



Terry Thone's winning band button design (pictured at right) pays homage to the first-ever Tri-State button (at left) and ties together the remarkable history of our festival

TRI-STATE BAND FESTIVAL'S 75TH ON 75!

The Tri-State Band Festival Committee is excited to plan and execute the 75th anniversary of Luverne's one-of-a-kind, high school marching competition on Saturday, September 26, 2026. Not only will the event celebrate a milestone, it will also be unique as the committee will be hosting the parade at a different location other than Main Street.

With the massive reconstruction of Highway 75 north of Main Street and Main Street serving as the official "detour" new plans had to be made.

After more than two years of investigation, discussion and evaluation – the Committee is excited to announce that the 2026 TRI-STATE BAND FESTIVAL PARADE will take place on Highway 75 from Dodge Street to Alumni Drive. (Providing the highway reconstruction project continues on pace.)

Think of that – TRI-STATE'S 75TH ON US HIGHWAY 75! It will be the shortest Tri-State parade in history but it will also be the one and only time that high school bands will march on

one-month old, fresh concrete US highway!
Make your plans to join us!

Anniversary Tri-State Band Festival Button

The Committee is also honored to present the official 75th ANNIVERSARY TRI-STATE BAND FESTIVAL BUTTON! This design was submitted by Terry Thone of Luverne for the button design contest.

With approximately 50 designs submitted, the committee's decision was very difficult. It took the committee a series of six ballots to come to their final selection. Terry's design pays homage to the first-ever Tri-State button and ties together the remarkable history of our festival.

Thousands of volunteers, residents and businesses have welcomed tens of thousands of high school students to an annual competition held for marching bands only.

The Tri-State Band Festival is the Midwest's

BAND FESTIVAL '75 ON 75/SEE PAGE 12

Honor Roll of Alumni News contributors

Compiled by Johnna Ahrendt

During this past quarter ending June 30, 2026, the Alumni News received money in the form of memorials, and gifts totaling \$1,078. 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, October 2026, for additional names of Alumni News contributors.

Memorials and contributions may be sent to:

Alumni News
709 N. Kniss Avenue
Luverne, Minnesota 56156

Financial summary

Balance 3/31/26	\$73,192.43
Donations:	1,078.00
Int & Div:	402.42
Expenses	
Postage	2,905.43
Printing	962.99
Labels	852.16
Subscriptions	828.23
Database	270.00
Paypal Fees	3.47
Balance 6/30/26	\$68,850.57

Memorials

Betty (Hansen) Luethje '50
Joan (Padilla) Ripley '54

Barbara (Smith) Gits '52
Robert Anderson '52

Eugene Meyer '53
Robert Anderson '52

Arland Anderson '54
Joan (Padilla) Ripley '54

Mary (Jorgenson) Edmundson '56
Class of 1956

Sharon (Toms) Rypkema '59
Bill Toms '64

Loren Forrest '62
James '66 & Carol
(Aanenson) '66 Hatting

Karen Hansen '63
Cheryl Creeger - Teacher

Jim Brandenburg '63
Richard '64 & Cammy
(Martin) '64 Iverson

Alice (Ossenfort) Hansen '65
Twila (Drost) VerSteege '64

Oltman "Okie" Honken '54
James '66 & Carol
(Aanenson) '66 Hatting
Joan (Padilla) Ripley '54

Janet (Boone) Jessen '65
Richard '64 & Cammy
(Martin) '64 Iverson

Helen Godfrey '66
Class of 1966

Joan (Kruger) Maras '66
Class of 1966

**Sara (McClure)
VanNieuwenhuizen '76**
Joyce Thode '77
Randy
VanNieuwenhuizen '75

Jane Gropel - Teacher
Dawn (Huiskes)
DeWispelaere '79

Contributions

Beth (Gibson) Lilja '82

Garneta (Slagel) Bear '72

Karen (Anderson) Aamot '61

Mavis (Winge) Amundson '50

Thank you for your support

There are expenses incurred with printing, mailing and database support, and these costs are paid for with generous contributions from our alumni and readers.

Luverne Dollars for Scholars ... Did you know?

Student scholarship awards are determined by series of scored qualifications

Applicants for a Luverne Dollars for Scholars award are evaluated on the following criteria: academic performance, scholastic aptitude, work experience, school activity and community involvement.

Students are also required to write an essay describing their future aspirations as well as seek a recommendation from someone, whether a teacher or an adult who has worked with the student. These applications are due each year around February 15. All applications are submitted through an online student profile application located on the Luverne Dollars for Scholars website.

Once all of the information is compiled, the selection process begins. Each application is assigned a number. The Luverne High School counselor verifies each student's class rank, GPA and ACT scores. Only the application number, not the applicant name, is seen throughout the rest of the scoring. Each essay is read and scored by a group of DFS board members. References, work experience, school activity and community involvement are cross checked against the computerized score assigned each applicant.

Not all applicants receive a scholarship. Applications who do not reach the minimum score do not qualify for a scholarship award. None of the scholarships are based on financial need.

The total amount of scholarships paid out each year

varies. The DFS Board uses 4.5 percent of the five-year fair market value of its fund assets as a guide when determining the total to be awarded each year.

Students who receive a scholarship award of \$4,000 or less can use it all in one year, while scholarships greater than \$4,000 are divided out over multiple years, with \$4,000 being the max that can be paid out each year.

Scholarship funds are not paid out until after the first semester of college has been completed. In order to receive their scholarship funds, students must maintain a minimum 2.0 GPA. Scholarship checks are paid directly to the school.

Luverne Dollars for Scholars wrapped up its 2026 awards season this May. Seventy four qualifying Luverne High School students from the Class of 2026 were awarded \$614,500. These scholarships ranged from \$3,250 to \$16,250.

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

Call: 507-227-4030 (Johnna Ahrendt)

Or visit: www.luverne.dollarsforscholars.org

Are you getting more than one (1) Alumni News at your house?

If so, please call Patti Pierson at 507-669-2371 or email her at piersonprp@alliancecom.net with the correct postal and email address of your children.

Thank you

Attention snowbirds:

If you are not going to be at the address that you got your July issue during the months of October, January, April issue if you could email me your alternative address I would appreciate it and will change it back and forth according to what month you will be gone so that we can save some money on the "temporary away" returns....thank you...

Patti Pierson piersonprp@alliancecom.net,
1-507-920-5186

or 1562 201st ST Hardwick MN 56134

Remembering our classmates

Compiled by Carol Schumacher Serie

1950 -1959

Margaret “Margi” (Henningsen) Kohl ’55, of Chippewa Falls, WI, died May 24, 2026. Margi married **Vance ’55 Kohl** on June 29, 1958. They owned and operated Tee-A-Way Golf Course in Ladysmith, WI, before moving to Chippewa Falls. She enjoyed spending time with family and friends and was an active member of her church.

Margi is survived by her sons, Korey (Nancy) Kohl of Hudson, WI, and Trent (Benida) Kohl of Delafield, WI; 7 grandchildren; 3 great-grandchildren; and sister, **Alice ’61 Phillips**.

She was preceded in death by her husband, **Vance**; sister, **Lorna ’53 Schmidt**; and infant brother; and brother-in-law, Jerry Phillips.

Mary (Jorgenson) Edmundson ’56 died on November 20, 2025, in Gilbert, AZ. Mary lived a life of open doors and open hands. As the oldest of three, she served as a steady guide for her brothers, **Dennis ’58** and **Bruce ’62**. Her giving spirit reached far beyond her home, including through a mission trip to the Czech Republic. She dated her husband as a teenager and built a marriage that lasted until his passing at age 86. They traveled the world together and later in life, she traveled alone on an Eastern Africa safari. Mary lived by three guiding pillars; faith, family and football, and became a lifelong Green Bay Packers fan. She also had a passion for bridge and achieved the title of Bridge Life Master, awarded by the American Contract Bridge League.

Mary is survived by four of her six children: Alan, Dawn, Dean, and Mali; 12 grandchildren; and many great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Arlen, and two daughters, Shawn and Terri.

1960 – 1969

Rita Mae (Kafka) Robinson ’68 died on March 30, 2026, after a lengthy battle with cancer. Rita contracted polio when young,

limiting use of her arms. She received a college degree in social work/psychology and worked for 20 years at the Sioux City Crittenton Center. She was the emergency shelter director when she retired.

Rita is survived by her husband, Chuck; daughter, Carie (Andy) Greer; her brother, **Joe ’65** (Gina) Kafka; her sisters Barb Kruger and Lori Bullis; three grandchildren; and lifelong friend **Mary ’68** (Foight) Sites.

She was preceded in death by brothers, Joseph, Jerome, Ray and **Randy ’67**; sister, Rosemary Catalan; and brothers-in-law, **Lewey ’72** Kruger and Gene Bullis.

Janet (Boone) Jessen ’65 died on April 15, 2026, in Luverne. Janet attended Luther College in Iowa before moving to Augsburg College after marrying **Delbert ’65 Jessen** in August 1968 in Hardwick. From 1969 to 1973 they lived in Atlanta, GA, before moving to Plymouth and Minnetonka. She worked over fifty years combined at Lappin Electric and JH Larson as an office manager and credit manager until retirement in 2022. Janet was a very good athlete, playing field hockey and basketball in college where she studied education. She also played golf, tennis, softball and bowled, and she enjoyed playing games, listening to music from the 60’s and cooking.

Janet is survived by her children, Amy (Chris) Jessen-Marshall of Madison Heights, VA, Heidi (Grant) Wilhelm of Maple Grove, and Doug Jessen of Crystal; three grandchildren; and three sisters, **Jeanne ’65** (John) Bowron of Luverne, **Jane ’72** (**Jim ’72**) Golla of Tulsa, OK and **Jodie ’77** Boone of Rochester.

She was preceded in death by her husband, **Delbert “Del” ’65 Jessen**.

Alice (Ossenfort) Hansen ’65 died on June 18, 2026, in Pipestone, MN. On October 1, 1966, Alice was united in marriage to **Ron ’62 Hansen** in Luverne. The couple settled in Hardwick. Alice worked at Fey Industries in Edgerton, retiring in March 2010. Alice invested a substantial amount

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Remembering our classmates/continued from page 4

of her time volunteering in various areas in her community. She loved helping everyone and had a way of lighting up every room she entered. She moved to Ridgeview Estates in Pipestone in June of 2025.

Alice is survived by her children, **Theresa '85** (Terry) Swenson of Pipestone, and **Trevor '89** (Julie) Hansen of Bellevue, NE; 4 grandchildren; and five great-grandchildren.

She was preceded in death by her husband, **Ron** on October 3, 2012.

1970 – 1979

Ellen (Arends) Cannefax '70 died on June 8, 2026, in Sioux Falls, SD. Ellen attended Avera McKennan Hospital Inhalation Therapist program, beginning her lifelong medical career. She worked in Sioux Falls for several years before moving to Minneapolis where she married Robert Cannefax in 1984. Ellen was a “foodie” and along with Robert, they loved to cook and entertain. She became certified as a cardiopulmonary specialist and completed her B.S. in Respiratory Therapy from St. Mary's College. The couple moved to the Phoenix, AZ, area where she continued her work and where she received her master's degree in Adult Education Distance Learning from the University of Phoenix. After her husband's passing in 2018, Ellen moved back to Sioux Falls.

Ellen is survived by her siblings, **Don '71** (Cindy) Arends, **Julie '73** Burmeister, **Lori '75** (Mike) Ptak, Audrey Arends-Claussen, **Annette '81** (Gary) Wageman and **Stuart '86** (Tanya) Arends; stepchildren, Patricia, John, Mary Beth and Suzanne; and many beloved nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Robert Cannefax.

Bruce Kurtz '70 died June 26, 2026, in Storm Lake, IA. The theatre was one of Bruce's favorite places, having acted in, directed, and supported hundreds of stage productions. He was a founding member of the Green Earth Players and a long-time member of the Calumet Players in Pipestone. His first performance – “The Fighting Littles” – came during his junior year

in high school. The final show he directed was “Miracle on 34th Street” at the Palace Theatre in Luverne during the 2017 holiday season. For most of his life, Bruce worked in the men's clothing trade. He was employed at Creeger's and Cook's clothing in Luverne and later operated his own stores, including B&K Mercantile in Storm Lake. Bruce loved fishing, strongly supported the DFL, and loved the Minnesota Vikings. Bruce and Joan Wawers were married in November 1982 and had three children. The family resided in Pipestone until relocating to Storm Lake in 1998. The couple separated in 2006.

Bruce is survived by his children, Jacob (Amee) of Storm Lake, Nicholas (Amanda) of Los Angeles, CA, and Veronica (Austin) of Des Moines, IA; 3 grandchildren; brothers **Gary '76** Kurtz and **Mark '78** (Cindy) Kurtz, and sisters **Brenda '81** Stickling and **Vicki '90** (Stan) Steensma, all of Luverne; and many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his sister Paula Kurtz, sister-in-law Tami Kurtz, and brother-in-law Perry Stickling.

Peggy (Hendricksen) Hewitt '71 died on May 11, 2026, in Sioux Falls, SD. Peggy married David Hewitt in Luverne. They later divorced. She enjoyed knitting, scrapbooking, decorating birthday cakes and spending time with her family, especially her grandchildren.

Peggy is survived by her six children; 21 grandchildren; two great-grandchildren; four siblings; a sister-in-law; and many other relatives and friends.

She was preceded in death by her parents and brother, **Jerry '77** Hendricksen.

Sara (McClure) Van Nieuwenhuizen '76 died on April 4, 2026, in Ellsworth, MN. Sara married **Randy '75** Van Nieuwenhuizen in Luverne on June 18, 1976. They lived in Bozeman, Montana, from May 1983 to 1991, when they returned to Luverne. Sara worked at Minnwest Bank and later at Kozlowski Insurance. In December 2020, Sara was diagnosed with

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Parkinson's disease. She retired in December 2023. Sara and Randy enjoyed camping and spending time with their friends.

Sara is survived by her husband, **Randy**; nephews, Jessie Freeborn, Shane (Blossom) Freeborn of Sioux Falls; great nieces and nephews, Canyon and Sylvie; and siblings, **Cleon '71** (Sue) McClure; and many other family and friends.

She was preceded in death by sisters, **Laura '73** Hauff and **Ruth '68** McClure; and sister-in-law, Darla Van Nieuwenhuizen.

Larry Lupkes '77 died May 12, 2026, in Worthington, MN. Larry farmed, worked for Frank Heiderman Tiling, and then in maintenance for the City of Rushmore. He held that position for almost 30 years. He also enjoyed working with the people at the Coop Farmers Elevator in Rushmore. He was a member of the Lions Club and Booster Club. Larry enjoyed hunting, fishing, gardening, playing pinochle, and especially helping people. He had served as chief of Rushmore Fire and Rescue and loved helping with Little League.

Larry is survived by one brother, David, of Rushmore; two sisters, Sally Lupkes of Las Cruces, NM, and Sherri (Paul) Ritter of Mount Dora, FL; one niece, Emily (William) Mees, one nephew, Jonathan Ritter, one great-niece, Ashlyn Mees; and the countless individuals he has mentored.

1980 – 1989

Scott Mark '83 died April 2, 2026, in Worthington, MN. Scott attended Nettleton College in Sioux Falls. He served 18 years in the Minnesota National Guard, training in units of

Worthington, Luverne and Willmar. Scott enjoyed riding horses, attending horse shows, and doing many crafts. He loved playing ball with his faithful companion, Leah.

Scott is survived by his children **Stephanie '07** (Mark) Johnson, **Nicholas '09** Mark, **Jesse '17** Mark, Madison Kramer, Noah Hellerud and Lilyan Mark; 7 granddaughters; a sister, Rhonda Farrell; a brother, **Duane '81**; an uncle, John "Jack" Cragoe; and many cousins.

He was preceded in death by his father, mother, and grandparents.

1990 -1999

Bradley Ver Steeg '90 died at his home in Luverne on June 3, 2026. Brad attended South Dakota State University in Brookings, SD. He worked in the agriculture industry for over three decades and made many connections with farmers, agronomists, seedsmen and other people at various levels of seed production, distribution and ag equipment. On June 8, 1996, Brad married **Amy '88** Dispanet in Luverne. Blessed with two children, the family created countless memories together on their acreage west of town. Brad also loved riding motorcycles, attending country music concerts, Vikings games, fishing trips and winter getaways.

Brad is survived by his children, **Sage '19** Ver Steeg of Sioux Falls, SD, and Tate Ver Steeg of Luverne; mother, Kathy Ver Steeg of Luverne, siblings, **Nathan '94** (Tonya) of Luverne and **Manda '99** (Mark) Steensma of Luverne; **Amy** Dispanet of Luverne; and many other family members and friends.

He was preceded in death by his father, **Norlan '68** Ver Steeg, his grandparents, and two aunts.

Please help us find missing addresses

Please check the Alumni News website for "unknown" addresses. We need your help locating them for postal addresses and email addresses. If you know the individuals personally, please ask them to email their postal address to piersonprp@alliancecom.net. Thank you.

AMERICA



ROCK COUNTY MN and the ROCK COUNTY FAIR

FAIR EVENTS DAILY

**EVENT
DATES**
THURSDAY - SUNDAY
JULY 30 - AUGUST 2

LUVERNE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Reception & Tours
Saturday, August 1: 9 - 11 AM
Hosted by Luverne Education Legacy Fund

BOOK RELEASE CELEBRATION LUVERNE'S A TO Z BOOK

During the Fair
Rock County Fairgrounds

ROCK COUNTY HISTORY CENTER

Thursday thru Saturday, 10 AM - 4 PM
Special Exhibits:
75th Tri-State Band Festival

AMERICA 250 CLASSIC CRUISE IN

Friday, July 31, 5:30 - 9 PM
All Vehicles Welcome – Free Registration
Live Music – Beer Garden – Food
Rock County Fairgrounds

ROCK COUNTY HALL OF FAME INDUCTION

Sunday, August 2
Ceremony at 1:30 PM – Generations
Unveiling & Reception at 2:45 PM – History Center



MILITARY VEHICLE ROLL-IN

Honoring America's Service Members
Saturday, August 1, 11 AM - 3 PM
Live Musical Entertainment
With Bill Johnson as "Bob Hope"
Free Event - At Cedar & Fletcher



FUN DUELING PIANOS

Fun entertainment for the whole family
Saturday, August 1, 7:30 - 10:30 PM
Free Admission – Fairgrounds
Sponsor: Rock County Community Foundation



Alumni, Educator Hall of Fame inductees announced

Induction ceremony set for Oct. 2 during homecoming

Alumni Hall of Fame

2026 inductees include Emily (Bowron) Crabtree, Omar Olson, Bill Weber and James Wiggins.

Emily (Bowron) Crabtree:

Class of 1990: Emily's community and county service has been as Executive Director of the Rock County Community Foundation, formerly known as the Luverne Area Community Foundation. During her 15 years of leadership, the RCCF has grown from \$1 million in assets with six funds to over \$10 million supporting 150 funds that enhance quality of life throughout Rock County.

Omar Olson: Class of 1967

Omar's life journey has included newspaper editing,

radio announcing and politics. He was active in the Walter Mondale campaign, serving in the communications department. Omar was instrumental in educating people about the importance of early detection of colon cancer. He recently has spent time promoting *The Boys in the Light*, a book that shares the heroic war experiences of Elmer Hovland, a local WWII veteran.

Bill Weber: Class of 1971

Bill is an accountant and a politician. He owns a Luverne business that focuses on residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural appraisals. As a public servant, Bill was a city councilman and Mayor of Luverne. Bill was elected

as a State Senator in 2012 and represented southwest Minnesota at the state capitol until he retired from elected office in 2026.

James Wiggins: Class of 1922. James was owner and editor of the Rock County Star and then wrote for the St. Paul Pioneer Press-Dispatch. His career then took him to the Washington Post for 25 years. He was managing editor and eventually executive editor of the Post. He cared about freedom of the press and helped pass the Federal Freedom of Information Act. President Lyndon Johnson named James U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations from 1968-69.

Educator Hall of Fame

2026 inductees include Shirley Harrison, Marge Christensen, Jerry Jensen and Jim Sanden.

As an elementary teacher,

Mrs. Harrison created a character education program which teaches children the important values of living in society. Shirley was awarded \$10,000 for the program, which she donated to the Luverne Public Schools character education program. Shirley started the annual Respect Lunch event that continues today after 26 years. She was Luverne Teacher of the Year in 1998. She taught a variety of primary levels at the Elementary School from 1969 – 2005.

Mrs. Christensen was a person who was passionate

about the education of young people. To her ninth grade Civics students, Government was not just a subject, but an obligation to know in order to live as a citizen. Marge often invited state and local government officials to her classroom as part of her instruction. Marge was a substitute teacher and twelve year classroom teacher. In a nomination letter, she was described as a teacher who was determined, encouraging, and always put students first.

Mr. Jensen began teaching science at Luverne High School in 1973, with biology being his primary focus. Jerry's use of creativity and integration of technology in the classroom received statewide recognition when he was named the 1994

Minnesota Outstanding Biology Teacher of the Year one year after being recognized as the Luverne Teacher of the Year. Jerry's teaching method during his 38-year career was "learning by doing".

"Are there any comments or questions?" This statement made by **Mr. Sanden** at the start of his class and the discussions that followed are lasting memories for many former students. Students could share their beliefs, discourse was encouraged and opinions mattered. Conversation happened and all were friends when they left the classroom. Jim stressed the importance of critical thinking, current events and being a knowledgeable voter. Jim taught in the same classroom for 39 years.

LUVERNE ALUMNI & EDUCATOR HALL OF FAME



2026

EVENT SCHEDULE



FRIDAY | OCTOBER 2, 2026 | LHS HOMECOMING

Dress of the day = business casual or Cardinal logo gear

Unveiling Ceremony | Alumni Garden | 4:00 pm

- *Introduction of Alumni Inductees & unveiling of the Alumni Hall of Fame Wall*
- *Following Alumni unveiling, return to PAC Commons for the unveiling of Educator Inductees & unveiling of the Educator Hall of Fame Wall*

Induction Ceremony | Performing Arts Center | 4:30 PM

- *Inductee (or representative) are guests of honor and invited on-stage*
- *Inductees introduced in alphabetical order; Alumni Induction followed by Educator Induction*
- *A gift honoring the inductee will be presented*
- *Inductees or their representative will be given 1-2 minutes for acknowledgements*

Class of 2026 Hall of Fame Reception | Following the Induction Ceremony

- *A casual reception will be held in the PAC Commons for inductees, guests and the general public*
- *Event hosted by the LEA (Luverne Education Association)*

LHS Homecoming Football Game | 6:00 PM

- *Tailgate meal fundraiser by LELF at Cardinal Field*
- *2026 Inductees to be announced prior to kick-off (around 6:45 pm)*

Sampson S. Start

by Gregg Gropel

Kudos to classmate Laura Huntington for being the first person to graduate from Luverne High School, but right behind her was Sampson Start. Sampson was the first boy to graduate from Luverne. He was second in line to graduate from Luverne only because students are graduated in alphabetical order. Had Sampson's last name started with a letter somewhere between A and G he would have been bestowed the honors of being the first person to graduate from Luverne. On the other hand, Sampson was the school's first valedictorian, and Laura was the first salutatorian. Incidentally, there were only two students in the first class to graduate from Luverne High School—the Class of 1888.

Sampson Start Bio

Sampson Start, Jr. was born in Monroe, Wisconsin, on May 3, 1866, to Sampson and Catherine (White) Start. His father was an immigrant from England. His mother was a native of New York, born in Oneida County, New York.

His parents moved to Wisconsin and farmed for a short time in Green County (Monroe) and shortly thereafter in Dane County (Madison). In 1864 his father felt compelled to help the Union fight the South, as he joined Company H, Thirty-eighth Wisconsin Volunteer Infantry in August of that year.

When the Civil War ended his father returned home, resumed farming until 1876 when the family moved to Cherokee County, Iowa; approximately 95 miles south of Luverne.

In 1883, when Sampson Start, Jr., was approximately seven years old, his family moved to Rock County, Minnesota, settling on a 160 acre farm located in Vienna Township, section 30. The family farm was approximately four miles northeast of Luverne.

Sampson attended high school in Luverne, graduating in 1888. His schooling didn't end with high school graduation. Sampson enrolled in the University of Minnesota, attending the prestigious school from 1888 through October, 1890.

While attending college, Sampson

started on the college football team, playing left tackle.

The coach celebrated his talents and skills by telling the *Star Tribune*, "S. S. Start is one of the strongest men on the team. He is 24 years old and weighs 182 pounds. Start plays tackle and is one of the best men in the team to break through the line and get onto the ball. . . ."

That information appeared in the November 23, 1890, *Star Tribune*. That same article also provided the next step in Sampson's life, as the coach continued on saying, "He played on the team two years ago and has played baseball some at his home in Luverne. He will be missed from the team next year. At the late election he was elected superintendent of schools of Rock county and will leave school at the end of this term to take the duties of his new office. Start is an honest and conscientious player."

It appears Sampson served five years as Rock County School Superintendent, from late 1890 through much of 1895.

Somehow, sometime, Sampson became acquainted Irene Gay Bryant, and on June 26, 1895, in Fayette, Iowa, the couple was married.

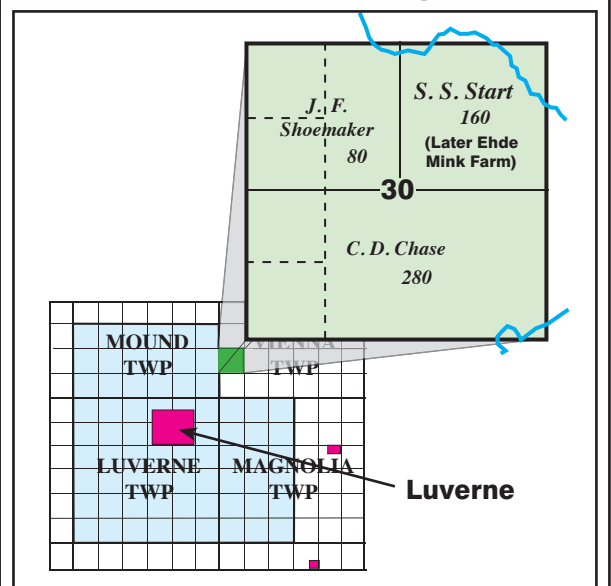
Irene was born in Elgin, Iowa. Irene's parents were Augustus and Emily (Pierce) Bryant.

According to Sampson's death certificate, the couple entered the beautiful state of Oregon in 1896.

Although Sampson and Irene were new residents of Oregon, ironically their son, Harold C. Start, was born in Elgin, Iowa, on September 9, 1899, three years after entering the "Beaver State."

What most likely was the impetus for the Starts to move to Oregon was gold. Yes, gold!

Section 30, Vienna Township



Sampson Start Jr.'s father owned 160 acres of land in the northeast quarter of Section 30, Vienna Township. In 1888 cars were just beginning to be developed, buggies were the usual mode of transportation in Rock County's early years. Young Sampson more than likely walked or perhaps rode a horse over the nearly 4-mile stretch of land from his home to high school and back.

In 1896, Sampson became the superintendent of the Luverne Gold Mining Company in Bourne, Oregon. The company was incorporated on the "magnificent capitalization of \$1,000,000" that year by a group of investors, which included several prominent Luverne Hinkly family members—Benjamin H., Frank L. and Ray B.—and other Luverne citizens, hence the name "Luverne Gold Mining Company."

The gold mining company didn't pan out as well as they thought it would, it lasted about six years, as ". . . it was one of dozens of hopeful 1890's outfits that chased the Blue Mountains gold rush but didn't strike it big enough to last. No dramatic end—just the typical fate of a small player in a boom-and-bust mining camp."

Prior to the bust, apparently it wasn't unusual for Sampson to prospect for gold in Alaska, and when cold weather set in to return to Oregon, as noted in a 1902 newspaper: "S. S. Smart will remain here (Oregon) a couple of months looking after his

interests in this district and then go to Iowa, where he will spend the remainder of the winter with his wife. He and his brother will return to Alaska in the early spring." This may explain why Sampson's son was born in Iowa three years earlier.

Eight years later, in 1913, Sampson Starts' wife, Irene, filed for divorce, stating, "Mr. Sampson deserted her in 1910." A year later, on August 1, 1914, Sampson married Virginia "Jennie," maiden name Tarter, who was previously married and assumed to be a mother of three girls.

Following the quiet, non-dramatic dissolution of the Luverne Gold Mining Company, Sampson entered into both the real estate and insurance businesses.

On May 29, 1936, Sampson's wife of 22 years passed away. According to a newspaper announcement, her death followed shortly after she had undergone an operation

Eleven years later, on January 14, 1947, Sampson S. Start passed away at his daughter's home in Lakeview, Oregon. He was 80 years old, just a few months shy from reaching his 81st birthday.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his second wife, Virginia "Jennie" Elizabeth, who died in 1936; two sisters, Jennie Townsend (1855-1931) and Mary Johnson (1859-1917); and two brothers Robert (1862-1862) and Fred (1868-1943).

Sampson was survived by his first wife, Irene Gay (maiden name Bryant) now Buickerood (1872-1957); two sons, Harold (1899-1986) and Sampson, Jr. (1918-1990); one daughter, Catherine Fossum (1915-2003); and three step-daughters, Jessie Pugsley (1899-1978), Josie Standley (1905-1965) and Susan Griffiths (1909-1986); six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Sampson was laid to rest in Union Cemetery, Union County, Union, Oregon. His eternal resting place is a long way from his birth town of Monroe, Wisconsin, and a long way from where he earned the honor of being Luverne High School's first valedictorian—Luverne, Minnesota.

MRS. START DIES FRIDAY EVENING; BURIAL SUNDAY

Funeral services for Mrs. Virginia Elizabeth Start, who died at the Grande Ronde hospital Friday evening, was held at the L. D. S. church at Union Sunday afternoon at 3 o'clock, with Bishop Kofford in charge. Burial was in the Union cemetery in charge of the Snodgrass and Zimmerman mortuary.

Mrs. Start's death followed on operation a short time ago.

Born in Colfax, Wash., Oct. 17, 1880, she was 55 years, seven months and 12 days of age. She made her home at Union the last three years before that resided in Baker county.

Survivors include her widowed husband, Samuel S., of Union; four daughters, Mrs. Jessie Pugsley, of Novis, Ida.; Josie Stanley, of North Powder; Mrs. Susan Baisley, of Molais, Ore.; and Mrs. Catherine Fossum, of Baker; a son, Sam, of Union; three granddaughters and one grandson; her father, Daniel Tarter, of Camp Brook, S. D.; a brother J. A. Tarter, of Weiser, Ida., and a sister, Mrs. Mary Brouillett, of Reno, Nev.

LaGrande Evening Observer, Monday, June 1, 1936, LaGrande, Oregon.

Bourne, Oregon—A Mining Camp of 1,500 People, Now a Ghost Town



Luverne Gold Mining Company was once a part of Bourne, Oregon. "Bourne, a once-thriving mining town, now lies in quiet solitude. Tucked away in the Blue Mountains, it was a bustling place during its heyday. The town's remnants, including old cabins and mining equipment, offer a glimpse into the lives of those who sought their fortunes here."

---Nissie Lipscomb

S. S. Start Sr. Death Told

LAKEVIEW, Jan. 20—Sampson S. Start, Sr., died Tuesday at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Don Fossum, with whom he had made his home the past five months because of ailing health.

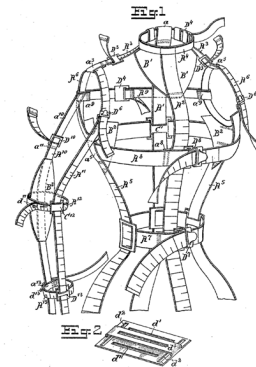
Mr. Start was born on May 3, 1866, and was nearing his 81st birthday at the time of his death.

A plane came down from Baker Wednesday to take the body there for funeral services Friday, and interment in the cemetery at Union where his wife was buried in 1936. Mr. and Mrs. Don Fossum and Sam Start, Jr., left for Baker to attend the final rites.

Surviving are four daughters, Mrs. Jessie Pugsley of Caldwell, Ida.; Mrs. Josephine Standley of Union, Mrs. Sue Simons of Pendleton and Mrs. Catherine Fossum of Lakeview; two sons, Sam Jr., of Lakeview, and Harold of Portland; six grandchildren and three great grandchildren.

Herald and News, Monday, January 20, 1947, Klamath Falls, Oregon.

(No Model.) S. S. START, JR. & M. A. S. JOHNSON.
GARMENT MEASURE.
No. 545,139. Patented Aug. 27, 1895.



Witnesses:
Samuel Reichelt
Charles Schuyler

Inventors:
Sampson S. Start Jr.
Mary A. Start Johnson
By Reichelt & Schuyler
Attorneys

In 1895, Sampson S. Start, Jr. and his sister Mary A. (Start) Johnson were granted a patent on a device used to measure a person's body sizes to assist seamstresses to accurately cut pieces of cloth to be sewn together into a perfectly fitting garment.



Origin of Carrie Bakken memorial stone is a mystery

A stone with Carrie (Laabs) Bakken's name engraved in it was unearthed last month in the landscaping near the Luverne High School tennis courts.

And today her family members, who were touched to learn about, are trying to find out who had completed the thoughtful gesture.

It's a 9-inch square chunk of Sioux quartzite bearing the words, "IN MEMORY OF CARRIE BAKKEN."

The landscape rock and vegetation had been built three feet into the Highway 75 state of Minnesota right of way, and with the current road construction project, it had to be moved.

According to school maintenance supervisor Cory Schmuck, the red rock popped up in the dirt as heavy equipment was uprooting the vegetation and removing landscaping stones.



He contacted Carrie's parents, Darold and Helen Laabs, Luverne, who said they were unaware of the origins of the rock, but are curious who had done this in their daughter's memory.

Bakken was a member of the Luverne High School Class of 1986 and was a teacher in Luverne Elementary School as a Title 1 and RTI teacher.

She was passionate about her job and enjoyed being a part of her students' lives.

She died July 15, 2019, from complications of scleroderma, an autoimmune disease which causes hardening and tightening of skin and connective tissues.

Anyone with information about Carrie's memorial stone is asked to contact Alumni News volunteer Lori Sorenson at editor@star-herald.com. Her family would like to know its origins.

Band Festival '75 on Highway 75/continued from page 1

longest, continually operating high school marching band (only) festival!

Let the drums roll and the trumpets sound on Saturday, September 26, 2026 as the 75th Tri-State Band Festival comes to town!

Check out the TSBF website for updates & history - <https://www.tri-statebandfestival.com/>

BAND FESTIVAL COMMITTEE: Class of

2026: Haley Boltjes, Hannah Buysse, Shawn Kinsinger, Eugene Marshall, Janet Marshall, Dale Nelson, Ann Robinson, Wayne Robinson

Class of 2027: Rebecca DeBoer (co-chair), Kristi Groth, James Jarvie, Caitlin Kramer, Paul Kramer, Susan Skattum, Morgan Van Holland

Class of 2028: Melissa Buckland (co-chair), Julia Ferguson, Egypt Forrest, Cheryl Hartman, Eric Hartman, Jenny Polzin



Chris Notwatzki (left) and Bill Thompson display student art that was created during their teaching careers in Luverne. Both retired in May. (Jason Berghorst photos)

Nowatzki, Thompson retire after more than three decades of teaching in Luverne

When Chris Nowatzki was hired to teach art at Luverne High School, he told his wife Martha that he would teach in Luverne for five years and then the couple would move to Colorado.

That was 39 years ago.

Nowatzki retired on the last day of school, May 21, after teaching nearly four decades, and 34 more years than he expected, in Luverne.

“Our daughters were born and we realized this is just a great community to raise our kids in and school district to work in,” Nowatzki said. “Luverne has been really good for my family and my career.”

Nowatzki was born at Fort Benning, Ga., and grew up as an “army brat.” He went to school in Germany for 11 years and graduated at 17 years old in a castle in Heidelberg, Germany.

While studying art at North Dakota State University, he had the opportunity to be an artist-in-residence in Fargo Public Schools.

It was then that he realized he might be interested in teaching art.

His first teaching job was in the Glyndon-Felton district where he taught for a teacher on leave. When that teacher decided to return to the classroom, Nowatzki was again searching for a position.

“I came down to Luverne and interviewed with Mr. Rath, Mr. Harner and Mr. Miller,” he said.

From using a printing press and a dark room in 1992 to using 3D printers and robots in 2026, Bill Thompson and his students have seen major changes during his 34-year teaching career.

“When I started, we didn’t use computers in my class,” Thompson said. “And now we have robotics, 3D printing, transportation technology, airbrushing, prototyping and more.”

Thompson retired on the final day of school in May after teaching middle and high school graphic arts and technology education classes.

His entire teaching career was at Luverne schools.

The Columbia Heights native didn’t always plan to be an educator.

“I was working at a printing business in Anoka and found it to be pretty monotonous,” Thompson said. “I had some friends in college and decided to join them in college.”

Thompson attended St. Cloud State University. He explored other majors until a professor encouraged him to consider technology education and become a teacher.

After graduating college, he accepted the graphic arts teaching job and began teaching in Luverne in September of 1992.

“I had to ask for a day off right away to get married,” Thompson said.

“Sherri and I were married on Saturday, Sept. 26. I

CHRIS NOWATZKI RETIRES/SEE PAGE 14

BILL THOMPSON RETIRES/SEE PAGE 14

“Right at the end of the interview, Mr. Miller asked if I would be the yearbook advisor; I knew what that meant,” Nowatzki said. “I only had to advise the annual for about five years, but I got the job.”

Over the years, Nowatzki not only taught art to middle and high school students, he also spent a great deal of time coaching.

He has coached girls’ golf for his entire career at LHS and has coached gymnastics since 1991 and volleyball for about 14 years.

“Coaching is a really good balance to teaching,” Nowatzki said. “You get to know kids in a different capacity.”

In the classroom, Nowatzki has enjoyed seeing his students grow as artists and as people. He said he enjoyed promoting respect, responsibility and work effort as much as artistic skills.

“I truly believe respect and responsibility should be rewarded and I enjoyed seeing students grow up to be contributing members of society and, often, our community,” he said.

Nowatzki said that, in some ways, teaching has become more challenging in recent years.

“There are more mandates to meet and it often seems schools are being asked to solve all of society’s problems, but often without the resources to do it.”

Still, he said he has enjoyed working with young people every day and will miss the students and fellow staff members.

“We have great kids and great families and great teachers,” Nowatzki said.

At this point, he plans to continue coaching gymnastics and golf for at least one more year. He also plans to continue working part time at Take 16 Brewing and is considering other part-time work in the fall.

“Right now, it just feels like summer, but in the fall, I’ll really feel retired,” he said.

In addition to coaching and part-time work, Nowatzki looks forward to spending time with his family, especially his grandson who lives in Russell.

The Nowatzkis’ daughter, Kaia, lives in Russell and their daughter, Gretchen, lives in Sioux Falls.

He also plans to continue with his many hobbies as well. He listed hunting, fishing, golfing, cooking, beer brewing, biking and pottery as opportunities to fill his time.

“I’ll also be getting back into taekwondo and possibly do some art fairs on the road with my older brother again,” he said.

The retirement stories of Chris Nowatzki and Bill Thompson were written by Jason Berghorst, Luverne teacher and Star Herald Summer reporter.

had to pay for a personal day on that Friday so I could get to the Twin Cities to get married on Saturday.”

After a very eventful September, Thompson said he settled into teaching technology classes.

“STEM and tech ed give students opportunities to design, create and make things that lead to careers in so many fields,” he said.

“We were really able to add a lot of programs over the years.”

Adding new programs for middle school learners is something Thompson enjoyed most.

“The middle school kids really love doing the projects and trying new things,” he said. “They are active learners and really connected well in my classes.”

Thompson mentioned Lego League and after school robotics as middle school programs he especially enjoyed.

In addition to those activities, Thompson also coached middle school football for 24 years, served as the district’s summer recreation director for five years and served on the Dollars for Scholars board of trustees.

“It was such an honor to be part of Luverne’s Dollars for Scholars,” he said. “It’s just an outstanding program for our community.”

Thompson said he also has great memories from his football coaching years.

“I learned so much from Joel Swanson, Todd Oye, Mike Wenninger and Mark Lundgren,” he said. “It was incredibly fun and they taught me a lot through teaching and coaching.”

Now that he’s retired, Thompson plans to spend more time with his two grandchildren, who live in Harrisburg, S.D., with their parents, Brent and Morgan Thompson.

The Thompsons’ daughter, Susan, lives in Minneapolis.

More fishing and boating at the family cabin on Lake Minnewaska near Glenwood are also on Thompson’s retirement agenda, along with hunting and attending Gopher games.

Thompson said he plans to stay busy with part-time work. He’s starting Bill’s Handyman Service and is working part time painting at Centennial Apartments.

“I have flexibility and time to figure out what I want to do more now,” he said.

As he reflected on his career, Thompson said he is thankful for the students and the opportunities he has had to influence them.

He mentioned that former students often remember and mention projects completed in his classes.

“There are thousands of students who have a project at their house that we did in class,” he said.

“I’ll see a former student and they’ll say, ‘I still have my CO2 car.’ ... That’s pretty cool.”



CLASS OF 1996—30th REUNION

JULY 9, 2026—Hot Dog Nite

7 pm—Meet at Take 16 Brewing Co.

JULY 10, 2026— Reunion

6:30 pm—Meet at Howling Dog

Food & Drinks Available for Purchase

Live Band “THE BASH” Outdoors from 7-10 pm

Please PrePay by Venmo \$20

to @Staci-Minkler

Block of Rooms Reserved GrandStay: 507-449-4949

Please reach out to Staci Minkler (612) 207-6875

or Susan Rudolph (612) 730-7682 with questions.

**Looking forward to seeing you all
for a fun celebration!**

CLASS OF 1966—60th REUNION— JULY 31, 2026

Meet at Take 16 Brewing Company—7 pm

Reminisce, Enjoy Pizza, Refresh with a Home Brew!

RSVP if possible Buzz Anderson <andersonrus633@gmail.com>

OR just show up! We would love to see you all!

**Tim Getman, Mary DeJarlais, Gordon Hemme, Shirley Vandenhoeck,
Stephanie Heyer, Chuck Rodman & Buzz Anderson**

CLASS OF 1971 55th REUNION— JULY 31 & AUGUST 1, 2026

GATHER: Friday Night Cruise In at Fair by the Beer Garden

DINE: Saturday Dinner at Revel - 5:30 pm

RSVP REQUIRED for dining: Text or Email

507.920.5197 or lanpherejane@gmail.com

ENJOY: Saturday Evening—“DUELING PIANOS” at the Fair

CLASS OF 1976—50th REUNION—SEPTEMBER 11 & 12, 2026

Friday Night—Informal Get-together at Take 16 Brewing Co.

Saturday Night Gathering— THE LAKE

MORE INFO & DETAILS TO COME! Contact: Deone Hemme (507.290.0267)

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Johnna Bowron Ahrendt, Patti Kirby Pierson and Rock County Opportunities

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