairview Medical Center. Craig attended St. Cloud State

University and then transferred and graduated from Mankato State University in 1994 with a B.S. in Electronic Engineering.

On July 31, 1993, Craig married **Julie '88** Pick and they moved to Sioux Falls. He worked at Sencore Electronics, Gateway, and finally, Raven Industries/ Aerostar International as a senior quality engineer where he helped with the creation of many Thanksgiving Day Parade balloons and Google balloons. Craig loved his family, hockey and his

friendships.

Craig is survived by his wife, **Julie**, son Thomas and his fiancée Elizabeth Neumiller, daughter Sydney (Josh) Benda; parents Linley and Lorraine Becker, all of Sioux Falls; sister **Paula '83** (Steve) Ward, of Brandon, SD, brother- and sister-in-law **Dan '85** and Diane Pick of Luverne; and numerous friends and other family members.

He was preceded in death by his sister Kimberly; nephew-in-law Cody Miller; and Uncle **Ronny '69** Visker.

***Alumni News Staff:*** Cindy Arends, Jane Wildung Lanphere, Carol Schumacher Serie, Lori Sorenson  
Johnna Bowron Ahrendt, Patti Kirby Pierson and Rock County Opportunities

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***Alumni News***

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