S.T.O.R.I.E. Time
Seniors Teach Others Real Intergenerational Experiences

Cover art created together by Hannah Mallow, UNI Senior and Jean Thompson, Western Home Communities senior

May Gratitude be a Guest of your heart and a Companion of your soul.

Western Home Communities Seniors & UNI Human Relations Seniors
Fall 2017

Online at: http://scholarworks.uni.edu/storie/3
Dedication

John Focht

To our new friend,
John Focht
this book is dedicated to you.
Thank you for teaching
all of us the meaning of simplicity
and what creativity
can do in the classroom.

You rock.
Introduction: Gratitude

University of Northern Iowa students enroll in a Human Relations course during the final year of their teacher preparation program. Kathy Oakland, a faculty member who teaches this course, has been using my book as one of the texts: *Gratitude: Affirming One Another Through Stories*. Carolyn Martin from the Western Home Communities matches the seniors. It is always the “perfect match.”

S.T.O.R.I.E. Time is a visionary idea that has become a portal to cross-generational experiences. Seniors at UNI and Seniors at Western Home Communities will cross the threshold of their generational distinctiveness and immerse themselves in universal themes of their common humanity. Stories will be the centerpiece and medium of exchange.

At the outset, as participants, you will be spectators in one another’s stories. Gradually and together, you will recreate yourselves inside the narrative of each other’s unique experiences. You will mean more and more to each other as a result of seeing something special in the telling of your lives. Gratitude will begin to emerge as a mainstay in your relationship. It will manifest itself as grace and goodness at work in your lives. You will become co-authors and characters in one another’s stories.

Gradually you will grow into better expression of yourselves becoming more aware, perceptive, and appreciative of the plot line in your lives. You will likely live differently and more purposefully for having traveled this road together. The experience may be the precursor of a more mindful understanding of who you are and contribute to the awakening of new possibilities at the dawn of each day.

Len Froyen

Conversations & Stories:

*Acceptance, hardship, friendship, work, hospitality, serendipity, passion, misfortune, kindness, weather, waiting, imagination, forgiveness and gratitude.*
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Walking into Human Relations the last semester of my senior year, I had no idea what to expect. What even is human relations? What am I supposed to get out of this class? I think one of our speakers in this class put it best. “Human Relations cannot be taught; rather, you must experience it for yourself”. After our first class, I learned I would have yet another field experience to devote time to. Now as an education major, one does not love walking out of that first class realizing it comes with a field experience. Many times, it makes one feel overwhelmed as they have to find time each week to devote to that field experience.

I was excited our field experience was with someone from the Western Home. When “field experience” is talked about in education, it is oftentimes assumed it will be at a school in the area, learning from students. This time, I was going to be learning from someone who was two generations older than me. What were they going to teach me about education in today’s society? I was a little hesitant about this, however, I was becoming more and more anxious to be paired with my senior because I knew they would become a mentor to me. Spending time with my grandparents is something I cherish, and struggling with coming to terms of only having one grandparent left to spend time with following my grandfather’s death this past March, I began looking forward to getting to know another individual of this generation.

A few of my friends were in this class as well, and we were all just a little curious (or maybe very curious!) of what lie ahead with this experience. Our professor kept telling us “They will love you!” and “They won’t want you to leave!” We kept thinking “I hope she is right.” but secretly we were a little nervous.

Each and every time I went to visit my senior, I began to learn more and more. She always wanted to know about my life and what I was up to, and I always had many questions about hers. The questions provided to us guided our conversations deeply the first few meetings, but after that, we hardly even talked about the questions. I was more interested in her life experiences, what was happening in her day to day life, and her life growing up. We had so much to compare and she had so much life experience to share.

I think I speak for mostly everyone in our class when I say this field experience was never dreaded, rather a break from our everyday experiences to learn from another generation. We were learning what it was like to grow up in their generation, how life has changed, and how life is the same. We were sharing our talents with each other and most importantly, building a relationship and friendship.

And just like that, our field experience is coming to a close and many of us will not see these individuals on a weekly basis anymore. We will be moving onto the next chapter of our lives, but not without using the knowledge these wonderful individuals have shared with us. As we move on and begin our careers, I am now confident in what

At times our own light goes out
and is rekindled by a spark from another person.
Each of us has cause to think with deep gratitude
Of those who have lighted the flame within us.
these individuals taught us. They helped us learn how to develop positive relationships with others.

Every single day we will have to work with students, parents, and adults from different backgrounds, different generations, and different cultures. Each and every one of our seniors had a different background, was from a different generation, and the culture they grew up in was different than the culture we grew up in. We learned just how important it is to show you care and pour your heart and soul into those you meet. This will be important to all of us as we continue throughout our careers. The seniors from the Western Home taught us more than we ever thought was possible this semester and for that, we are ever thankful.

Renae Drey, UNI Human Relations Senior

2

The “Good” in Goodman

May Mrs. Goodman rest in peace in heaven
and continue to bless upon us down here on Earth
with her guidance and wisdom.
I will cherish these memories with her
and continue to serve the young students
with the same compassion and care she did.

A young girl dream: to teach, to inspire, and to foster new knowledge to young minds of children. Mrs. Marjorie Goodman was dedicated to that dream while growing up on a farm attending country school at Hickory Ridge. Many of Mrs. Goodman’s best memories were growing up on her farm using corn cobs as ice skates and taking on daily chores. Yet while growing up Mrs. Goodman had one thing in mind, and that was to be a teacher, and to be good at it. Certainly, she did, she was dedicated to her career as an educator, never thinking of teaching as a job but as a passion. “Everything went as planned” said Mrs. Goodman. “I consider myself grateful. My hardships weren’t hard compared to others, and I have all that I have ever needed.” Mrs. Goodman always had an optimistic view on life, she never complained even when discussing times that were tough in her life. She was humble and kind and always perceived everything that was handed to her in life as a gift.

Mrs. Goodman showcased her love of teaching in every square foot of her living space. She had portraits of one room school houses that reflected history on her walls, small rustic school buildings on her end tables with little clothed students and a teacher. One of her prized possessions was a Coca-Cola glass bottle with a flag standing in it that symbolized how the United States flag was presented in her own classroom before they had hanging flags in the schools.

Within every conversation that took place, it always seemed to circle back to her teaching days. Mrs. Goodman’s eyes would light up when speaking about her students and her duties as a teacher. She would bring out old laminated documents of what she used in her teachings. She loved her students because she took them under her wing just like her own children. Her children were so loved by Mrs. Goodman, she always stated how blessed she was not only as a teacher but a mother, and wife. Cecil Goodman, her
late husband, was a true gift said Mrs. Goodman. “He always supported me as a teacher and raised our children with nothing but love and respect.” They had a wonderful marriage that was supported by love and support of one another to pass on to their children. She demonstrated a true symbol of kindness and grace. Treating others the way you wanted to be treated was the golden rule in her class that she certainly modeled day in and day out.

Marjorie Goodman (deceased), Western Home Communities Senior
Shelby Schindler, UNI Human Relations Senior

3

Chance of a Lifetime

Who says nothing ever happens to small town Iowans? This is the story of how a small town girl got a big city opportunity and went for it. That decision led to lifelong memories, lifelong friends, and a lifelong love.

Evelyn grew up in La Porte City, Iowa which had a population of 2,000 at the time. She had six siblings who were spread apart in age. She was always a good student and enjoyed her country life, but was willing to explore the world. When she got to high school, her business teacher took a great interest in Evelyn and gave her the opportunity of a lifetime. That teacher’s sister worked in Washington D.C. and knew of a secretarial position for the FBI.

Evelyn decided that was her chance for a change, so her uncle bought her a one-way bus ticket to Washington D.C. Evelyn had never been to a city that big. The FBI set up housing for their employees near the main work building and Evelyn became close friends with her roommate. Her roommate was from Colorado and had never left home before either. They almost had to be friends because they didn’t know anyone else.

Evelyn got used to the big city life and hung out with her FBI friends and roommates often. There was so much to do around town like bowling and going to movies. She enjoyed her secretary position, but it was tedious at times. Her job was to have new hires fill out paperwork and she would do background checks on them and their families. She would go as deep as their grandparent’s magazine subscriptions. Jay Edgar Hoover was the head of the FBI at the time and was a strict boss. She could spend an entire day trying to get the margins at one inch on both sides on a typewriter because that is the only way he would sign off on the letter. He would walk into an elevator and whoever was in there with him would have to push the floor button because he was in too much power to push a simple button. From that position, she learned how organization and professionalism can get you ahead in life.

One day at Evelyn’s apartment, she ran into this guy who lived across the hall. His name was Carl and he was from Pittsburgh. He worked for the FBI on third shift checking fingerprints. He asked her to a movie for their first date and they eventually became the couple of their friend group. After dating for a while, he proposed and she wasn’t surprised with the timing. Within the year, they got married and neither one of their families could make it to the D.C. wedding. Everyone who did attend the wedding was from a different state. A little while later, Evelyn became pregnant and they decided to move back to Iowa to raise a family. Iowa felt more like home for them. Washington
D.C. was too big and busy to raise a family. They enjoyed their jobs at the FBI, but were excited to find jobs in Evelyn’s home state.

After fifty-eight years of marriage, Evelyn and Carl are still in love and look back fondly at the memories that they made in their big city days. They are grateful for their experience working for the FBI and falling for each other in the process.

Evelyn Boice, Western Home Communities Senior
Rachel Baxter, UNI Human Relations Senior

92 Years of Experience

Karl Koch is a man that I would send anybody to for advice. When he speaks, I make sure I am always listening very closely, because I don’t want to miss any of the wise words he provides me every time I visit.

When I first met Karl, I was surprised by his Danish accent. This made the first topic of conversation very easy. I asked Karl where he was from, and he said, “Denmark.” He then began telling me a little bit about his life story. Karl did not have it easy growing up, because he didn’t have the typical upbringing. But, due to his past, I’ve been able to look at life from new and different perspectives. I’ve greatly appreciated the advice he has given me each time we meet.

One thing we always talk about when we’re together is friendship. At a young age, Karl always struggled with friendship, because when he moved to the Denmark he was the “new kid on the block.” Since I am going to be a teacher, he related this to school. In a school setting, Karl always tells me there are going to be kids who struggle with friendship. He always reminds me that everyone needs a friend or someone they can talk to. This advice is important to me, because I will likely teach or coach students who struggle to build friendships and need someone to talk to. Karl helped me realize that I need to be there for these students and help them through.

Karl often talks to me about the importance of friendships at work, too. He owned and worked at Koch Construction in Cedar Falls, and his son owns the business now. I had the privilege of going with Karl to look at the machines and set-up of his shop. The examples of the work done at Koch Construction was great to see. Karl often talks about the relationships he made with both customers and co-workers. He talks about how important it was to be friendly to the customers, because it created good business for him and his company. And, most importantly, he discusses the relationships he built with co-workers to keep his business running successfully. This advice was helpful too, because students are like the customers in Karl’s case. To create an inviting classroom, you need to build relationships with your students. I will need to take the time to get to know my students, so I know how to handle each student’s individual needs. Also, to fit in as a teacher at a new school, relationships must be built with my co-workers, just like Karl’s business.

Lastly, I had the opportunity to meet Karl’s wife Ethel Ann. They have been married for 65 years! So, whenever Karl wants to give me relationship advice, I take it to heart. The best relationship advice Karl has given me so far is: When you are ready to marry somebody, know that you aren’t only marrying that person, but you are marrying her family, her friends, and everything she likes to do. This was very important to me,
because when I started to think about what Karl was saying, I realized how very true that is. This relates to my life because of the relationship I am in right now. It made me think: If I were to marry this girl, would I be okay with marrying her family, friends, and things she likes to do? The answer is yes. The only part I struggle with is the part where he adds in things she likes to do. However, Karl always tells me that if you don’t like doing something, don’t dislike that person because they like something you don’t. This has helped me try to enjoy more things my significant other likes to do. All the advice Karl has shared with me about relationships has really helped me think about my own relationship more deeply.

I am very thankful to have met Karl Koch. He is willing to share his life stories and experiences with me to better my life. The advice he has given has already been very helpful, and I can’t even imagine how helpful it will be even further down the road in my life. Who wouldn’t want life advice from a man with 92 years of experience?

Karl Koch, Western Home Communities Senior
Jason Bedard, UNI Human Relations Senior

True Love

Mac Eblen is an intelligent, down to earth, and understanding woman. She grew up in Wichita, Kansas during the Great Depression, fought through the dust bowl, and went to college during World War II. Not only did Mac live through a difficult time, but being with the love of her life did not come easily. It was at Wichita State University that Mac met the love of her life, Roy Eblen. Mac first knew of Roy because he had dated 2 or 3 of her acquaintances. Mac even first laid eyes on Roy when he was with one of those girls. Instantly, Mac adored his blue eyes and knew that there was something different about him. Later, after Roy had called it quits with the girl, he called Mac on the phone and they started to go on life’s journey together.

Roy, was a bright man set out to have a purpose in life. However, Roy was also very different than most men that age, not only because of his intelligence, but because he had limited use of his legs. Roy had been diagnosed with polio at a young age, and since there was no cure at the time, he had become paralyzed and used crutches to get around. However, this had absolutely no effect on Mac’s love for Roy. It was the least of her concerns; Mac fell in love with him because of his intellect and personality.

When they were first dating Mac enjoyed going out for cheap Chinese food with Roy, but she was especially delighted when they would go to the river together. There they would sit on a bench and talk for countless of hours about life. Roy was so interesting and Mac could never be bored when she was with him. Mac and Roy were an unstoppable couple. Nothing was going to come between their love for one another.

After one year of dating, it was time for Mac to finally meet Roy’s parents. She first met his father who did not give off a great first impression. He worked in insurance; he was a rich, arrogant bigot and thought he was better than everyone else. Roy came from a wealthier family than Mac did, and Roy’s father did not especially like Mac since she did not come from a well-off family. Curiously enough, Mac’s parents did not approve of Roy either. They never imagined she would be serious with a man who was
unable to walk without crutches. Both sets of parents disapproved of Mac’s and Roy’s relationship. One can imagine how their parents reacted when Roy and Mac announced that they were going to get married.

Neither Roy nor Mac’s parents attended the small church ceremony they had for their wedding. Mac had bought herself a simple white dress; A-line, cotton, a pretty cut out pattern around the neck, and the length of her dress just below the knees. She had flowers to carry and Roy had a boutonniere, and the pastor of the church married them. There to witness the wedding was a couple who were Roy and Mac’s friends. It was a simple wedding that resulted in two people who truly loved one another starting the rest of their lives together.

Life is like a card game; each of us are dealt a hand and we can’t control what cards we get, but we can control what we do with them. Mac and Roy Eblen embody his perfectly. They didn’t let anyone get in the way of their happiness, and because of that, they shared a life that was perfect for them. They knew what they wanted and made it their future. Together, both Mac and Roy became wonderful companions and accomplished professionals through the adversity they were dealt. I’m deeply grateful for Mac and her stories. I have learned so much about life, and will never forget the time that we’ve spent together. Our time together has made me a more understanding individual who is set out to have a purpose in life and be happy with the hand I’ve been dealt.

Mac Eblen, Western Home Communities Senior
Hannah Brummel, UNI Human Relations Senior


Faye grew up attending a country school then continued her schooling in Grinnell, Iowa. Faye loved her country school, but valued her country school teacher even more. Faye believes that the teacher makes the school, the school does not make the teacher. Faye remembers memorizing scripts for plays during Christmas time and was an avid 4-H leader. Faye had two close friends in school named Camilla and Dorothy. She believes that a true friend stands up for you and is always there for one another when needed. Faye does her best to be a friend to everyone that she meets throughout her journey of life.

It’s easy to say, that Faye loved her father dearly. Faye always turned to her father for help with the occasional help from her mother. Faye’s work while growing up consisted of dusting, doing the dishes, fetching eggs (which she did not enjoy), ironing, and cleaning house. Faye’s first “real job” was detasseling. This job was hard work for Faye and she did not do it for very long. Shortly after detasseling, Faye began working at a local drug store then continued on to the UNI Library. Through work, Faye has learned
a lot about herself and her ability to try new things. Life is a journey that helps teach oneself who they want to be.

Faye got engaged to Donald Rohwedder in May and was married by December. Something that Faye and Don loved to do was travel the United States together. They have traveled about everywhere with the exception of Delaware and Alaska. One of Faye’s silliest memories with Don took place while visiting their family. Don was fearful of elevators; however, Faye and Don got a room on the 18th floor of a hotel while visiting their daughter. To overcome the elevator fear, Don would close his eyes until he got to his destination floor. One day, Faye and Don rode the elevator down to the main floor to meet their family. Faye gracefully stepped off the elevator on the main floor expecting Don to follow behind. However, little did Don know that they were on the main floor of the hotel. Don ended up riding up and down the elevator a couple times before finally realizing he needed to get off! Faye still cherishes these memories today and remembers Don as a loving husband who always made her feel confident in herself. One thing Faye wishes she could have done before Don passed away was vacation to Alaska. It is still one of Faye’s dreams to visit Alaska and she hopes to one day venture there. Life is a journey and anything is possible.

Faye can be known for valuing friends and family above all, and always doing her best to make others feel welcome. Faye is the type of person that will do anything for you even if it is out of her comfort zone. She will always try her best. If you are ever looking for a vacation buddy look no further; Faye is your gal. It’s important to remember that life is a journey and we are all passengers in life that need to sit back and enjoy the ride.

Faye Rohwedder, Western Home Communities Senior
Kacy Cazett, UNI Human Relations Senior

7

Risk and Reward

Mac describes herself as “not much of a risk taker.” Mac hated the water, but her husband, Roy, loved to swim. Mac explained that growing up, Roy contracted Polio and had to walk with crutches. One summer, Roy, his mother and siblings went to a famous hot spring in Georgia. They took the train from Hartford, Connecticut to the hot spring, leaving his father behind. This hot spring is well known in literature about Polio in the United States.

Franklin Delano Roosevelt (FDR) was the 32nd president of the United States, serving from 1933 until his death in 1945. Polio left FDR paralyzed from the waist down, and he spent much time at a warm springs in Georgia. In fact, he built a cabin on the grounds. The warm spring was said to have healing powers, so many people with Polio traveled to bathe and exercise in the waters. The nurses and doctors on site determined what/how often exercises should occur.

Roy’s mother had reserved a small room for the group to stay at while they were in Georgia at the spring. His mother did not intend to swim in the hot spring, so she remained in her clothing and walked around the grounds. Unexpectedly, she ran into the (future) 32nd president of the United States. FDR was a democrat, and she was also raised in a democratic family. At the time very few people, including Roy’s mother,
knew that FDR was paralyzed by Polio. The press and reporters made a special effort to hide that he was paralyzed.

After speaking for a short while, Roosevelt offered his private cabin up to Roy’s mother and his family. At this point, Roy was introduced to FDR, and he became a huge fan. Roy and his family lived in FDR’s cabin for one month, and then returned home to Connecticut by train. In the following years, Roy watched Roosevelt carefully, and he was ecstatic when he finally became president. Roy spent his lifetime admiring FDR. Roy returned to the hot springs in the following years, but never saw Roosevelt again.

Because of these experiences at the hot springs, Roy developed a love for the water and swimming. In opposition, Mac spent much of her life terrified of the water. In fact, she almost was unable to graduate from high school because of her fear! In order to earn her diploma, Mac was required to swim one lap in the pool. She described herself as “an awkward mess in the water.” The experience was so traumatizing for her that the teacher had to walk along the edge of the pool while she swam her lap.

When Roy and Mac were about 50 years old, they took a trip down to Mexico. Roy was working with Phonology/Acquisition of Spanish Sounds. They were staying in cottages that had a saltwater pool. One day while Roy was working, Mac went and sat by the pool in her bathing suit alone. It was a beautiful day; the temperature was just right. The water looked glorious, and Mac began a dispute with herself inside of her head. “Oh you will not drown! You could float if you tried, you know!”

Although Mac knew that it would be a big risk, she went ahead and slipped right in. She took a deep breath in and found herself almost magically floating on her back. The water felt wonderful, and she was so thrilled that she began to move around. Eventually, once it was time to head back for supper, Mac pulled herself over to the side and exited the pool. Later that night, after Roy had finished his work, Mac suggested that they go swim at the pool. Roy being the “fish” that he was agreed. However, he did not expect that Mac would be joining him in the water. After Roy entered, Mac once again slipped into the pool, and Roy was absolutely astonished! Mac told him all about her risky, but adventurous, day. After all, in the words of FDR, “The only thing that we have to fear is fear itself.”

Mac Eblen, Western Home Communities
Kendall Deitering, UNI Human Relations Senior

A Walk with Faith

Throughout life, life presents opportunity, and life takes things away unexpectedly, and we have to believe that faith will be our guide. This is exactly how Sue Hoffman has lived her life, even through tough times, and tries to continue to see the world as a positive place.

Sue grew up in a small town in Nebraska of only 400 people, where everyone knew everyone. Growing up in a small town back then, she lived in a house without electricity and running water (until she went to high school.) She might have grown up poor, but she didn’t know it. A lot of the people in her town were in the same boat, so nobody really knew any different, and if they were better off, they didn’t act like it.
Everybody was friends with everybody, and “nobody was going to kill somebody over a pair of shoes.”

She started at the one room country schoolhouse in first grade, and continued through to graduate in eighth grade. Life at school wasn’t always easy. When Sue was in the second grade there was a snowstorm that cause them to shut down the school for three months, and to make matters worse, at home the cattle were dying right there in the field. Sue also didn’t like to get up and go to school because it was sometimes hard for her, and that made her hate it.

When Sue graduated eighth grade she had to go to the city to go to school. Sue had to move in with her Grandma Nelson because her house out in the country was too far away from the city school, and even though she had to be away from her family, she had the opportunity to learn about her grandma, and their relatives from Sweden. While at the city school this was the first time Sue experienced being treated differently. The “country kids” were treated otherwise because they had grown up different, and hadn’t learned all of the same things, such as music.

When Sue graduated high school she graduated with 25 people in her class. Sue still keeps in contact with the remaining 20, and could tell you where they are all located and what is going on in their lives. Their loyalty to each other has remained strong throughout the years, and is very important to Sue, because it shows how much they truly care about each other, and that loyalty goes both ways. They have their 60th class reunion coming up, and hopefully they can all make it.

Soon after high school Sue was married and had three kids. Her marriage didn’t go as planned and she ended up divorced, because God had other plans for her. At the age of 40, her and her three kids moved from Nebraska to Iowa, to have a fresh start. The times after her divorce were tough, and she had to work two jobs. She worked hard, and learned to appreciate what her and her kids had.

Once Sue moved to Cedar Falls her daughter set her up on a blind date. She was set up to meet a random man at Perkins, and when they met neither of them were sure who they were supposed to be meeting. It turned out he was only in town for a few short days and was headed back to Arizona the next day, so Sue didn’t get her hopes up. But when he left, he asked for her information and told her he would write, and Sue could only think “yeah right.” Less than a week later she received a letter from him, and they started calling each other often, and as they say, the rest was history. She was swept up in a whirlwind romance, with a very charming man, and they were happily married by spring.

However good life has been, Sue has also had experiences she wouldn’t wish on anyone. Sue lost her husband, and once it happened, it happened, and she didn’t even get to say goodbye. She also lost her son to suicide, which was, and still is, very hard to understand. But, as mentioned before, faith has been a big part of Sue’s life, and was a very big part in helping her try to understand what had happened. She had to rely on her faith to help her accept it, and make her own peace. She had to learn to deal with what happened, because it’s not something that a person can just get over. Sue knows her son was a child of God, and that God just needed him more than she did. She knew that he was baptized and confirmed, and that God forgave him, and so should they.

Even though life has sometimes hit Sue hard, she still has a sense of adventure. She has traveled to Rome and Italy with her church, and to Sweden where she was able to
stay with a relative and learn more about her family history. Her biggest item on her bucket list right now, without a doubt, is to go to Graceland. She is a huge fan of “The King” and wishes more than anything to see his home. And if the good Lord will let her, she would really like to travel back to Sweden again, to see and learn more about her family.

Sue’s appreciation for hard work and life in general, has really helped her develop an optimistic outlook on life, has led her to volunteer and help others as much as she can. She continues to be an active member in the community, and loves to be involved in as many opportunities as possible. Because of this I am thankful that life gave Sue and me the opportunity to meet, and to start the beginning of a beautiful lifelong friendship.

Sue Hoffman, Western Home Communities Senior
Allison Eppens, UNI Human Relations Senior

Ragbrai Experience

Carl Boice is an outstanding gentleman I had the pleasure of getting to know over the course of this semester. I learned that he worked for the FBI’ specifically fingerprinting different people and doing an analysis for each fingerprint by hand and examining each one by a magnifying glass (of course he can’t tell me much more because, you know it is top secret). I have learned all about his family, and how he isn’t a fan of Disney World but loves hockey. In fact he works at the Waterloo Blackhawks games. He also is a big fan of Wartburg where his granddaughter goes to school. Of the many stories he has told me the best would be his Ragbrai experience back in the 90’s when he went the whole way.

Carl and a friend decided they were going to do Ragbrai the Christmas before it actually was going to happen. Once the snow cleared and he was able to ride his bike he began to each day after work. He trained for 6 months before he actually participated.

But a couple weeks before the event he and his friend on the 4th of July decided to try to bike 100 miles that would be the longest he would have to ride on the route to get to Oelwein. They started at 6 in the morning and it was already hotter than heck outside, but they did make it to his niece’s house in Iowa City. So they were set for the big event.

Now this is the time before cell phones, but Carl had arranged places to stay with friends at each stop. He called them and told them the week before that they would get up and start biking around 6, stop for breakfast about 15 miles later, and then ride until they got to the house at roughly 2 in the afternoon. He got ahold of the person he was staying with in Oelwein which he had never met. It was set up through a friend’s friend who knew another guy.

She said that her husband would not be home, and that she would be at work but she told them where they key to the house was and to make themselves at home. So they did their biking and got to the house around 2. When they found the key, they went inside. There was a note on the table for them that said, “Hello welcome to Oelwein, Iowa. Make yourselves at home, my husband is gone, and I am at work preparing a meal at the local Catholic Church. The beer is in the fridge, the whiskey is in the cupboard,
and the bathroom is down the hall to the right with towels and everything else you need in the cabinet. Make yourselves at home.”

Carl decided they would quickly shower and head to the church to say hello. They did so and ate dinner with the host, and said they were going to go downtown for a bit and would be back by 8 o’clock to chat before they head to bed so they can get up and go in the morning. She said that was fine and would be at the house waiting. Carl went downtown for a bit and when he came back the husband had just gotten home from working on a detasseling team all day, and he said, “Hi, nice to meet you. Let’s go downtown and grab a drink.” Carl decided “why not “so they nice fella took him out for another drink and they stayed out until about midnight.

All of this was set up through friends. He never had even met these people, but he is glad he did. Carl met a lot of friends on the week long bike trip and enjoyed every minute of it. It is amazing which one of life’s opportunities knock when we have no idea what to expect but we go in with a good attitude. I loved hearing the story and eating wings with Carl that day.

“I only have one piece of advice, and that is to do what makes you happy.”

Carl Boice

Extraordinarily Ordinary

I am going to tell you a fairytale. No, not like Beauty and the Beast or Cinderella, but a real-life fairytale, one about a woman with such an ordinary story that it becomes extraordinary.

There is something so magical about the moment you realize your calling, what you are meant to do. The moment that EthelAnn knew she was meant to be a nurse was when she was at the hospital in Iowa Falls with her mother as a young girl. Up until this point, her responsibilities and experiences had consisted of fetching the eggs, milking the cows, living on a farm in small-town Iowa, and attending a one-room schoolhouse. The women who cared for the patients were so beautiful and kind, like angels with their white caps and uniforms, going back and forth serving the people in any way that they could, supporting the families through hard times and EthelAnn knew immediately she wanted to be one of them.

When she got to high school, EthelAnn was not sure how to make that dream happen but was determined to find a way. She cared, and cares, so much for other people that she wanted to be there in some of the hardest parts of their lives. After attending high school, EthelAnn was accepted to Broadlawns in Des Moines for nurses training. One strange occurrence during the whole process was when EthelAnn needed her birth certificate for the paperwork. Unbeknownst to her, she had gone her whole life writing her name differently than what it actually was. EthelAnn was really Ethel Ann (first and middle name) and she went nearly the first two decades of her life without knowing anything different. Just one more way that this wonderful woman is so unique.

The tale continues with a rather difficult and intense course load over the next several years. They had to attend classes and work all year long for the next three years with only two to three weeks in the summer for vacation. She did not do much work with
medicine at the beginning of her training of course, but spent her time reading doctor’s orders and caring for the patients. Out of all of the training that she had to go through, pharmacology was the hardest course for EthelAnn. Her time in training also took her to Chicago and Cook County Hospital for six months to work in obstetrics and the psychiatry ward. These were the longest six months of all. To officially become one of those wonderful women, EthelAnn had to sit through two days of intense testing that covered all knowledge she could possibly need on the job. Is this sounding like a fairytale yet?

For the next year of her life, EthelAnn got to experience life away from Iowa with friends at a hospital in Denver. ‘Part of your salary was climate and scenery when you worked in Denver’ this is something that EthelAnn heard often in her first few months. After finally achieving Registered Nurse pay, EthelAnn’s mother grew ill again and she felt it was time to return home. Where did she end up? Right in our very own Cedar Valley at Sartori Hospital in the operating room (OR). Here is where the story really becomes magical. One normal day EthelAnn was working on the surgical floor and began caring for a patient who has had his appendix removed. She did not think much of this patient with a definite accent and good humor to begin with, but thought he was an interesting enough guy.

After being released from the hospital Karl Koch found out her name from a mutual friend and the rest, as they say, is history. But wait! The story clearly does not end there if I am writing about it now! They met on the 4th of November in 1951 and married the 27th of September the following year. This year they have celebrated 65 wonderful years together through all of life’s ups and downs, through many joys and thankfully few (though very deep) sorrows.

When they began their family, EthelAnn decided to move on from hospital work and be able to spend more time at home by working in a doctor’s office. The special thing about this blessed family is their willingness to open their home to a girl who did not have one elsewhere even when they had three boys of their own. EthelAnn told me at the very beginning that she hasn’t endured much hardship or suffering. I have come to find out that what she has experienced has been profound and deep, but with the help of family and of God she has been able to live her fairytale life.

This woman is extraordinary and special in many ways from her genuine love for people and her gentle spirit to her honesty and kindness. I cannot imagine a better person to have been paired up with and have heard such a wonderful tale. This story is relevant to us all in our current stage of life, learning where we are as adults going into the professional world and many of us getting ready to marry. I can only dream to have a tale as ordinary as hers one day.

EthelAnn Koch, Western Home Communities Senior
Rebecca Givens, UNI Human Relations Senior
Doud's Dedication

Janet Doud is a woman of many gifts. Friendship, love, passion, and dedication are just a few things that come to mind when I think of her. I have had the chance to meet with her this fall semester of 2017 and have built a great friendship. I am very grateful that I have got the chance to get to know her. Janet is currently with Western Home at the new apartments with her husband of 57 years and a dog.

From our meetings, it is very clear that Janet values friendship. She is the kindest woman and says her doors are open to whoever she can help. For a year, Janet opened her home to a Chinese "daughter", Chun Lin, that she still has communication with. Janet got the opportunity to let her live with him after she told a geography professor that her house was so empty. Janet says that when they've reached out and helped someone they were paid in love.

Janet is very surprised how this turned out in 1985, and now every Mother's Day, Christmas, Valentines Day and other events they get a card from Chun. Another story from Janet comes from her adventure coming back from a Rainbow convention on a bus. At Rainbow, Janet learned how to walk in high heels and the colors stand for: love, religion, nature, immortality, fidelity, service, and patriotism.

Janet was only a teenager and saw a lady on the bus coming back from Des Moines that reminded her of her grandmother. She was from Switzerland and Janet invited her to come off the bus with her and go to her house to have supper. This lady was headed to Chicago and got off the bus with Janet and made a dear friend. Although Janet has not been able to connect with her, she remembers her beautiful personality, outfits, and voice.

Janet has a passion for band- especially the clarinet! If Janet was a guy she would have been a band director. Women usually had the jobs of secretary, telephone operator, teacher, or nurse. Janet spent a lot of her time practicing the clarinet during her school years. Every time she sees/hears a marching band she could cry. She can just imagine herself out there and believes that she will always wish she was out there. Something I regret from our meetings is not asking her to play for me. Janet says that when she put her clarinet away, it was like putting it away in a coffin. When you played in the band, it was like giving your life to the director.

A passion that turned into sincere dedication for Janet is her class reunion books. She started making books with poems, quotes, contact information, pictures, and more for everyone in her class. She loves doing this and it has helped her classmates become closer. Although it costs lots of money and time, she enjoys doing it. She is driven to do these and doesn't know why. I got the chance to receive copies of things that she will put in her next one, which unfortunately will also be the last. Something I really found interesting was her sheet of *Eating in the 40's*. "Take Out was a mathematical problem. Skim milk was fed to the pigs- whole milk was for the children." These books are so special and I will cherish my copies forever.
Janet Doud is dedicated, passionate, loving, and a friend to everyone. I will cherish our time together forever and hold it closely to my heart. When I think of her, I not only think about the things I've talked about in this short story but I picture her beautiful smile and heart as well. I am forever grateful I got the chance to meet Janet Doud.

Janet Doud, Western Home Communities Senior
Montana Gourley, UNI Human Relations Senior

Benchmarks

The first time I met Steve McCrea, we made the usual pleasantries and introduced ourselves. That was normal since we didn’t know each other very well, but the moment we sat down and started chatting a bit, he told me “I’m 70, now, and—well, I still don’t know what I want to be when I grow up.” I couldn’t help but be instantly charmed. And I think that quote is a direct representation of who Steve McCrea is; a man who’s lived through a lot, experienced even more. But that’s only from what he’s told me about himself in the few months I’ve known him. I’m sure it’s but the shore of a far vaster ocean, yet to be revealed.

During my numerous visits with Steve, our conversations got into a rhythm, followed a theme of exploring certain “benchmarks” or “keystone moments” in a person’s life, whether personal or societal. These moments are like vivid snapshots, events and dates that transport us back to another place, where we can remember exactly where we were, what we were doing, and what was going on in the world. It’s moments such as these that seem to echo throughout the rest of our lives.

Societally, or historically, these benchmark moments tend not to be the happiest moments—they stick out in a stark, bleak contrast compared to the regular days wrapped around them. For instance, we talked about the J.F.K. assassination and a similar unpleasant historical moment in the case of my generation: 9/11. Just as I can recall the memory of the Twin Towers collapsing without too much effort, Steve recounted the moment he found out J.F.K. had been shot. He was one of the few families on his street who had a television—a color television, mind you—and was home watching the news as the story broke. Steve was young, only sixteen, and not quite sure what to do, only knowing he had to do something.

What else is there to do in times of trouble but seek family? He walked out the back door of his home towards the school where his mother worked. She had already been on her way back, and they met in the backyard, standing beside a dead and twisted peach tree (perhaps an apt symbol of the day’s tone), both of them stunned and quiet. He told me how he remembered it being almost preternaturally silent in the neighborhood, how time seemed to have stilled for a second and all around the country men, woman, and children were grieving.

We all hold a moment like that in the recesses of our minds, and while most of those historical events are grim, the personal benchmarks of Steve’s (and the average person’s) life generally revolve around an opposite tone: an experience of profound happiness. The night Steve met his future wife, I can say with complete certainty, fits
nicely into that category. It was easy to tell, the way Steve recounted the evening with a
certain energy, a slight smile on his face all the while.

Steve met Kathy, the wonderful woman who would become his wife, in the Fall
of 1969. As it happened, what would become over forty years of marriage all began over
the course of one spaghetti dinner. Before the dinner, though, Steve was tasked with
going down to the local liquor store to procure the wine. He made sure they wouldn’t run
out. As he and his three friends made their way down Olive Street, towards the sound of
music, the evening wind whispered through the trees. Leaves—of a rustic red, orange,
yellow—blew about like tumbleweeds, swimming around the feet of a young Steve
McCrea cradling three entire jugs of wine.

Steve told me he did not know what he was getting himself into, but any nerves or
preconceived notions melted away the moment he was inside. The apartment was a warm
oasis compared to the brisk wind outside, the welcoming hosts even warmer. It was a
crowded table between Steve, his three friends, and the six women hosting them. The
way Steve put it, “We were all young and beautiful…or maybe we just thought we were.”
And I think there’s merit to that. The way he described this table of friends, an apartment
filled with laughter, good cheer, the air humming with music from a nearby record
player—it wasn’t just the people who were beautiful and full of life, but the moment as
well.

Kathy was no exception. Sure, as Steve said, there were plenty of young and
beautiful people to talk to at this little get-together, but Kathy and Steve had an
immediate connection from the start. They could laugh together; she was quick with a
joke, quick with a laugh, and able to run circles around him. I can imagine Steve, a man
with a world class sense of humor, falling under her spell right then and there. Decades of
a strong, lasting marriage unfurled from that first moment, a perfect night: the night Steve
and Kathy gathered around a table with good friends and laughed together for the first
time.

It’s magical, happy memories such as these, the ones that can take you back to an
exact moment of emotion, that make life worth living and, more so, worth sharing with
others. I know the time I’ve spent with Steve will stick out as a keystone experience,
something I’ll have as a continuing friendship and a series of memories I can look back
on with fondness. Mostly because it was such a unique experience…a traditional
experience. In days of cell phones, text messages, and social media—when do we ever sit
down for an hour or two and just talk to someone face-to-face?

When do we listen carefully to what someone says, listen to their deep and
intricate stories? When does that happen anymore? I can tell you with complete honesty:
it doesn’t.

And I think that makes the time I spent with Steve that much more memorable. It
took me away from things that seem dire or important at the time, but really weren’t. It
offered me the chance to share in a human experience, a human moment of connection
we often aren’t accustomed to anymore. It’s hard to condense a person down to a page
and a half, and really it does not do Steve justice, but I hope this at least stands as a testament to how important one person and one moment can mean in someone’s life. If you want the full experience, you’ll just have to give Steve a call, share a cup of green tea with him, and meet the man for yourself. Bring a good attitude, and he’ll bring the stories. Thanks again, Steve. I can say without any reservations, it was an absolute pleasure.

Steve McCrea, Western Home Communities Senior
James Hansen, UNI Human Relations Senior

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The Key to Everything

Maureen Oates is a precious human being who is so wise in her actions and words. For some reason she reminds me of myself. I see my future self. It’s both awesome and crazy at the same time. Every time we talk all she does is make me smile. Maureen has so much independence, love, encouragement, advice, and of course, stories. She has come such a long way in her life. Through all the tough times Maureen went through, she still appreciates the most memorable, fun events in her lifetime.

Maureen had a good education growing up. She attended a Private Catholic School, a place where she felt accepted and never felt less than. She had a kind heart towards others and never felt anyone disliked her. If someone didn’t like her, she never knew about it. Even though, she had a sassy side to her personality. At Maureen’s school there were Nuns, and sometimes she would try to get under their skin but only to mess with them just a tad. She thought it was funny! As Maureen got older she mellowed out more and became dedicated towards her studies. She was president of her class Senior year of high school and was involved in spiritual groups so she could reach out to others. She enjoyed her younger years being surrounded by friends and people she loved.

After college, Maureen taught in New England before she came to Cedar Falls to teach. Maureen taught for a year and a half in a 1st grade classroom before she started working at UNI. Teaching wasn’t the first thing on Maureen’s list of careers. She actually wanted to go into nursing but she couldn’t because of her leg. She has had an artificial leg since she was 1 year old. She never let her leg slow her down and she didn’t want people to feel sorry for her either. Maureen kept living her life like any other ordinary person would.

While Maureen was in New England, she happened to meet the love of her life. She wasn’t planning on meeting anyone. It was totally unexpected. His name was Mike. He so desired to take her out on a date and, of course, she said yes. Their love started when they were young and blossomed for many years after. They were so supportive of one another and enjoyed each other’s company.

If only it lasted longer. Mike passed away a few years ago. Maureen wasn’t sure if she could go on without him. They were each other’s partner in crime. They made decisions together all the time. As the years went by Maureen learned that she could handle things on her own without Mike. That’s where her independence comes in. Maureen does so much not only for herself but for others as well. She loves when her children come to visit her and take her out for dinner. Maureen feels grateful for the
friends and family she has. Her friends challenge her and help her grow every day. They have always been there.

In September of 2016 Maureen underwent heart surgery for a replacement valve. The surgery was going to either be successful or not. It was one of the biggest risks Maureen ever had to go through. After her surgery, she couldn’t be any healthier. She no longer has heart problems. Doctors called it a miracle for Maureen to receive such fantastic results.

From what I have seen and talked about to Maureen is that fact that hardships don’t necessarily slow us down. I think hardships and all the rough seasons in our lives help strengthen us for the amount of days we have in front of us so we can face them head on. Maureen has shared with me so much of her life that it has helped me to stop and think of how everyone has different events that happen in their lifetime. Sometimes worse than others, but it also helps me look forward to all the wonderful things that I’ll hopefully be able to experience as well.

Maureen and I have more in common than I thought to ever expect. I would say that it wasn’t a coincidence for us to be paired together but faith has something to do with it. It’s brought us together to share our stories, to enjoy one another’s company, and to be able to connect at so many different levels. I’m glad I had the opportunity to meet Maureen. Our friendship is sure to last.

Maureen Oates, Western Home Communities Senior
Mari Henrichs, UNI Human Relations Senior

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A Man of Many Talents

Paul Klotz is a man of many talents and rather than explain all of them to you, I’d highly suggest that you take a trip to Windgrace Apartment 2 and have him show you. At the young age of 89, Paul is up and at it at 6:30 a.m. every morning. And you better believe that he gets a full day of work in too.

Paul started his life in one of the hardest times America has ever seen – The Great Depression. Times were tough. Not only Paul, but for everybody. At the age of 4, his grandfather died and his first cousin moved in with Paul and his family. As it would turn out, Paul and his cousin didn’t get along, at all. On top of that, a kid in the high-school band bullied Paul. Any change the person would get, they would pick on Paul, smack him around, and give him a hard time. Paul simply tried to stay out of his way and mind his own business.

Growing up in such turmoil would result in many people giving up and looking for excuses, but not Paul. Paul had to make do with what he and his family had and he did what he had to do to make it. Paul and his family would garden every year as way to provide food for the family and save some money for other things they would need. He also helped can food with his family. These were just two of the different accommodations Paul had made to help during the Depression.

During this turmoil, Paul also learned and gained an appreciation for work. Again, from a young age, Paul would mow lawns for a whopping 35 cents. He and a friend would also go around and pick up and dispose of ashes people had left out for a few
cents. Although he didn’t always have the most desirable jobs in the world, Paul learned that he had to “stick with it”. Rather than throw a pity party for himself, Paul went out and tried to make his life and his family’s life better. When times were good, they could split a pint of ice cream 5 ways. Each person would get a slice of the pint. When times were tough, he didn’t really notice or let it get to him because he knew that the times were tough for everybody, and he knew that some people had it a lot worse than he did.

As he got older, he worked more desirable jobs such as working in the hardware store with his dad. Here, his father let Paul be himself and this is where Paul found his love for appliances. This appreciation for appliances led to his life career of being a repairman for appliances, renovating houses, silversmithing, and rock polishing (I told you he had many talents!). Hard work is something Paul is very passionate about and his something he exhibits every day. With Paul, there is no such thing as wasted time. He believes, and has always believed to be truthful and do a good job the first time so you don’t have to go back and do it again.

Why, you might ask, did Paul work so hard and do what he did? Not for his own benefit, but for the benefit of his family and those around him. Paul continues to polish rocks, silversmith, and fix appliances to this day. His story has defined him and made him into the person he has become. And if you ask me, that a pretty humble, selfless, amazing person. On behalf of everybody who’s encountered Paul in their lifetime, thank you Paul for who you are and what you do.

Paul Klotz, Western Home Communities Senior
Devin Howard, UNI Human Relations Senior

A Fair System

The only thing stronger than Don Walton’s sense of fairness might be his natural desire to help people however he can. Don has spent most of his life serving the public in one way or another. Whether he was teaching high school students, teaching G.E.D. students, working in human resources, or working in a Personnel Department. Don seems to have a particular drive to help people. Don has frequently expressed a preference for the public sector, believing it to be more open to people with different values and upbringings. Any place where Don can talk to people and work together with them, he is happy.

This instinct to help people was particularly on display in his time in the personnel field at a public university. Don noticed that there was not a fair system in place to protect public employees working at the administrative level. Professors have the option of tenure, but there was no such system designed to protect administrative employees like Don. This is where Don’s sense of fairness intersected with his desire to help people. Don thought it just wasn’t right that administrative employees could be fired without the same due process as other employees. He made it his personal mission to design a system intended to function in the same way as tenure for administrative employees, writing all the rules and by-laws needed to make such a system work. The result was a set of rules and procedures to guarantee continuing employment for these employees beginning in 1974.
Just a few years later, however, Don lost his own job in a startling plot twist. Technically speaking, he was not “fired”. “When they want to fire you in the public sector, they just eliminate your position,” Don told me. Disappointed at having to leave the university, Don worked elsewhere for the next four years, until he received assistance from his son, a lawyer. Don’s continuing employment system had not been properly followed in the case of his own firing, so he and his son brought it to an arbitrator. Upon further review of the rules, the arbitrator determined that Don had been unjustly fired without due process, and ruled that he must be re-employed by his old employer. In the end, Don’s career in the Personnel Department was saved by the very system that he helped design.

This sense of fairness is evident in how Don has lived his entire life. He has always been determined to do things the right way so that everyone is treated fairly. For this reason, it’s lucky for everyone that Don spent his life in public service, helping all kinds of people be treated fairly.

Don Walton, Western Home Communities Senior  
Coren Hucke, UNI Human Relations Senior

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An Unbreakable Bond

Calleta Koefoed is a thoughtful, caring, compassionate, entertaining, and charismatic person. Her laugh is contagious, and she is a huge joy to be around. She has lived a life full of adventure, family, friends, hardships, and meaningful moments. Her stories make her who she is, and she has many to share. She has many stories about her teaching and adventures in the classroom, but the stories she is most excited to tell are about her late husband Paul. Their love can be felt when she is telling the stories, and his memory lives on. She painted the picture of a good-looking man who is thoughtful, caring, hardworking, intelligent, and adventurous.

Calleta attended Iowa State Teacher College and worked on campus. She made $15 a month in the archives office. She became close to a girl she was working with and learned a lot about the girl’s brother, Paul. The two met, and the rest is history. They hit it off right away and were a long-distance couple for a period of time. They were able to write letters to one another during this time, and Calleta still has these letters today. Paul was a very hard working man. When he was young, around 17 or 18 years old, he worked with the Civilian Conservation Corps at Backbone State Park. He worked in a shipyard in Washington State during World War II. He continued his education at UNI after the war, focusing on engineering. He was employed at John Deere until his retirement.

Paul and Calleta’s retirement was the beginning of a new adventure. They decided to make the most of their time. They had a camper that was small but had everything they needed. They packed up their camper and set off on their exploration. The two spent an entire summer in Alaska in a place Calleta refers to as “the top of the world”. They parked by the Yukon River and stayed on beaches. They had a lot of fresh salmon that were caught in the rivers and were able to explore the beautiful state. They saw breathtaking views, met many new people, grew closer as a couple, and created many new stories.
During the winter months, the couple decided to go somewhere warmer. They camped all over Texas and spent winters in South Padre Island. According to Calleta, they “wore out the camper” with all the time they spent camping. They would camp by the border of Mexico and were able to travel between the two countries. The two spent three to four months in Texas for twenty years, but always made it home by tax season. They would never get a hotel for their travels, and they would always stay where they thought was interesting. Her spirit of adventure is inspiring, and every day of Calleta’s life has been meaningful. Her love for her husband, three children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren is felt by every story she shares. Her husband’s presence is felt through these stories, and his picture sits in the middle of her table so she can be with him every day. Calleta cares deeply about her family and is the definition of hospitable and welcoming. The highlight of my week is when I talk with her, and I hope everyone has the opportunity to become close to a great person like Calleta.

Calleta Koefoed, Western Home Communities Senior
Emily Kudron, UNI Human Relations Senior

Humbled

When I think about aspirations and goals I’d like to fulfill throughout my lifetime, I can’t help but think about Dorothy Brown. Throughout her lifetime, she’s traveled to, almost, every state and even to Sweden! When I learned this, it resonated with me because it’s on my bucket list to travel to all fifty states, in addition to, at least one country! I won’t lie when I say, that scored Dorothy some major cool points for me. While travel can be fun and exciting, it takes courage and bravery so, my admiration for Dorothy increased tenfold after learning that. I never thought that this experience would result in me developing such admiration for a woman I had just met eight weeks ago.

In addition to being a thrill seeker, Dorothy is the definition of humble. She is a woman who has endured many obstacles and yet, her heart beams purity and content. She told me about how she had to grow up pretty quickly and take the place of her mother's because she was sick throughout her life. As Dorothy grew up, she watched her mother as she experienced asthma problems, gall bladder surgery, and other various health problems that made it hard to tend to her children and home. From a young age, Dorothy was taught by her parents to always focus on the good things in life and she did. Even when she and her family endured the dust period that lasted for about two to three years back in 1931 or 1932, her family was happy. Her family didn’t make any money farming because no crops would grow, but Dorothy still smiled and did her best to remain positive like her parents requested.

As she grew older, she was blessed to experience two marriages from men who loved her very much. However, she also experienced the loss of her mother, two husband, and two of her own children. Despite she says that she would not change anything about the life that she lived. Why? Because she got to do everything she wanted to do, see everything she wanted to see, and truly believes she had a good life. Today, Dorothy lives comfortably, and happily, at Western Homes Retirement Communities. She loves to write stories, spend time with her friends, attend community activities, read, and see her
grandchildren. Not only that, but she gained two families during her two marriages whom love her very much as well.

Learning that Dorothy lost so many people close to her made me think a lot about how I’d handle the loss of my loved ones as well. Originally, all I could think about was how my life would fall apart but, because of Dorothy, my thoughts have changed. She’s makes me feel like, no matter what, everything is going to be okay and, for me, that’s a pretty relieving feeling to have. Yes, indeed. My visits with Dorothy have left me feeling humbled. I feel so lucky to have gotten to know such a beautiful, brave, and wise woman.

Dorothy Brown, Western Home Communities Senior
Tre’Chiondria Lathan, UNI Human Relations Senior

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A Heart for Service

As soon as you start to talk to Connie Hansen you can see her heart for helping others. Starting with her nursing career, she suffered from polio her senior year of nursing school, but she never let it get her down. She stayed those extra six weeks in the program and even managed to still get married on time. Creating a scholarship for students in need looking to join the medical field is how she plans to continue to serve others. Though she helped countless people in her long nursing career, she felt a desire to still help others and found an opportunity through her church with the Medical Missions International (MMI). Connie worked for this group for twenty years as a nurse, starting in 1990 they visited developing nations like Jamaica, Peru, and Haiti to provide much needed medical care.

One of the most impactful trips that Connie has been on was to Peru. She would travel with a group of medical professionals including anything from pharmacists to dentists. The people in these countries had a variety of needs from immediate medical issues to just needing clothing or a meal. These mission trips lasted about two weeks and they would travel from city to city setting up mobile clinics where people could get help. The main needs that Connie mentioned were dental and medications. This is because there would be no one in the area that could provide these services.

There were also sad parts in her journey, like seeing multiple kids coming with the same outfit, passing it to the next kid, so that they all looked nice coming to the clinic or hearing mothers telling their stories of having many miscarriages from lack of medical care. There were also uplifting times, like providing a meal and fellowship to these struggling people or getting to see the beauty of nature all around them. On their days off they would get to go sightseeing and visited Machu Picchu. Connie really felt like she was making a lasting difference in the lives of the people of Peru that they would remember long after she left.

Another place Connie visited was Ecuador. She had a lot of the same experiences getting to know the people and the cultures. One part of the trip she vividly remembers, to this day, was attempting to meet the others in her group at a new church. She had stayed behind and gotten directions on how to get to this church. She had started walking and got lost. Not knowing the language, she decided to go to their normal church instead and meet up with the group back at the dorms. While at the church a Peruvian woman
dressed in worn clothes came and sat with her. While they sat together they would speak but still formed a deep connection praying and leaning on each other through the service.

After spending ten years on mission trips to the Caribbean and ten years going to Peru, Haiti, Ecuador, and Jamaica she decided the opportunities that meant the most to her were when she felt that she was making the most difference. Connie encourages anyone to go out and serve anyway they can either locally or internationally using resources like a church. She has inspired me to be continually thinking of how I can help those in need and take advantage when opportunities to serve are presented to me. Anyone who is able to hear Connie’s stories will develop a better appreciation for their life and hopefully pass on a little of her selfless heart to others.

Connie Hansen, Western Home Communities Senior
Mackenzie Lee, UNI Human Relations Senior

A Moment Lasts Forever

There the two of them stand on the front porch of their home in Bettendorf, Iowa. Betty holds her Kodak camera, while her daughter, Paula, fixes the hem of her new yellow dress. It’s that time of year again when the kids go back to school. Every year, on the first day of school, it’s been tradition that Paula gets her photo taken in her new dress. Time flies by, and these are moments that Betty does not want to forget.

As Betty peers through the lens of the camera, she is flooded with emotions. Her little girl is growing up so fast and she would give anything to freeze time. Even as Paula fidgets with her dress, she still has beautiful posture. Her eyes sparkle as if she is always expecting something wonderful to happen and her smile lights up a room. There’s something about Paula that makes her glow, even as she stands there waiting for her photo to be taken.

Underneath all of her beauty, there is a very kind and loving girl that shines through to the surface; to her face, her thoughts, and her actions. Betty only dreams of doing artwork the way her daughter does, with such elegance and splendor. Paula can so easily see the logical side of things and is one of the few people that can convince her mother not to worry. Betty deeply wishes she could be more like her daughter in this way.

Betty glances up from the camera as she waits for Paula. The amount of love that Betty has for her little girl makes it hard for Betty to breath. If Betty is completely honest, everything about Paula makes her the absolute perfect daughter that most mothers can only dream of having. Betty knows just how truly blessed she is to have the daughter that she does.

Paula finishes fixing her dress and looks up. She stands tall with a gentle smile on her face. As excited as she is to start her first day of 7th grade, she patiently looks at her mom, ready for her photo to be taken. Paula notices, not for the first time, how beautiful her mother truly is. People always tell them that they look alike, but neither of them really see it. Paula always thought she took more after her dad, both in looks and personality.
There’s so many parts of her mom that Paula wishes she had taken after though. Paula thinks of her mother as a very strong person with a lot of spunk. She’s someone who truly knows what it means to be selfless. Betty has been through more than her fair share of difficult times, but she has always stayed strong and carried on. She’s always been optimistic, which is one of the things she passed on to Paula.

Paula looks at her mother and thinks about all of the things she has already learned from her. By far, one of the biggest lessons Paula learned from her mom is that the only person who can decide how you view the world and how you act is yourself. When things aren’t going your way, you can either choose to be miserable, or you can choose to be happy, but the choice is ultimately yours. Betty has always chosen happiness, even when the world around her was screaming to do the opposite.

Paula gazes at her mom, proud to be the daughter of such an amazing woman. Betty is honestly the smartest person Paula has ever known and she would give anything to be as outgoing and as confident as her mother is. As Paula’s photograph is being taken, she is suddenly filled with a strong sense of gratitude for her mother.

I’ve known Betty my whole life, but have only recently gotten to truly know her. I’ve always known she’s beautiful on the outside, but getting to spend quality time with her, I’ve learned just how beautiful she is on the inside too. Betty has taught me valuable lessons within a short amount of time, but one thing I don’t think she even intended to teach me was the value of love. Betty showed me that photographs are great to help remember our most cherished moments in life, but it’s the relationships that the people in the photographs share that makes the moments last forever. It is love, the same type of love that Betty shares with her daughter that truly makes a moment last forever.

Betty Newport, Wester Home Communities Senior
Jamie McCarty, UNI Human Relations Senior

Define Yourself!

I was given the most incredible opportunity to have an amazing woman become a part of my life and she has excellent advice to live by. She taught me that you can shape your own life and define yourself by who you choose to be around and let into the depths of your heart. This advice fits right into her story.

Mary is very caring and determined to support others, a very selfless act. Her decision to become a teacher was grounded in the desire to make a difference in the lives of others, and what better way than teaching. She went on and earned a counseling degree, but wanted to continue teaching using this added knowledge to help others. Mary recognized the importance of knowing how to be there for other people and wanted to teach these skills to her students. Many times, one would not want to see a counselor but would talk with someone they trusted. She taught home economics and family study classes. Perhaps the most enjoyable moments in teaching were being a part of and watching the growth within the students.

“A stranger is a friend you haven’t met yet,” as her husband always said. This philosophy is great to live by, always meeting new people that could change your life. She defines important characteristics of a friend as someone you feel comfortable around, can converse both by sharing and listening, and most importantly a two-sided
relationship. A friendship should be grounded in trust, acceptance, and of course, fun. When making friends, be approachable and peel the onion slowly as the foundation of friendship is developed. Friendship doesn’t mean you need to talk all the time, just never forget them and reach out occasionally to stay in touch and reinforce that you are always there for one another.

In life, as challenging as it can be, it is essential to learn how to say no, especially when you have a heart like hers. Be a person that helps others but don’t let others walk all over you. You do have the right to say no. Love in life allows you to welcome and empower others by sharing that love. Another reason why every choice you make in life is important. Choose the people, environments, occupation, and etcetera to help you develop and maintain that love.

Before I could learn the story of how her and her husband came to be, I had to learn and understand the importance of not rushing into a relationship and taking time to find someone that would lead to the empowerment of each other. Age is just a number and does not determine the amount of happiness or success you will get out of life. She says to find the person that you love being with and inspires a healthy relationship. Heading to attend the American Personnel and Guidance conference in San Francisco, Mary boarded a train. On this journey, she met Bob and was able to talk with him on the way there. However, throughout the conference they did not see much of each other but for some reason, which some may call fate, they both ended up on the same train leaving the conference one day early. Just to add more coincidence, her seat just happened to be one row in front of him and his friend.

About a year later, he called her to see if she would be attending the conference that year and that they should go to dinner. After the conference, they wrote letters back and forth as they lived quite a distance away from each other. Through all odds, they married with her being twenty-seven and him forty-one. The choice of who to spend the rest of your life with is so big and they made a great choice. The death of a loved one can seem unbearable, but before Bob passed away thirty-four years later, he ensured that she had a life of her own. He was looking out for her and wanted to safeguard that she would have a great support system to help her through. They loved to entertain and especially enjoyed the talk that occurred afterward.

Her stories have shaped her into the kind and loving person she is today. She has been such an inspiration to me. She is always working towards meeting new people and continually helping others. Building relationships and choosing the people in your life help define who you are. Her biggest passions in life are helping others and making a difference. The person that has been able to influence my life so greatly in such a short amount of time is Mary Franken.

Mary Franken, Western Home Communities Senior
Melanie McGill, UNI Human Relations Senior
An Empty ‘Fridge’

Joan Baumgartner grew up in the country. Her parents were not wealthy, but her life was never lacking love and family time. Joan attended a small elementary school with about 15 or 16 kids in her class. In the evenings and weekends, she had chores to do; feeding the chickens, while her sister fetched the water. Inside, they would dust the house, wash the dishes, vacuum the floors, and keep their rooms clean. She has a younger brother and an older sister. She has always been very involved in Church, and is still a Lutheran. Growing up, she considered her parents somewhat strict, but always very loving.

As a young woman, Joan became a cosmetologist. She went to work styling hair, living with a friend who worked in the same salon as Joan. These two, on their own for the first time, decided to live it up. They went out almost every night. They would find a man to buy them drinks, sometimes two. They would have a blast, and both girls enjoyed their life.

One day, Joan’s parents came to visit. When her parents arrived at the girls’ apartment, they opened the refrigerator, expecting to see food, milk, etc. However, the only thing in the fridge was 2 six-packs of beer, and some cigarettes. Oh, what her parents must have felt, opening their daughter’s refrigerator! However, instead of judging her, lecturing her, or otherwise shaming her for her choices, Joan’s parents took the girls grocery shopping. They showed their unending love and acceptance for their daughter through their actions, by fixing the lack of food, rather than berating her for any misdeeds they may have thought she committed.

Later, Joan would grow up and out of this lifestyle, but always remembered her parents’ acceptance of her. Reflecting on Joan’s story, I cannot imagine what would have happened if my parents had visited and saw my ‘fridge in this state, but I can only hope that they would react in such a forgiving and accepting way as Joan’s parents did. Throughout my time with Joan, she has always been very thankful for her parents, and I hope that as I grow and mature, I will stay thankful for my parents.

Joan Baumgartner, Western Home Communities Senior
Lillian Meyer, UNI Human Relations Senior

French Toast

I knew from the first day I met Marty that I would enjoy getting to spend time with her weekly. She is a very wise, faithful, strong and compassionate woman. Marty and I have been meeting once a week for the past ten weeks. As we discussed several different topics over the last several weeks a common topic that frequently came up was relationships with friends and family and memories that we shared with one another.

During every visit, the two things that I loved to hear Marty talk about were her marriage with Dale and her family. They were married for fifty-seven years and had three children, nine grandchildren and two great grandchildren. She has several wonderful
memories of them together. One of her favorite memories with Dale was while they were at their home in Windcove.

Marty is an early riser, unlike Dale who liked to sleep a little later than her. She always got up in the morning to go walking while Dale would sleep in. Marty would get up in the morning to have her quiet time and then she would go on a walk and by the time she got back Dale would be up and ready for breakfast. They would eat breakfast together every morning which is one of the things that Marty really misses. Every morning at breakfast they would sit and visit for a long time. Dale kept up with what was going on in the world. He was very wise, and they always talked about various subjects.

One morning when Marty was walking she noticed that there was a post-it note on the outside of their door and it said French toast on it. After she finished walking she came into the room and found that Dale had stuck another post-it note on the cabinet. This one also had the words French toast on it. Someone really wanted French toast for breakfast. Dale was in the other room on the computer, so Marty went in and said “Hey, I was thinking about breakfast, what do you think about having French toast today?” Dale thought it was a great idea to have French toast for breakfast. This is just one of Marty’s favorite memories with Dale that they had over their fifty-seven wonderful years together.

Through our conversations about memories of family and friends I have realized that family and friends are a very big part of both our lives. I have learned not to take for granted the time you get to spend with family and the memories that you share with them. Family is the best and most important gift in our lives and it is important to embrace the time every day that you get to share a memory with them. I have enjoyed every moment of the wonderful memories that we have shared with one another and I hope one day to have as much wisdom as Marty has shared with me.

Marty Halupnik, Western Home Communities Senior
Allison Miller, UNI Human Relations Senior

A Trip Worth Taking

Over the course of this semester I have had the wonderful opportunity of talking to Nancie Handorf and hearing her stories. She has told me so many awesome stories about her life, family, faith, and friends. It was difficult to choose just one story to write about, since there were so many that I found interesting! I decided to choose one of my favorite stories that was brought up when we talked about taking risks.

Though Nancie resides in Iowa now, that is not the only place she has lived. She is originally from the west coast. Oregon is where Nancie grew up and went to college. After college, Nancie lived and traveled many places. The move I specifically want to share today was one that occurred shortly after college.

Shortly after graduating with a degree in Elementary Education from Oregon State University when she was 22 years old, Nancie made a big change. She wouldn’t consider herself as being a big risk taker though. Nancie decided to start teaching in Japan on a military base just two years into her teaching career when she was 24! Though that seems like a big risk to go somewhere new like Japan, it just seemed like the right
next step for her. While in Japan she lived in a small shack with one window that overlooked the rice fields. Most all of her friends lived in the same type of house or on the military base. Nancie also climbed Mt. Fuji during her time in Japan.

Nancie taught in an elementary classrooms on a military base when she was there. During her time in Japan she ended up meeting Jim Handorf, the man who she would soon marry. Jim also taught at the military base. Jim served in the military with Nancie’s assistant principal years earlier. He was convinced by him to apply to teach overseas. They were introduced at the assistant principal’s barbecue. Nancie and a couple of her friends had been invited to talk about a recent trip that they had taken. They hit it off from there, and were married just 8 months later in Japan.

Since the ceremony was in Japan and none of her family could make it, Nancie was given away by the man that introduced them, the assistant principal of the school. At the start of her third year of teaching, Nancie got some big news, she was pregnant with her first child. She stopped teaching a month before her daughter was born. The next teaching year they were off, Jim had made a request to transfer and they made the move to Germany.

Most of the amazing things that happened to Nancie in her life she has accounted to her faith. Going to Japan and meeting her husband was all a part of God’s plan for her. Nancie knows that God always has a reason for everything, the amazing opportunities, the hardships, and the fun things she has experienced. Though many people would have considered the move to Japan as a big risk, she thought of it as a part of His grand plan for her. Anything that was thrown at her could be solved with the help of her faith in God. Even today she knows that it is all a part of God’s grand plan.

Although I started off a little nervous to meet Nancie, it was an awesome experience. I got to hear so many of her wonderful stories and learned so much about her and her life. Having this experience has really made me realize that it is our relationships and stories that make us who we are. The best thing we can do is share our stories for other people to connect and relate to. I hope to continue to meet people half as wonderful as Nancie in the future!

Nancie Handorf, Western Home Communities Senior

Taylor Niewohner, UNI Human Relations Senior

Love by Divine Guidance

Growing up during the great depression can create a lasting impact on a person, yet it is how you take your experience and view the world after. Al gained a view of the world with a positive outlook and a faith still strong to today. Through the depression, his family was not rich, but growing up on the farm he never felt poor as his needs were always provided by his parents and his faith.

Al found his faith in God during the early years of his life. He rarely ever missed church and Sunday school as it was a way to strengthen his faith as well as to socialize. As a child, Al was bashful and never really saw others except on the Saturdays he wasn’t helping his dad and headed into town. Sunday school acted as a way to socialize and meet others. Clinton, a boy in Sunday school, became friends with Al and they would sit
together at church. One day in church sitting with Clinton, Clinton’s sister came up and sat with them. Al knew her through Sunday school but had not spoken with her often until that point. Al and Bess, Clinton’s sister, quickly became acquainted with one another and thus a friendship began together through God and Faith.

Although Al and Bess stayed friends, they still continued along different paths, but something kept bringing them back together and they began a relationship together. In 1952, Al and Bess began their life together shortly before Al had his draft orders for the Korean War, but God must of had other plans because the day Al arrived into South Korea, the war had reached a ceasefire with the Korean Armistice Agreement. This provided Al the opportunity to head to Japan to expand his education with courses in engineering. Returned to the United States, Al and Bess could begin their life together.

Al truly believes God was working in his life and provided divine guidance through the sixty five years of love Al and Bess showed one another. Through the ups and the downs that life can throw, divine guidance was there to ensure life never disappoints as long as you learn from those experiences. Although doors may appear shut, Al viewed it as a message from God as “just wait” and divine guidance brought them to a happier place. Today, life can have its tough day but he still thanks God for his divine guidance, those who came into his life, and for the life he was given.

Al Tapper, Western Community Home Senior
Bradley O’Connell, UNI Human Relations Senior

Coming Home

The University of Northern Iowa is a special place to many of us. It is where we have spent several years of our lives, bettering ourselves and our educations, while making lifelong memories. As for Jim Peterson, it is where most of the memories of his life take place. When you think of Sabin Hall, the College Hill, the McCollum Science Hall, or the Curris Business building, I’m sure you know what it looks like today or maybe have some memories of your time that you’ve spent there. Jim has memories of all of those places too, although according to Jim, his memories are much different than what we have now.

Jim attended “Lab School,” in what is now called Sabin Hall. This is where he began his education as a kindergarten student and continued his elementary schooling here until he was in 7th grade. He remembers college students helping in some of his classrooms, or sometimes just observing the teacher. The kids would play outside on a swing set, where the McCollum Science Hall now stands. There was also a pond on campus, right where the Curris Business building is. Jim and other kids would ice skate there and then go into a power plant where his father worked to change their shoes and warm up. During this time, Jim’s family lived in a small house on the college hill. He was a paperboy and would deliver papers in the morning and evenings to make some money. At age 12, Jim’s family moved to the country so his dad could do share crop farming. He attended a one room school house there in Blackhawk County, where he was the oldest student. His job was to walk to the nearest farm every morning and get water for the day. In the winters, he was in charge of starting the stove so that the schoolhouse would stay
warm. Since one room school houses have only one teacher, he pretty much taught himself due to him being the oldest. Sometimes he would even help teach the other five students who were younger than him too. Jim then attended Denver High School, where there were about 80 people in the entire school. To give you an idea of the size of the school, Jim describes the superintendent of that school as a “one man show,” because the man did everything. He was the principal, the coach, taught civics, history, woodworking, and more. Jim enjoyed participating in the athletics part of school, playing baseball and basketball. Jim moved from Denver to New Hartford his junior year, where he met another farm boy named George that was very much like himself. George shared his books with Jim because Jim did not have books himself. From then they became friends for life.

Jim joined the Navy when the Korean War broke out in 1950, and spent time on the island of Guam. He served in the Korean War for some time before returning to Cedar Falls with his wife, where he went to the Iowa State Teacher’s College and earned a degree in teaching. Jim taught in Nashua for a while before changing careers to work as a data processing manager which is now called Information Technology. Jim and his wife Ruth continued to work and raise their family. Ruth was a third grade teacher at Irving Elementary. Jim remained friends with George, and they both raised their families together so their children were friends as well.

Once Jim retired he spent 10 years volunteering for Meals on Wheels. He delivered meals to those around Cedar Falls who weren’t well enough to get out of their homes. He enjoyed doing it because not only did he get to help people, but he was most likely the one person they got to see in a day. He said that he would do his best to give them a smile or a laugh and then move on to the next person. Jim also volunteered doing income taxes for people for free. He did that for about 19 years. He also enjoyed doing this because it relieved the financial burden and stress off of people that taxes create. Now that Jim and Ruth have retired, they enjoy watching their children’s families grow. He has four children, twelve grandchildren, and fifteen great-grandchildren. Jim is very active in watching the UNI Panthers. He and his wife attend most home football, basketball, and volleyball games.

Jim thinks of himself as very blessed with the family he has, and during this time I have gotten to know him, I believe he is very right. I am lucky enough to call Jim a friend, and have been blessed to get to know Jim’s story.

Jim Peterson, Western Home Communities Senior
Hayden Owens, UNI Human Relations Senior

Mutual Trust and Support

Who is your closest friend? Why do you consider them your friend? Jean is someone who has been blessed with friendship throughout the years. According to her, having a friend means having someone who will listen and not judge. She also stated that having the same faith is important, but it is okay if they do not. However, it is important to have common interests so you have activities to do and talk about. In different stages of life, special people stood out to her and became her closest friends. Each one taught
her something new and helped her to become the wonderful person she is today. In this short story, I will share with you the love, compassion, and life that Jean shared with her closest friends and how they were a part of making the wonderful women, I am grateful to know, Jean.

In the first stage of her life, Jean found she was a great student when it came to school. She loved to study and was proud of the work she did. School gave her many opportunities in life such as learning new information, going to college, and meeting new people. One of these people she met was in grade school where she attended a one room school house. There was a little girl, named Helen, who was as cute as could be and she always had nice clothes. Jean felt bad for this young lady because her mom had recently died and she felt as though she needed a friend. Through this, it shows that Jean grew up with compassion and love for people and it shows through her stories.

Outside of the classroom there were two other people that hold a special place in Jean’s heart. These people were her next-door neighbors Helen and Ruth. They were a lot older than Jean but always made the time to involve her in what they were doing. Together, they would go hiking, go to community parties, and even 4-H. One of the girls, Ruth, was her leader who Jean looked up to for everything. She admired all the service she did which is how Jean got into doing service. She saw how much she could change the lives of others and she wanted to be a part of that. This is a big reason as to why Jean loved to volunteer in the community which included being a grandma in a special education class, working with her church, being a guide for a museum, and reading to an elementary class.

Even though Jean had many friends as she was growing up, one person holds a special place in her heart and who will forever be her best friend, her husband, Pete. Jean met her husband when she was attending Luther College. She was friends with his sister who actually introduced them to each other. Her husband was older than her due to the fact that he was in the war before coming back to school. He was someone that was extremely kind and loving to those around him.

When Pete became a preacher, she became the preacher’s wife. Through this transition, he taught her how to step out of her comfort zone and be less shy. According to Jean, this turned out to be a blessing. She met many people through him and being able to be the preacher’s wife. Jean loved him because of how he respected and loved her. He never once yelled at her, even if she yelled at him. He would be the one there to calm her down. When talking with her, she couldn’t even state all the reasons she admired him because there were too many reasons. Her husband gave her a lot of things in life that she is extremely happy about; a loving family, great kids, and a wonderful life together.

Having a friend means so much more to me than it used to. Talking with Jean, I realized that a friend should be someone who influences you and leaves a mark on your life. Jean has lived an amazing life and I have loved the opportunity to get to meet with her and hear her stories. The meaning of friends is this, “Friends: a state of mutual trust and support between allies.” I know for a fact that I did not only learn about friends, but gained one within these past ten weeks. Jean, you have meant more to me than you probably know and I hope I have been good company. Your stories will stay with me forever. Thank you!

Jean Swiggum, Western Home Community Senior
Aftin Phyfe, UNI Human Relations Senior
From a very young age, Betty Goettsch was taught to value education. Her father, an employee of a railroad company, was only able to attend school through the fourth grade. From the very beginning, he had high expectations of all his children and was determined that each of them would graduate from college. Betty explained to me that the area in Texas in which she grew up had multiple school districts, some better than others. The better school districts belonged to more expensive neighborhoods and it was her father’s mission to be able to send his children to the best school district he possibly could. Each time he received a promotion he would move his family to a home they could afford in a better school district. Betty moved multiple times as she was going through school.

When her older brother decided to attend medical school, her father once again packed up the family for a move, but this time to another state. He heard Kansas’s residents could send their children to college at a price their family could afford and knew this was the best thing to do for his son and family. After graduating high school, Betty attended college in Kansas as well and planned to go to medical school until hardship found its’ way into her life. Betty had been seeing a young man who had strong feelings for her. Before heading off to fight in World War II, he asked her to marry him and she agreed. Betty received word her loved one had gone missing and was presumed dead. The grief she experienced following the news caused her to take a 180-degree turn in her life. Her grades began to slip and she realized that medical school wasn’t the best fit for her. She happened to come across a poster advertising an aeronautical engineering program for women. She took a chance, signed up, and was assigned to study at Iowa State University.

Betty was one of 100 women in a condensed aeronautical engineering program at ISU. The purpose of the program was to educate women in order to fill the void left by male engineers going off to war. The women studied 40 hours a week and completed a program in just ten short months (the regular program takes two and a half years to complete). While studying at ISU, Betty met a man named Al and they hit it off pretty well. Al was in the military and was gone quite a bit, but made it a point to see Betty on his leaves. Within ten months of meeting, the two were married. They then began their family and had three children. Betty was a housewife and mother until her children were all in school. She then returned to ISU and minored in chemistry, zoology, physics, and education, creating her own degree.

Betty then went on to teach for 29 years. She made it a goal to try to encourage others, especially her female students, to get involved in the sciences. She knew most of her students wouldn’t share the same love for science as she did, so she tried to make the information she taught applicable to her student’s lives. Betty said she particularly enjoyed the relationships she formed with students and helping them to develop their skills and abilities.

After listening to Betty tell me of some of her experiences, I have come to realize that education has been the backbone to her life. Her father instilled a love of learning that Betty continues to experience to this day. She says she never wants to sit still and would prefer to be learning something new or challenging herself. She also likes to
challenge others in her daily life. As stated in an article she shared with me, she feels “a strong desire to make a difference beyond” herself. She wants “to be a healer, a support, an encourager, someone who lives to make an improvement for others.”

Betty also expressed to me that she is not sure how effective she has been in this endeavor thus far. I can tell you she has become a great friend and support to me in the short time I have been able to get to know her and I am sure all of those who have met her before me feel the same way.

Betty Goettsch, Western Home Communities Senior
Cassidy Riden, UNI Human Relations Senior

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What Matters Most

Many people talk about the time when you grow older; you slow down, and you do less. For Sue LeQuatte, age is irrelevant. From the beginning, Sue has been active in various activities and jobs. Slowing down was never on the radar for Sue and it doesn’t look like it will be anytime soon. If you learn anything from her is that the best thing about growing older is getting clear about what matters and what doesn’t matter.

As the years have gone by, it seems that there are several things that have become clear of what matters to Sue. Throughout Sue’s high school career, it became evident that her work ethic and her own financial support was an important part of her life. By working those years, Sue was able to attend college which led her to several secretarial jobs. Although there were a few years that Sue took off from work, she kept her determination of her work ethic. Today, Sue stays active in several organizations which keep her very active and busy.

Not only is Sue a member of these organizations, but she also takes on several leadership roles. Through these roles, Sue stays very occupied by implementing her secretarial experiences and knowledge into her organizational work. Compared to her high school and college years; Sue is even more involved and engaged now than before. By keeping herself involved with Daughters of the American Revolution and Catholic Daughters of the Americas, it is clear that this active lifestyle is very important to her. Not only do these roles play a large part of Sue’s life, the most evident importance in her life, is her family.

Sue and her late husband, Rick were blessed with two daughters, Dawn and Teresa. As anyone should know, raising two children and being a loving wife takes time, a hard work ethic, and organization; all parts of what Sue has learned over the years from her secretarial career to her leadership roles. Even with her hectic schedule, Sue is still able to make time for her now grown daughters and five grandchildren. Sue is also able to make time to spend with her friends through lunch dates or road trips. It is very evident in the time Sue spends with her family and friends how important they are to her life.

Although it may not seem out of the norm to have family, friends, and work be at the realm of importance in someone’s life, but it definitely shaped Sue to be the person she is today. She does not let time or age get in the way of spending time with those or things she finds important in her life. And this is definitely no small feat.
Growing older for Sue did not slow her down or make her do less; instead Sue found the things she sought to be important and strives to keep them a priority in her life today. You will learn many things from Sue’s experiences, but the most important might be not taking time for granted and be clear on life’s most important matters.

Sue LeQuatte, Western Home Communities Senior
Katy Ruth, UNI Human Relations Senior

Planning for the Unexpected

Imagine a job where you can never plan for what might happen the following day. Immediately our minds start coming up with fitting professions: doctors, lawyers, police, etc. What about teachers? The unknown can be extremely tricky to plan for, but one teacher taught me that it is about handling the situation with care. This thoughtful, caring teacher’s name is Mrs. Pat Taylor. Mrs. Taylor has taught at a variety of different schools, but there was one school where everything seemed to fall into place: Orange Elementary School in Waterloo, IA. This is where Mrs. Taylor taught third through fifth grade Special Education. She loved every aspect of teaching: going to specials, walking through the hallways, teaching science, and most of all making connections with her students. With being a great teacher, comes moments where not everything goes as planned.

One day, Mrs. Taylor’s class was beginning their normal spelling routine: she would write a word on the board and the students would follow a four step process. The steps included: looking, reading, saying, and repeating the words. The students would do this for each word of from their spelling list. Just after the students had completed the first step, one student's hand shot up in the air. Mrs. Taylor recognized that a student had a question and called on her. The girl stated, “Mrs. Taylor, you misspelled the word vacuum!” Next, Mrs. Taylor looked at the word and realized it was spelled wrong.

Mrs. Taylor could have handled this situation two ways, but she chose to handle it in a positive manner. She told the student that she was proud that the she caught her mistake. Afterall, even teachers make mistakes sometimes. In this situation, Mrs. Taylor revealed that teachers are humans who sometimes make mistakes too. A hostile teacher would have handled this situation differently—scolding the student for interrupting. Mrs. Taylor handled the situation with care, which is what all teachers should do when the unexpected occurs in their classroom. Students must know that before the content, the teacher’s first priority is caring for their students.

When walking around town, Mrs. Taylor still sees her students every once in awhile. It is not uncommon for her students to run up to her at HyVee. Why do students still greet her with excitement? Mrs. Taylor was a teacher who truly cared, and was not afraid to let her students know that she is human too.

Pat Taylor, Western Home Communities Senior
Bridget Tharp, UNI Human Relations Senior
Ultimate Level of Trust

Trust is quite the complex concept. You can trust people with your secrets, with your children, or with their overall judgment on particular subjects; this is merely something we all grow to know as we mature throughout our lives. Dan Krause on the other hand once chose to trust an absolute stranger with something rather valuable, this something being his very life.

Dan was a typical twenty-one-year old male, born and raised in good ole Wisconsin. He had grown up on his family’s farm with his siblings and parents, going to school, doing chores, and of course huddling around the television for the weekly Packers game. His life was ‘simple’ as one might say; however, one day he soon found his life in a rather obscene situation.

Dan had decided to come home from college one weekend. After his visit he needed to get back to Madison for school. He planned his trip from Green Bay to Madison, bought his bus ticket, and was anxious to get the show on the road. Unlike any other plan someone has when it comes to traveling, things were not going as he had hoped. Dan found out that his bus was running late, which meant there would be a fairly large delay in his arrival back at school. This, added to the general anxiety that comes from taking the bus, merely got Dan’s pot boiling that was until he was greeted by a man; he was an average looking guy who looked as if he had had a rough night. This very assumption was later proven to be true. The man introduced himself and proceeded to ask Dan where he was headed. When Dan said Madison, the man’s face brightened. Without hesitation the man proposed an idea; he asked Dan to drive his own personal car, along with him, to Milwaukee. He explained that he needed to get there, but he was in no condition to drive and was seeking a helping hand. Dan was rather thrown off by such a request; Milwaukee was indeed on the way to Madison from Green Bay, but he had already purchased his bus ticket. He explained this to the man, and then more or less declined the offer. The man then struck him with yet another surprising suggestion; he offered to also pay for Dan’s bus ticket from Milwaukee to Madison. This threw Dan off all the more; how could he say no to such an offer? Of course there was the fact that this was a man he had never met before, but on the other hand, driving a car would put him in Madison sooner than the bus would and it would probably be a smoother ride. Dan had to make a decision, to trust this man or to not trust this stranger.

After no time at all, Dan and this man began their trip from Green Bay to Milwaukee. The car ride was silent for the most part, a few small talk conversations took place, and the man did his fair share of resting. Dan thought he was in the clear. That was until the man pulled out a metal tool that he had had underneath the passenger seat of his car. The tool was roughly a foot and a half long, solid metal, and could certainly do someone some damage. Dan grew frightened. What was this tool in the car for? Why was he bringing it to his attention? Who was this man? Despite these thoughts and questions that were quickly consuming his mind, Dan remained calm. The man then merely proceeded to tell him that it was a tool used for his line of work and that he had found it easiest to just leave it in the car.

When they arrived in Milwaukee the man dropped Dan off at the bus station, bought him the ticket to get the rest of the way to Madison, and said goodbye. Looking
back Dan said that he could not believe that nothing more had come from that car ride, or that he had agreed to such a thing in the first place. Beyond that he also said he would never do such a thing ever again! Trust is a complex concept, and sometimes we find it in people for no particular reason.

Dan Krause, Western Home Communities Senior
Makayla Walters, UNI Human Relations Student

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Never Too Late

Tick… Tock…. Tick…. Tock. Does time seem to be running out and you still do not have a teaching job? Does it seem like you will not find that dream job you have always wanted? No need to worry, head over to Windgrace apartments to find Jo Grover, the perfect person to talk to. She has many stories to tell you about starting her career at age 48. It was not always easy, but well worth it in the end. Her calling maybe not in teaching, but in Department of Human Services (DHS).

Jo Grover for most of her early adulthood, was a stay at home mom and had various part time jobs. Once her children were older and almost all out of high school, she set out to find a full time job. Looking for a job at 48 and with no college degree, is certainly not the norm, but that did not stop Jo from going out and finding a job. She was determined to find a job that she loved and sure enough, she did. She applied at DHS.

When time came for Jo to have her first interview with DHS, it didn’t go as she expected. They turned her down for the job. Still determined, she got a second interview with DHS and was turned down again. Third time was the charm. Jo had finally gotten the job at DHS. While working at DHS, Jo worked in many different areas. She began working as an income maintenance worker for adult programs. She also did SSI food stamps, which she did financial eligibility reviews for people annually. She assisted people get the help that they needed and was always fortunate to be on the side of the desk providing assistance. Later she did nursing home and elderly waivers eligibility for Black Hawk County. One of her greatest accomplishments at DHS was receiving the Employee of the Month from the State of Iowa in 1994 for her work of getting the elderly wavier program up and running.

After Jo’s full time career and learning lots about helping people in need, she retired at age 84 from the NEI3A Agency of Aging. Jo has learned many lessons from her time at DHS and other jobs. She learned a lot about people, and in “almost any career you will learn about people, their life, and who they are.” She took away from her experiences in life and in her job to never let life get boring, always find something that makes you happy, and never stop looking for what you want. Jo Grover has taught me over the short 10 weeks that, “It’s never too late to get the job and you do not have to get the perfect job.
right after college.” She now loves giving advice and sharing her experiences with people in the building. No matter how difficult a task might seem, Jo Grover is willing to help people out. Since retiring, Jo loves putting together puzzles, spending time with her cat, Boots, and sending time with her neighbors, family, and friends. Her career has helped shape her into the person she is today and who she will be in the future. Thank you, Jo, for shining your light wherever you go, what you have done, and still are doing today.

Jo Grover, Western Home Communities Senior
Anna Zeller, UNI Human Relations Senior

What Makes You Happy

This semester I got to spend a lot of time with Bev and I have really enjoyed getting to know her. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that we have a lot of things in common. We are interested in many of the same things and have the same ideas and views on a lot of topics.

Bev grew up on a typical family farm. When she wasn’t at school she helped her mom with the housework like cooking, cleaning, and sewing while her brothers helped her dad outside. She describes her childhood as pretty normal during that time.

But the first thing that comes to mind when I think about my conversations with Bev is her interest in sports, especially college football. She has always enjoyed football. Growing up, she would spend many fall afternoons watching the games with her dad and brothers. Her interest in football has stuck with her throughout the years and followed her to the many different places she has called home.

There are three college teams that Bev cheers for: Nebraska, Minnesota, and of course the UNI Panthers. Bev’s love for UNI began when she was a student here. Her interest in the panther football team has grown even stronger since she graduated years ago. Bev then lived in Omaha for a while which is where she became a fan of the Nebraska football team. She also lived in Minneapolis and grew a love for the Minnesota Gopher football team.

Bev still attends almost every home football game at the UNI-Dome and watches all of the away games on TV. Some of my favorite conversations with Bev began with her complaining about how some of the fans she sat by at the last game didn’t understand football. She always talks about how you should know how football works and when to cheer/when to stay quiet if you go to a game. This is something we agree on and laugh about together.

Aside from football, two things I admire most about Bev is her determination and her passion for volunteering. Bev acquired a hearing loss when she was younger. She said that many people doubted her, but she used that as motivation to work hard. She proved everyone wrong and became very successful in her life accomplishments. Bev is also very focused on volunteering and giving back to the community. She likes to keep herself busy and there is no better way to do that than by helping others. Most of her days are spent going from one volunteer opportunity to another which is something she truly enjoys.
Bev is a special person and I have learned so much about her this semester. I am grateful to have been able to meet with her, and I still look forward to talking to her after every football game. I never would have thought that we would end up having so much in common, but we do, and I am very grateful we got the chance to share this experience together.

Bev Fish, Western Home Communities Senior
Mallory Adams, UNI Human Relations Senior

Moving to Hell

Graduation, marriage and moving are all normal transitions in life, but it can be quite hectic when they all happen at the same time. Barb highly anticipated her interview for an open position in East Los Angeles schools. Her fiancé, Larry, drove her from Cedar Falls to Chicago for the interview and celebrated with her when she received the job. On their special wedding day, Larry and Barb were married and ready to start their life together.

Barb, having been born and raised a faithful Iowan, felt anxious about moving across the country. However, since Larry was accepted into art school in Los Angeles, she was excited for their adventure filled with newness. Together, they packed up a small U-Haul with a few meager belongings, strapped it to Blue Gerty, their 1968 Chevy, and trekked across the country. The journey did not start well, as Barb quickly learned that any slight jerk of the wheel sent the entire U-Haul into a swivel. For the safety of newlyweds, Larry did most of the driving that trip.

Their laborious journey was soon coming to an end as they travelled up the San Bernardino Mountains. But, as the car reached the top of the hill overlooking the valley containing Los Angeles, all they could see was thick smog engulfing the city, illuminated by the vibrant red rays of the sunset. With a look of terror and feeling of hopelessness, Barb turned to Larry and whispered, “We are moving to hell.”

The newly married couple found a furnished apartment and filled it with their small amount of belongings from home, hoping to bring the Iowa feel to Los Angeles. As Larry began art school, Barb began her teaching job in the Barrio as a long-term substitute in second grade. The teacher who Barb subbed for took an 8-week European vacation at the beginning of the school and left the room a mess. The students in her class were quite difficult for a first-year teacher. There were students who only spoke Spanish and Barb only spoke English. Reading was very difficult to teach, but Barb began to communicate with students using nursery rhymes and expressive gestures.

Barb was very blessed, amid the trials of this transition, to have the support of her husband, encouraging co-workers and helpful principal. As she reflects back on her unimaginable experience from the first few months of living in Los Angeles, she learned
a lot about teaching to a diverse group of students and that in order to teach well, she had to accommodate for all of the individual differences of her students. Barb learned so much about different cultures from her students and coworkers and these experiences molded her into the teacher, mother and grandmother she is today.

“Barb”, Western Home Communities Senior
Natalie Bantz, UNI Human Relations Senior

Serendipity of a Lifetime

Many people find their true love in various ways. Some become high school sweethearts, finding true love at a young age. Others find “the one” locking eyes with each other from across the room at group gatherings. Larry found his special someone in a very unique way that no one would have seen coming. Larry likes to label it as a “happy accident” when he tells others about the day he and his wife met.

This serendipity love story all started in the bottom floor basement of Hagemann Hall at the University of Northern Iowa. Barb, Larry’s future wife, resided in Cat House of Hagemann Hall. Her house was hosting a mixer in the basement and had invited Carpenter House, a male house from Rider Hall. It just so happened that Larry lived in Carpenter House that year. Larry and others from the house accepted the invitation and went over to Hagemann Hall.

During the mixer, Larry decided to just sit on the side with his buddies from his house. He wasn’t much of a dancer and didn’t like to be sociable. He called himself a “stranger” to this sort of thing. During the mixer, there was a song that came on that was designated as a Sadie Hawkins style of dance. The girls had to go ask the guys to dance for this certain song. Larry didn’t know that his life was going to change for the betterment of things after this song.

For this particular song, Barb came up to the row of guys where Larry was sitting. Barb had initially decided that she was going to ask Greg to dance, whom she thought was cute. Larry happened to be sitting next to Greg when Barb was approaching him. As Barb was about to ask Greg to dance, Greg turned to one of his friends to tell him something. Since Greg was occupied talking to Scott, Barb decided to ask Larry to dance. Larry couldn’t believe that anyone would ask him to dance. As Barb and Larry went on to the dance floor, they made eye contact and started to dance. After the dance had ended, the two decided to dance a second dance together. Larry, in a personal way, asked Barb, “You seem down about something.” After this second dance, Larry and Barb decided to walk to the Commons to the snack bar.
From that moment forward, a connection was established into what it would become today. Larry and Barb started to talk to each other for hours on end over the local phone line in the residence halls. Then they started going to movies together. Larry said he never thought anything like this would happen to him. It was timing, bad on Greg’s and good for Larry’s, which ended up benefiting him for the rest of his life.

Thank you for sharing a defining moment in your life. You never know when you might meet someone that ends up being important to you. We should all be open to new adventures and take opportunities to meet others when we are given them.

“Larry”, Western Home Communities Senior
Ross Barclay, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Finding the Good in All

Jo Ackman is a woman of many adventures and is full of lots of advice. She was born in 1929 during the Great Depression. At the age of 12, WWII started in 1941. She grew up with three sisters and had rations for everything (food, gas). She never had a store bought dress until she was two years old. Living in this world has made her a better person inside and out. It has also made her appreciate life and become compassionate, loving, and understanding. She grew up with not having much, but she chose to work hard and live life to its fullest. Since she lived on a farm, she couldn’t go to town much and participate in any extracurricular activities or join friends for fun.

Jo was a wife, mother, homemaker, teacher and much more. She has always been appreciative of life and all the tasks God throws at her. Even at some of the hardest times in Jo’s life she kept her faith. Jo’s son became sick when he was two days old. His lips started to turn blue and that’s when they knew something wasn’t right. Jo and her husband took him to the hospital where they then put him in the intensive care unit (ICU) in Cedar Rapids. He was in the ICU for six weeks. Jo and Don would drive back and forth but could only go see him a couple times a week. They couldn’t hold or touch him, and it was so hard for them to see their son so sick. After weeks of being patient and praying for him to get better, Jo and Don admitted that if God really wanted him to be an angel right now then that was his plan. Jo and Don let God take over and let him decide if their son was going to become an angel or start to get better. He was in his hands now, they couldn’t do anything more than pray that God would make the best decision for their son.

Jo and Don would get a call every Friday at 5 o’clock from their son’s doctor. One particular Friday their Doctor had fantastic news to share about their son. Magically, he was starting to get better than he had ever been. Life was looking up for the Ackman’s, they knew that all things are possible if you leave your life in God’s hands. The Ackman’s found out that their son had a staph infection from a nurse when he was delivered at the hospital. The nurse didn’t know she was a carrier. He became very healthy and got to come home and grew up living life to his fullest.

Jo faced many hard times in life and always kept a positive, caring attitude and always kept her faith. Jo’s husband had Alzheimer’s. Every day she took care of him and valued each day with him. Family means everything to her, she would do anything for
her family and friends. Every day she adjusted her day to take care of her husband. She told small white lies to make his days better. One of her hardships is death, she now realizes that you shouldn’t be afraid of death. She isn’t afraid of death because she has lived her life for so long and has learned so much from it. If God wants her to be with her than it will happen. Her compassion, love and understanding is what makes her life worth living.

No matter what life throws at Jo Ackman, she is a strong independent women that stays true to her faith and always finds the good in people and life. She does little things like opening up her home to future Western Homes Community members and baking cookies for new people moving in her neighborhood as a welcoming gesture. Every week she gets together with her friends and doesn’t brag about her friends. She sits and listens. She tries not to be judgmental and finds the good in all people even when not making good decisions. Jo is one person I aspire to be like, for her compassion, love, and gratitude for life. For anyone who’s met Jo, she’s one of the most grateful, life touching people I’ve ever met or encountered.

Jo Ackman, Western Home Communities Senior
Lexie Bieber, UNI Human Relations Senior

Look for the Rainbow

There are a few, precise moments in our lives that are defining moments and influence how the rest of our days will unfold. We can pinpoint these moments and are aware of the changes they caused in our lives. Throughout my weekly meetings with Marcia Hansen, I have gained insight on these defining moments and how we can choose to let them affect us. For Marcia, a defining moment in her life was when her first husband, Sam, passed away. This news came to her completely unexpected and out of the blue. She shared with me that suddenly it felt as though all of the lights went out and she wanted to crawl in the casket alongside him.

For a while, she didn’t want to participate in anything; these were some of her deepest lows. An unexpected blessing came to Marcia in the sky one day. As she stepped outside of her house, she saw a rainbow. There had been no thunderstorm or even rain, yet there was a beautiful rainbow overhead. Marcia instantly knew this rainbow was meant for her. She realized that there is hope and she needed to be strong to get through the tough times in order to reach the rainbow. It took about six months before she decided enough was enough, she was ready to rise to the occasion and jump back into life. This moment could have ended differently, but she chose to be strong for her children and continue on. Two and a half years later, Marcia found the second love of her life, Vern. With this, she shared some valuable information with me: there is not just one person for us, we are capable of loving a lot of different people and it is just about the timing. She remains happily married to this day and feels very fortunate to have had two happy marriages in her lifetime.

Throughout these defining moments in her life, Marcia has realized that everyone has a story. She realized we never know what someone is going through and by helping them or simply giving them a smile, we will never realize how much of an impact we can have on them and in this way, we can help contribute to society. She believes we should
be kind to one another. If we get to know people first, we may realize how kind they are and we shouldn’t judge them by their looks. Marcia has always been interested in people. She is outgoing and loves to entertain. After her husband’s death, she developed a fondness for widows because she can empathize with them and understands what they have gone through. She enjoys spending time with widows and helping them feel accepted and loved in the community. She particularly looks for widows who may not have a large support system and then she offers them her time and ears for listening. She wants to be there for those who need it. Making everyone feel welcome and having genuine interactions with people are what Marcia strives for. She is always on the go and involves herself in many activities throughout the community. Moving to the Western Home Communities was the perfect decision for her and Vern because she can continue to surround herself amongst friends, spreading her light. One warm-hearted thing Marcia does to help people feel welcome is by giving them muffins. She has baked and brought 90 muffins to one of the living communities an incredible 26 times! She personally delivers a muffin to each resident and shares a few words with them. This is not something she feels obligated to do, she takes this upon herself and cherishes the relationships she forms.

Marcia has shared so much valuable information with me this semester and for this, I will be forever grateful. Her charming, compassionate, and upbeat spirit has touched so many people, and now I can luckily say I am one of them. Through Marcia, I have learned that there will be lows in my lifetime. They will be extremely trying and I will feel as if I can’t continue on. But it is in these moments I will make a decision that will affect my life. I can wallow in my misery and choose to let the situation consume me, or I can take the time I need and search for the rainbow. It will take time, but life will come back and the sun will shine again. By surrounding ourselves with people and getting to know them, this will help bring light into our lives. The key to happiness is to search for the positive in situations, put our worries to the side, and form healthy, strong relationships with those we encounter.

Marcia Hansen, Western Home Communities Senior
Kelly Carstens, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Spouse is Best Friend

Kevin and Betty Cayton were both born in August of 1957. They have been married since April of 1980. They have been raised three daughters and continue to live happily together in Vinton, Iowa. They started their family at the young age of 18 when they had their first daughter. Then, they took a break and had their final daughter when they were a little more seasoned at the age of 37. Growing up Kevin and Betty did not know each other, but they shared many similar experiences.

In her childhood Betty recalls working hard to help support her family, taking care of her younger brothers, and moving around a lot. Things did not come easily to her. She remembers having what they needed but nothing more; there was never any extras. They had the things they needed, which wasn’t always the things they wanted. Betty knew when she started a family of her own, she wanted to be able to give them
everything they needed and some of the things they wanted. She didn’t want to raise her family the way she was raised.

Kevin’s younger years were similar to Betty’s. He also moved around a lot as a child. He also helped care for his younger siblings and tried his hardest to adjust to new homes and new schools. Kevin recalls that going out for sports helped him get along a little better with his peers, but he still felt like an outsider. Kevin knew as a child there was nothing he could do about moving around so he tried to accept the things he had no control over.

Because of how Kevin and Betty grew up when they started a family of their own, they knew they wanted to do it a little differently. Both disliked having to move as children so they decided they would not do that to their children and they would stay put in Vinton. At least until all of their children had finished school. Growing up and moving around made it hard for both of them to make and maintain friendships. They both talked about feeling like outcasts, like they didn’t really fit in. That was until they met each other.

Kevin and Betty were interviewed separately for S.T.O.R.I.E. Time so that they would have their own words and answer questions based on their own memories. Both of them answered their friendship question in the same way. When asked, “What do you admire most about your closest friend?” They both talked about how friendships were hard to come by, but Kevin then replied, “My closest and best friend is my wife and I admire how strong willed she is and loving at the same time. My wife lets me be me.” Betty said the same about him, more specifically she said, “My closest friend is my husband, he is someone I can turn to in good times and bad and I can let my true feelings show and know that he is there to listen to everything I have to say. He has always let me be me.”

Kevin and Betty Cayton, Cedar Valley Seniors
Hannah Cayton, UNI Human Relation Senior

Death of a Snowman

Sometimes it is the smallest instances that can have a lasting impact on our lives and who we become. This story is an account of one of these instances. I’m sure that young Elaine had no idea at the time the lesson she would learn from a small snowman she built in her front yard.

It was a snow day. Every kid’s favorite kind of day; waking up early and your parents bundle you up in snow gear so much that you can barely move. It was an overcast and cold morning in November. Elaine was outside playing in the snow alone at her ranch home in the west side of the Black Hills, Wyoming. She was around 8 years old, so she was ecstatic about being outside because when you’re young, you don’t notice the cold quite so much. Elaine did what any child playing in the snow would; she built a snowman.

Elaine was just about the only girl in the neighborhood. She had two neighbor boys in particular that were good at teasing her and getting on her nerves. One of the boys was older than her, the other a little younger than Elaine was. On this particular day, the two boys had the exact same idea as she did and were playing outside in their front yard.
As per usual, the neighbor boys decided to wander over to Elaine’s yard to see what she was up to. They were teasing her and pushing her and eventually this snowballed into an argument. Of course the boys saw the nice snowman that Elaine had built and decided this was a good way to enforce their point. Elaine watched in despair as they began kicking her snowman down. After all of her work getting that snowman built, Elaine was mad. Mad enough to end up scrapping with the younger neighbor boy. Needless to say, it did not end very well for Elaine.

Elaine went back to her house, her morale low and crying, not to mention soaked in snow, wet, and cold. Taking notice of the poor state of his daughter, Elaine’s father decides it is time to teach her about how to defend herself. After the tears had dried and Elaine had some time to compose herself, she went back outside to finish the argument.

That day, Elaine learned how to stand up for herself; not necessarily just physically, but also just to hold her own. Since then Elaine has been independent and tough and has always known how to stand up for herself. Even today, the lesson she learned on that snowy day helps her through any situation that might try to tear her down. One little snowman had a bigger effect on Elaine than she ever anticipated.

Elaine Logue, Western Home Communities Senior
Tessa Cohen, UNI Human Relations Senior

The Turning Point

Ken and Carol Cox are two people who have really made an impact on my life. I tell you this only eight short weeks after first making their acquaintance. Faith plays an integral part in each of their lives, and this is apparent not only through their words, but their actions as well. They recently told me a story that illustrates this point quite well.

It was a Sunday morning. Carol, being a devout Catholic woman, was getting ready for church. Their oldest son Jim was three at the time and he would go along with his mother each week. Once they would arrive at the church, Jim was dropped off for Sunday School. He very much enjoyed this.

However, this day was different. Jim was reluctant to go with Carol. When she asked him why, he replied, “Well, Daddy doesn’t go, so I don’t want to go either!” Carol didn’t know what to say.

You see, Ken was raised Presbyterian and identified with that denomination for most of his life. Up until college, he was a regular church-goer but when the two got married, Ken did not join the Catholic faith. Carol, being the supportive wife she is, was not opposed to his decision. However, Ken did not go to church with his wife and son.

Now back to the story. Jim was adamant about staying home from Sunday School. Carol was obviously shocked. Their son had never refused to go to church before so that was no plan of action. Then Ken stepped into the room. He walked over, looked at his wife and his son, and plainly said, “Get dressed. We are all going.”

The two of them told me that there has never been a time in their marriage when they felt their relationship was strained. That being said, Carol let me know how supported she felt by Ken after this had happened. For them, it helps to be on the same
When Ken had told his family that he was going with them to church, they never again heard a complaint from their son about going to church. Jim is now a devoted Christian, just like his parents. He has since instilled his beliefs and morals in his own family. Ken and Carol couldn’t be more proud.

Realizing how important my faith is to me, I am inspired by how Ken and Carol have lived their lives and raised their children. They have given back so much of their time to those less fortunate that I cannot help but ask myself, “What can I do to make a difference?” Since I first met them, they have made it clear to me how important their faith is. I am truly inspired by these two extraordinary people. I sincerely hope that they are able to touch the lives of countless others.

Ken and Carol Cox, Western Home Communities Seniors
Andy Cutler, UNI Human Relations Senior

**Life Full of Adventure**

Donna Brown is not a person you will find sitting around too often because she doesn’t like to slow down. She has continued her passion of staying active and helping others the best she can. When it comes to life experiences, Donna can tell you she’s had a wonderful, dream of a life. She puts her happiness forward to give to others and make a difference for those who don’t have as much happiness in their lives. Being involved with others isn’t hard when you have an active lifestyle like Donna.

From staying physically fit to using her extra time to volunteer, she is making many connections with the various people within her everyday life. She connects with the school children she helps in the JOB foundation, which helps ensure the financial success of children. To fellow church members who volunteer in the community, and of course her good friends and neighbors at the Western Home Communities. Donna also enjoys spending of her free time with nature, being adventurous. Donna said, “It’s so thrilling to get out of your comfort zone sometimes.” Occasionally, Donna even intertwines her volunteering with her physically active side.

Donna and her husband, Gary, were leaders for 7 times with The Explorer Scouts to the boundary waters. At the most northern spot of Minnesota, splitting the United States from Canada. The boundary waters are a vast network of waterways for canoeing, camping, and fishing. The trip removes people from the busy society and allows people to explore and simply enjoy nature’s beauty. In the summertime around July and August, they would drive off with the groups of high schoolers to the push off point, Moose Lake then set out on their adventure.

This was really a ‘roughing it up’ experience as they were only given 2 days of fresh food for themselves. Their trip included canoeing almost all day every day to go 25 to 30 miles in, then come back to their starting point. After each lake, they would carry
the canoe and packs from one to another. At night they would stop and make camp and
sleep within the wilderness. They even had one encounter with a bear, who decided to
come into the camp sites to check out their packs. Although everything is put away up
high in the trees to keep bears out of it, they woke up and found this bear, engineering her
way to get to their packs with bread and cool aid. She didn’t stay too long at this camp
before visiting another camp making the bang, bang, bang be heard from nearby. One of
the high school campers even tried throwing a rock at the big bear, actually hitting it right
in the nose.

Sometimes when you’re out in the wilderness, you need to get creative with how
you do daily activities. One of Donna’s ideas didn’t work out as well for herself though.
Between each lake when they had to carrying the canoes, it was tough to also carry the
large Duluth pack on your pack. Donna and Gary split the jobs up and she decided that
instead of doing two trips with the packs she would just do one. She put one pack on her
front and another on her back to even both out. The outcome wasn’t exactly what she
planned for. This didn’t work out the best for her when she lost her balance on her hike
and ended up on her back stuck from moving anywhere. Since she was already in the
lead, she had to lay and wait for another person.

Even to this day this memory is shared, known as the turtle on her back as
someone took a picture to remember, and it is sure that Donna won’t forget it either.
Some of the most memorable experiences that a person can have can be from the
adventures they take and the ideas they try. Thanks for sharing your life full of adventure.

Donna Brown, Western Home Communities Senior
Hannah Finn, UNI Human Relations Senior

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An Evolving Mindset

During my first visit with Jim and Karin Lubker, I realized that my future visits
were going to consist of a lot more than just small talk; they were going to be full of life
lessons and advice. Jim and Karin are among the most genuinely kind and humane people
I’ve ever had the privilege of getting to know. With so many unique life experiences and
stories to tell, they are the type of people you want to sit and listen to all day. I’ve never
really taken the time to sit down with anyone on a weekly basis to discuss such thought-
provoking topics. I definitely never thought that I could learn so much about someone in
such a short period of time.

Although I am coming out of this experience with an evolving mindset full of new
ways to think about different aspects of life, the piece of advice that has resonated with
me the most is actually quite simple. It could easily be overlooked and forgotten about.
During our visits, Jim told me stories about many different people who played major
roles in his life. These people ranged from friends, to employers, to family members. By
the way he talked about them, I could tell that these people really were important to him
throughout his life. The stories he told me painted a picture of how these people have
influenced different experiences in his life and his decisions.

When sharing with me about the people who made huge impacts on his life, he
gave me one piece of advice that he said he wished he would have thought about earlier
in his life. He told me, “If there is anyone who has made a big impact in your life, you should tell them and thank them for it before it’s too late.” We often take people and situations for granted, but we all need to take the time to stop and be grateful for those who have helped us and made us into who we are. Others may have no idea about the gratitude we feel for them unless we express it. We shouldn’t wait years before we finally do so.

Stop and think about the people who have taken the time to help you when they didn’t have to, have given you opportunities you may have never had without them, and people who were there for you when you needed them most. Whether the last time you talked to them was this morning, or if it was ten years ago, reach out to them. Let them know how big of a role they played in your life and that you are grateful for them. Not only will it make them feel good, but it will make you feel better too.

Jim and Karin Lubker, Western Home Communities Seniors
Taylor Haberl, UNI Human Relations Senior

World of Opportunities

From China to Canada and everywhere in between, Joyce Hufferd has had many experiences worldwide that most people can only dream about. From walking along The Great Wall to lighting a candle in a Greek Orthodox Church, she owes much of her life experience to those from traveling.

Joyce grew up in the small western Iowa town of Glidden. When she first informed me that she was from there, I had no idea where to even begin to guess where it was. Iowa is full of small farm towns, and Glidden, Iowa is just that; a small farm community. When Joyce was growing up, she remained friends with relatively the same people, considering her graduating class only had 32 people in it. Something she liked about growing up in such a small community was that everyone got along. Of course, typically there are different social groups within the school, but for the most part, Joyce couldn’t recall much drama. She liked that she could just be herself. She considers her strong work ethic to come from growing up on a farm and having farm chores. Joyce would help with the gardening and animals, which helped her develop what she identified as “mid-western work ethic”. This means that she learned quickly that work comes before play.

As Joyce grew into her late teens, she attended college at Iowa State University and then one semester at UNI. She met her husband, Phil, whom attended Iowa State University and received a bachelor’s degree in agriculture and a master’s of agriculture at UNI. Due to his job, Joyce and Phil received various opportunities to travel worldwide. She has been to 15 countries (some multiple times), including many parts of the USA, Ukraine, Netherlands, China, Wales, Russia, Scotland, Mexico, Hungary, Estonia, Belgium, England, Austria, Canada, and more cities in Germany than there are to remember.

One of the stories she remembers well is the first time she flew internationally by herself. Now, keep in mind that this is before we had internet or cell phones. Joyce’s husband, Phil, asked her to meet him in the Netherlands while he was there for work.
They had it all planned out: her plane landed after his, and he would meet her at the McDonald’s in the airport. But of course, nothing typically goes as planned. As she arrived at the airport in the Netherlands, she came to find out that her plane was early, and his had been delayed. She then realized that there were multiple McDonald’s in the airport. How was she ever going to find Phil? She didn’t know the hotel they were staying at, and didn’t have any numbers to call. They generally travel together, so doing this alone was a bit scary. As she waited for Phil’s plane to land from Africa, she became anxious. However, when she began to see open bags of potatoes rolling around on the luggage belt and women in traditional African dress, she knew she would see him soon. After a while, she remembers Phil walking in without a care in the world. This is just how she remembers her late husband too; carefree and down to earth.

To this day, Joyce still enjoys traveling, but typically sticks around parts of the United States. In our time together, she has had 3 trips: one to Michigan, one to Pennsylvania, and is getting ready to head to Nashville in a few weeks. She also belongs to an international organization called PEO, which gives aid to women with a gap in their education and helps them go back to school. She also showed me that they are making cloth diapers out of old t-shirts through this organization as well. Hearing Joyce’s experiences across the US and internationally makes my travel bug even more eager as time goes on. Sometimes traveling to new places can be scary, but keeping in mind one of my favorite things Joyce has said to me, “you can either fear it, or go for it”.

Joyce Hufferd, Western Home Communities Senior
Mackenzie Haight, UNI Human Relations Senior

We like People

Rita Congdon spends her days participating in the Lion’s Club, reading to students at Lincoln Elementary, performing imitations at local events, and most famously, playing the role of Mrs. Claus. Her and her husband, Rich, barely spend time at home; their days are filled each day, especially around the holidays. Instead of sitting at home, they are very active in their community – and they are proud of it! With Rita having an extroverted personality, she is always meeting new people and enjoying time with the others.

From the moment Rita and her husband moved into their neighborhood at the Western Home Community, they were instantly getting out to know their neighbors. The couple would plan events for the neighborhood, only expecting a few people to show up. Instead, over 80 people were in their backyard by the end of the night. Monthly, even weekly events take place throughout their neighborhood, usually planned by Rita and her husband.

Rita’s life now is more spontaneous than it has ever been. If a neighbor asks her to come over for salsa and margaritas in ten minutes, she’ll be there. If she wants to order a pizza, she’ll invite a couple of residents to come over and enjoy it with her. She was never this spontaneous and spur-of-the-moment as she is now, and she embraces it. She loves getting out of her comfort zone and enjoying time with people who make her happy. Rich and Rita have many friends, and instead of being jealous or judgmental of
their talents, they support and embrace their talents. “I don’t have time to be jealous” is a quote the couple said that hit me hard and will pop into my head whenever I get jealous tendencies.

The “East Side Social Club” is the name Rich and Rita gave to their part of the neighborhood. With a name, comes a newsletter. Rita and Rich thought starting a neighborhood newsletter would help inform and connect the residents of the community. Every month, a new newsletter gets sent to the residents in their neighborhood. The newsletter contains information, events, and anything else exciting happening in the community. This is a way for their neighborhood to get to know each other even better than they already do.

Rita’s positive personality will stick with me forever. She is always happy, always looking at the glass half-full - I admire this about her. I will be going into the profession she was in for most of her life: teaching. This profession may be hard, but it will be very rewarding, as I have heard from Rita. I am looking forward to my future, and I will always try to have a positive outlook on everything, thanks to Rita Congdon.

Rita Congdon, Western Home Communities Senior
Emily Heckroth, UNI Human Relations Senior

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My Friend Sam

I have had the pleasure of getting to know Margaret Shay this semester, and each week we talk for an hour or more about anything and everything. She makes me some cookies and we talk over a nice cup of coffee and have gotten to know each other quite well. One day I was visiting with Margaret and we were discussing stories, and I asked her what story she would like me to write about to put in the story time book. She thought for a while and then told me a story that was simple, yet had many valuable lessons. I am going to share a story about friendship and that our differences do not define us.

Margaret, her husband, and her 2-year-old son moved to Cedar Falls in 1965 from western Iowa. Her husband Lee worked down at the lumber yard, and she stayed at home with their son. As they were settling into their new home, Margaret found a project she would like to do. She wanted to make a sandbox for her son to play in. Margaret got a large tire to be the base of the sandbox, and then her husband Lee was going to send someone over to fill in the sandbox. Everything seemed to be working out just swimmingly!

One day a man stopped over to fill in the sandbox for their family. Margaret was at home with her son when a man, who was African American, stepped out of the truck. She was a bit worried that her young son with blonde hair and blue eyes, would say something that might upset this man, because he had never seen someone with a different skin color than him. However, this did not seem the case, and Margaret learned a valuable lesson from her young son that day. The boy ran out to watch this man scoop piles of sand to help make him a new sandbox! Margaret watched from the window as her son and this man who had nothing in common stood there and worked together as if they had known each other for years. She loved watching them run back and forth filling
the sandbox together, her son with a small shovel helping this man with the big scoop. He did not notice any differences between himself and this man. The young boy would only see him as “my friend Sam!”

Margaret still holds this memory in her heart, and I believe that we can all learn a lesson from her son. We live in a world made up of differences, and a lot of time they tear us apart. Instead of judging those we meet by how they look or where they come from, we can get to know them and know that our differences are what makes us unique and special. Lastly, when we learn to look past our differences and are kind to one another, a beautiful friendship can blossom in the most unforeseen places!

Margaret Shay, Western Home Communities Senior
Kenedy Heimerdinger, UNI Human Relations Senior

Lifelong Learner

Mike Seavey’s lifelong determination to learn about new technology, skills, and hobbies can still be seen today. Throughout his life, Mike has utilized technology and computers in not only inventive ways but fun artistic ways as well. Mike’s many talents and skills really demonstrate what we all strive to become, a lifelong learner. I had the distinct pleasure of meeting Mike and sharing part of his story.

Growing up in the Waterloo area, Mike first became interested in the world of technology through the efforts of his fourth grade teacher. His teacher introduced him to sci-fi comics and he soon became an avid reader. Another teacher realized Mike’s interest in mathematics and gave him some Math books to read. Mike soon became enthralled with the ever growing world of technology and math and purchased many science magazines including Scientific American. Computers were something that Mike read about in high school and always interested him. In high school Mike joined science club where he had the opportunity to visit Chamberlain Manufacturing, where he got to play around with one of their new computers. Sparked by his newfound interest in technology and computers, Mike started inventing things himself. At age sixteen Mike designed and programmed his first simple computer which could play a mean game of tic-tac-toe using paper envelopes. Mike also joined photography club and continued photography in college. Even from an early age Mike pursued his passions and avidly created and learned about new technology.

Mike attended UNI on scholarship and studied what really interested him. Originally a math and physics major, Mike’s curiosity with computers led him to take a couple computer science classes where he familiarized himself with programming languages like Fortran. As a prank Mike designed his own computer programs and coding with errors in them to try to puzzle his professors. After he graduated and worked for a few years a Chamberlain Manufacturing, Mike eventually made his way to John Deere. Mike brought with him some factory simulations that he had played around with in class and even though he was a physics major, Deere offered him a job right away. Even though engineering was not originally in Mike’s skillset, he decided to take the risk and accept the job. At Deere, Mike learned to work in new situations and areas that he was not originally familiar with. Mike learned that trying new things and making
mistakes is really “one of the best parts of life” and helps you immensely in the future. By collaborating with his peers and reading more and more about science and technology Mike continued doing what he loved and was successful at. He even utilized a computerized information inquiry system that helped speed up communication between different departments by basically functioning as an early form of email. Mike witnessed and embraced the ever increasing rise and integration of computer technology in the workplace and really emphasizes how, “computers turn data into knowledge.” Mike’s experimentation and interest in designing new things not only landed him a job at Deere, where he worked throughout his career, but demonstrated his ability to learn new things even if they may not be familiar.

As he got older, Mike’s passion for technology continued to grow. Mike’s interest in design not only helped him manage and succeed in his career, but he also had the opportunity to draw up the plans for the wellness center in downtown Cedar Falls. Mike’s creativity and ingenuity is visible today by his amazingly beautiful and intricate digital art that over time he has come to master and love. His passion for computers and technology has opened up a lot of avenues in his life and his will to always try new things and meet new people can still be seen today.

Mike’s interests go far beyond technology and computers including biking, cross country skiing, and music. He remains an active part of the community, including mentoring local students, and really embodies what a lifelong learner is meant to be. Mike’s generosity, dedication, and overall his amazing life story truly are something to not only be proud of, but look up to. His immense amount of knowledge and courage to experience new things has left a lasting impact on my life and made me examine my own life experiences and how I can continue to grow in what I love as a lifelong learner and educator. Thank you Mike for embracing your passions, trying new things, and doing what you love, you truly are a lifelong learner.

Mike Seavey, Western Home Communities Senior
H. Quinn Hostager, UNI Human Relations Senior

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The Right Choice

Mary Mortenson is a retired elementary teacher who loves being around children and people in general. Filled with lots of love and sweet things to say, Mary can light up any room with conversation. Her love of teaching and being generous to others led her to the man of her dreams, even when she did not know it would.

Mary had a fantastic father who led her to seek for high standards in a man. Being a beautiful young woman, Mary had many choices of men but only sought out the highest and best men. Her father was the kind of man who knew how to save his money but not be too strict. He loved having a big family and taught her to love a big family as well. Mary has always known her limits because her father instilled in her that she should always have limits and know how to stay within them. This has led her to live a happy and successful life.

After finishing college at Cornell University, Mary went on to teach in small town Clinton, Iowa. Here, she began to live in a small two bedroom house all by herself, knowing that her landlord may fill the spare room at any time. Mary was dating a “good
looking fella” and was very happy with the way her life was going. Soon, her landlord gave her notice that she had a young man who needed a place to rent and asked if it would be okay if they became roommates. Being the generous person Mary is, she said it was fine and allowed the stranger to move in. When she returned home, she met the man who was a 10/10. His name was Jim, he graduated from Iowa State in Forestry, was in the military, and he was new to town. Jim asked Mary to show him around town and tell him how things worked in town. Before they knew it, Jim and Mary were together all of the time and he eventually asked her, “Would you like to start going with me?” She of course informed him she was in a relationship but it did not take Mary much convincing to realize that Jim was the man for her. She broke up with her previous boyfriend and began her life with her true love.

Mary first took Jim home to meet her parents on Thanksgiving. Mary was hopeful that her parents would like him and she was right. Both her mother and her father thought he was a very nice and intelligent man. Mary’s parents approved of Jim and enjoyed that his morals and personality were very similar to her father. Mary then went home with Jim to Yankton, South Dakota for Christmas where she met his family. While she was a little uncomfortable with their outdoor latrine, she loved his family atmosphere. She was welcomed into their home and his family loved her. Things were going perfectly!

They were only dating a few months before he popped the question and they were married quickly after in Clinton, Iowa. When they wed, Mary was 25 and Jim was 27 and they had their two best friends, Herb and Julie, stand by their sides. Jim embodied Mary’s father in many ways such as his love for a big family, his display of affection, and his great money saving skills, giving her hope that the best decision she ever made was dating him. Together Mary and Jim began a beautiful family of 5 children, Steven, Jim Jr, Johnny, Linda, and Sarah. Their love grew over the years and they were unbelievably happy.

The love that Mary and Jim shared was a special and rare love that others can only dream of having. Because he was kind and loving and she was generous and accepting, they were able to create and maintain a family that embodies true love. Today Mary still thinks back and remembers their love for each other developing and how lucky she was. She made the right choice.

Marty Mortenson, Western Home Communities Senior
Savannah Jensen, UNI Human Relations Senior

First Date

Rich Congdon worked for his father at a printing press company. His father was the production manager for the back of the Printing shop. Rita’s mother was the secretary for Rich’s father at the company. Rita’s mother enjoyed having fun with others by doing pranks or teasing others. Rich would have fun doing the same back to her. They would go back and forth at each other while working together. Rita’s mother thought Rich was a nice, fun guy. One day she told Rita that she should ask Rich out. Rita wasn’t sure at first how she was going to ask him out because they had known of each other, but had never really talked much before. Her mother told her to ask Rich to go to their church hayride that weekend.
The day at school that Rita asked Rich, he had a practice to get to at noon that
day. He was on his way to his locker when Rita saw him walking. She left lunch early to
follow Rich to ask him to the church hayride. Rich took the middle stairway to go up
three flights of stairs. As he was going up the stairs, he could hear someone following
him up the stairs. When he got to the top of the stairs he started going down the hallway
then turned down another hallway towards his locker. All the while he could still tell
someone was following him. He finally got to his locker and was working on getting it
open when Rita came up to him and asked him if he’d like to go with her on the church
hayride that weekend. Rich was very surprised by this at the time and wasn’t quite sure
what she was asking, but said he would go with her. They had their first date on the
church hayride that weekend.

Rich and Rita were both sophomores in high school when they went on that
church hayride. They started talking more after that weekend and ended up going to
homecoming together shortly after. Seven years later they married and became Mr. and
Mrs. Congdon. Rich and Rita have been blessed with a long and wonderful marriage.
Today they live in the Windridge Community. They have come to realize where they live
now is the same area the farm that had the church hayride used to be. The same church
hayride they went on for their first date many years ago. As it has been said before,
everything comes around full circle. After years of dating and many years of marriage,
they find themselves back where it all began.

Rich Congdon, Western Home Communities Senior
Sam Lanam, UNI Human Relations Senior

A Lady to Admire

Colleen Liming is a lady of incredible generosity, love, and care for others.
Colleen was born on August 12, 1925, in the small town of Clemons, Iowa. She went to a
one-room schoolhouse until she was sixteen, and then she attended the Central Iowa
Business College in Marshalltown, Iowa. At this time, it was a big deal to go to college.
After college, Colleen had many successful jobs, such as working at a Manufacturing
firm in Marshalltown, Iowa, working at McGregor’s furniture store, and she was a
secretary for the president of Wartburg College. Colleen’s family is very important to
her. She has four children, six grandchildren, and she has thirteen great grandchildren.

When I first started meeting with Colleen, I was awe-struck with how much love
she has to give to others. She has volunteered for Habitat for Humanity and she has
knitted and crocheted over 1,000 baby hats and donated them to hospitals for mothers in
need. She has given all of her grandkids a hand-made quilt, and she gives away
everything she makes. Colleen has had such a profound impact on my life and she has
taught me to look at life from new perspectives.

In Colleen’s free time, she enjoys baking, and she is known for making her apple
dumplings and the candy, divinity. We have enjoyed baking together and trying new
recipes each time we meet! One day when we met up, Colleen told me about when she
and her husband were first married, and she was working at a furniture store. Colleen had
many different options of pieces to purchase and she told me the story about when they
moved into their first house. She said, “Things couldn’t be arranged well, so I cut the Davenport sofa in two because I wanted a sectional.” When her husband came home to the sofa cut in half, he was not mad, only surprised, but he agreed that her design taste was high-class!

During my time here at the University of Northern Iowa, Colleen’s wisdom and kindness will always stick with me. I loved hearing all of her funny and sweet stories, and her positivity is incredibly contagious. As I leave you with this story, I hope you find enjoyment in it.

I chose this story because it reminds me that life is too short, and to make every moment count. In the end, it’s not about what you have or what you’ve done. Instead, life is about making every second count and appreciating the beauty of what life has to offer.

Colleen Liming, Western Home Communities Senior
Kathryn Langenberg, UNI Human Relations Senior

Campus and Community

Phyllis Steele has many life connections to the University of Northern Iowa. She grew up in Cedar Falls, Iowa and had one sister. Her father worked on campus, so she came to know many people. She also spent a lot of time on campus through church and other opportunities, such as through school and her family. In addition, Phyllis volunteers in the community as well. Hearing Phyllis’ stories has made me think about how involved and connected she is with the campus and the Cedar Falls community.

Phyllis went to preschool in a building that was where the Rod Library currently stands. She went to a Kindergarten through 12th grade school that was in Sabin Hall (this was also the training school for teachers attending the university at the time). Phyllis experienced a lot of student teachers throughout her time at the Campus School. She also walked through campus to get to her school building, or when her class had gym. The boys went to the West Gym, and the girls went to gym in the East Gym; they all had to walk through campus during the day to get to their gym. When Phyllis was in high school, their proms were held in the Commons Ballroom.

Her father also worked for the university in the administration building, so she would often walk by her dad’s office. His office was in a building that was connected or near Gilchrest Hall at the time. She also knew many of the faculty on campus since her father worked with them, so there are many names that are familiar (even one that later had a building named after him).

Growing up, Phyllis and her family attended the College Hill Interdenominational Church that had services in what is now Lang Hall, in the large auditorium. There were always different pastors from different religions, so she got to experience a lot of different religions through this church. She always planned to convert to her future husband’s religion, so when she got married, she became Catholic. After church on Sundays as a child, there was always a Sunday dinner at the faculty dining room in the Commons building. Her family often attended the dinner.

With such strong ties to the Cedar Falls community and the University of Northern Iowa, when it was time to choose a college, Phyllis’ father highly encouraged
her not to attend UNI. He thought it would be good for her to get a new experience outside of this area, but still wanted her to attend a state college. This had also been the same case for her sister. Phyllis chose to attend the University of Iowa. This is where she would meet her husband and gained new experiences outside of Cedar Falls. After graduating, they eventually moved back to Cedar Falls, and when it was time for their kids to go to school, they wanted their kids to go to the Price Lab School on UNI’s campus.

Phyllis continues to be part of the University of Northern Iowa and Cedar Falls, she is at many home games for football and basketball games for men and women. She is very involved with the community as she helps to organize the Festival of Trees (she is the treasurer) and volunteers at the community theatre. I was fortunate to attend the Festival of Trees Fashion Show and Luncheon with Phyllis, and had a fantastic time! If you are at any of these events, then you will probably see Phyllis cheering on the Panthers or volunteering for her organizations!

Phyllis Steele, Western Home Communities Senior
Morgan McDowell, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Big Pine Tree Incident

In my first meeting with Phyllis Green, we talked about acceptance. We were talking about teachers that had an impact on our lives, and it reminded Phyllis of a story she wrote. I learned many things about Phyllis in this moment. One, Phyllis writes incredible stories about her life. Two, she was a passionate teacher. Three, she decided she wanted to become a teacher when she was only in second grade. This is my version of the story that Phyllis calls, “Bare Truth.”

Phyllis grew up during the Great Depression, so her family didn’t have a lot of money. Everyone was poor though, so Phyllis never really noticed. In 1934, Phyllis was attending Burr Oak Public School as a second grader. She was excited to wear her new Hoover Apron to school on one hot August day. The Hoover Apron, like many children’s clothing at this time, was made from a chicken feed sack. Phyllis’s Hoover Apron had blue flowers printed on it with matching blue tape to bind the arm holes. The Hoover Apron had no sleeves, no belts, and no fasteners. It wrapped around the body one and a half times, so two layers of fabric were in the front and one layer in the back. Underneath her Hoover Apron, Phyllis wore white bloomers, made out of sugar sacks. It was the perfect outfit for a hot day at school.

During the school day, all the kids got a break to go outside and play, while the teachers remained inside. Burr Oak didn’t have a playground, so the kids had to create their own games. One of the kids’ favorite things to do was to climb the big pine tree. It had a low branch with a ‘Y’ in it. All the kids took turns climbing onto the branch and swinging up and down through the ‘Y’ until they couldn’t hold on any longer. Then, they would drop to the ground, and the next kid would climb into the ‘Y.’

It was finally Phyllis’s turn to climb onto the branch and swing through the ‘Y.’ All the kids stood below her, waiting their turn, as she happily dropped through the ‘Y.’ Then, she realized her Hoover Apron got stuck on a little twig in the tree. Phyllis had
dropped to the ground, but her Hoover Apron was still swinging in the ‘Y’ of the big pine tree. Phyllis was standing in front of all of her classmates in just her white sugar sack bloomers. Practically naked and completely embarrassed, she ran to the outhouse to hide. Her sister, Kerry, was one of the bigger kids at school. Kerry kindly brought Phyllis’s Hoover Apron from the big pine tree to the outhouse. Even with her Hoover Apron back on, Phyllis was convinced she could never come out of the outhouse.

At this point, Phyllis’s teacher, Miss Loftsgaarden, had heard about the incident. She came to the outhouse to talk with Phyllis.

“Well, Phyllis, did everyone laugh at you?” she asked.

“Oh, yes,” Phyllis sobbed.

“Then they are done with that!” Miss Loftsgaarden firmly said, “Come with me.”

Miss Loftsgaarden took Phyllis’s little second-grade hand in her own strong hand and led her past all of the children to the schoolhouse. The confidence, understanding, love, compassion, strength, respect, and power flowed right through the teacher’s hand into Phyllis’s little body. The walk to the schoolhouse was a magical and pivotal moment for her. It was during that short walk that she decided to become a teacher.

Now eighty-three years later, Phyllis, a retired teacher, sat with me, an aspiring teacher, and told me of the first time she felt a sense of power. That August day in 1934 was the first time she knew she was supposed to become a teacher, so she could hopefully instill that confidence in another child someday. What impresses me is that as a teacher, Phyllis never thought about the impact she was making; she simply taught because she enjoyed it.

She also told me, “The things that you do in the time you do may not seem important, but later on, someone impacted by it may mention it.”

In case no one has “mentioned it” yet, Phyllis, you have impacted me with the incredible stories from your life, your kindness, and your encouragement for me to embrace who I am, be brave, and have confidence no matter the situation. For that, I thank you.

*Portions of this story are credited to the writing of Phyllis Green. Portions were adaptations and additions to her original writing, “Bare Truth.”

Phyllis Green, Western Home Communities Senior
Paige McGrath, UNI Human Relations Senior

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When Garnie Met Lorna

When Lorna was around sixteen years of age, she was walking into town like any other average day. As Lorna began her walk, humming to herself music she was learning in school, a man stopped beside her on the road, in a car with his friend. As he stopped Lorna looked at him with sparkling eyes. She had never seen a man like this before; he was tall, dark, and handsome! The man smiled kindly at her and asked for her name. Lorna was too busy admiring his good looks, so she didn’t actually hear him the first time. He asked her again and she replied, “Lorna.” The man smiled at her and said, “My name is Garnie.” The man then surprised Lorna and asked her out on a date for the
following week. She smiled and gladly accepted. As she walked into town, there was a little skip in her step.

When Lorna arrived home, she attended to her regular chores in the house, dusting, cleaning the bathrooms, and making sure her room was tidy. She received a call finally, and it was Garnie! He began to explain to her that he was actually already seeing another girl. Lorna’s heart fell into her toes with disappointment. Garnie didn’t’ want to go out with her anymore. Before she could hang up the phone, Garnie told her, “I am seeing this other girl, but I am way more interested in you.” Lorna smiled—she had a date. The first dates soon lead to more. Before the two young lovebirds knew it, they had been dating for almost 3 years! Garnie eventually worked up the courage to propose to Lorna, and the two got married while Lorna was finishing up high school.

Garnie and Lorna had a love that made her eyes sparkle when she talked about him. She always laughs when she tells stories about their younger years, and often of their travels they used to take. Together they created a family with beautiful children. They made more memories together as their family grew older. Garnie and Lorna knew they would grow old together, and have a love that is deep in roots, and strong in faith. As their hair grew white and gray, and their eyes crinkled at the corners, Lorna knew that Garnie was acting different. He didn’t seem to be himself anymore.

Dementia was something Lorna had never dealt with before this closely. She loved Garnie until his final day, after a stroke inevitably made his condition worsen. As I sit with Lorna now, someone who is about to embark on her own marriage and life together with one person, I’ve learned more than I could have ever imagined. Lorna loves her husband everyday she wakes up, and every day she goes to sleep. Garnie’s remains are resting peacefully near her in the tiny apartment she lives in. The same sparkle I imagined in her eyes at 16 years old still remains as she says his name. She often wondered if she would fall out of love with her husband after he died. A movie, *La La Land* brought her to tears at the theatre. There was Garnie on the screen, alive and well dancing through the movie as Ryan Gosling’s character portrayed a man who she has always loved.

Music and Art has always been something that has come naturally to Lorna. It’s fitting that the love of her husband could be reborn through this medium. Lorna has taught me that love is everlasting. Love is strong, and faith is stronger. Lorna knows with certainty Garnie is waiting for her among the heavens, and I do too.

Lorna Blohn, Western Home Communities Senior
Stephanie Nicholson, UNI Human Relations Senior

A Lifelong Learner

Throughout my time here at UNI, I have learned about the qualities that are necessary for a person to have in order to truly be a successful teacher. During my time at Windhaven, I have seen these qualities reflected in the friend I have come to know, Sharon Bowling.

From the moment I met Sharon, I could tell that she was genuine and caring, and I could not wait to sit down and learn more about her life. Growing up, Sharon was
blessed. She had loving and supportive parents who gave her the stability she needed to focus on her passion for learning. Her mother was a stay-at-home mom, who “spoiled” her for being the only girl in the family. However, as her passion for learning grew, she had to make a decision that her parents would not agree with. She wanted to continue her education and go to college, while her parents wanted her to focus on finding a husband.

Once Sharon was able to convince her parents that college was the right decision for her, they agreed that she should work towards a degree in business; however, she knew she was not going to be happy in this field. Instead, Sharon changed her career path in order to fulfill her two passions: working with children and learning. This career path required a lot of hard work and dedication. Sharon was behind many of her peers, and spent two summers taking classes in order to catch up. It was difficult for her to see her friends getting married and entering the work force, but in the end, she knew she had made the right choice for herself.

Once she began teaching, Sharon fell in love with her career choice. While many people struggle with the stress that comes from being a new teacher, Sharon embraced her job and exuded happiness, which she described as playing a major role in her positive classroom culture. Since she was happy at school, her students were also happy. Sharon knew how important her job was, and she worked to meet the needs of her students. Without teachers, students wouldn’t learn the skills and content necessary for them to become responsible members of society.

Even if we are both not having the best day, Sharon always manages to brighten my day whenever I see her, and I try my best to do the same for her! Sharon has spent her time helping guide me on my own path to becoming a teacher, and she is someone that I can confide in about my thoughts and troubles. We have shared many memories with each other about our families and friends, and I am so thankful that I have been given the opportunity to get to know such an amazing woman.

Sharon Bowling, Western Home Communities Senior
Mary Nietzel, UNI Human Relations Senior

Doris Crandall describes her life as “long and happy.” From the stories she has shared with me, that statement could not be truer. Doris was born on a farm in Franklin County on January 28th, 1929. Although she lived through The Great Depression, Doris does not remember ever having to go “without.” Because her family lived on a farm, they grew most of their own food and had plenty to eat. Doris knows now that given the circumstances during her early life, she was very lucky.

Doris attended school in Hansel, Iowa. During high school, she was introduced to the boyfriend of one of her close friends, Max. She had no idea what that first encounter with him would lead to. After high school graduation, Doris came to Cedar Falls to get a degree in education. During her sophomore year of college, she was asked on a date by her friend’s boyfriend (or so she thought). After clearing with her friend that they were no longer seeing each other, she decided to go through with the date. That date was the start of the rest of their lives together.
Max decided to pursue a degree at Upper Iowa after returning from the service. Since they did not have cell phones, Doris and Max’s only form of communication during the week was letter writing back and forth while only seeing each other on the weekends. Doris still has some of the letters she and Max shared with one another.

After a few years together, Doris and Max decided they wanted to get married. They had difficulty deciding on a date for the wedding. First, Doris thought she should wait until she had a year of teaching under her belt, then they thought that they should get married over Christmas. They finally decided on getting married Friday after Thanksgiving. Although she wasn’t, Doris’s mother thought because of the rush of a wedding Doris might be pregnant. The two were only ready to start their happy life together.

Doris describes her wedding as very simple, but wonderful. Doris and Max decided on the place of their honeymoon by choosing a town they had never been to within a short radius away from Cedar Falls. They found their destination to be Fort Dodge, Iowa. Since the two had no car of their own, they borrowed Max’s brother’s car to take on their honeymoon. Shortly down the road, they noticed a terrible smell and soon found out that someone had put limburger cheese on the radiator of the car. They spent the weekend in Fort Dodge washing and cleaning the car, going out for dinner, and then heading back home on Sunday so Doris could prepare for teaching the next day. Although it was a very short and simple honeymoon, it meant the world to the two of them, and they could not wait to spend the rest of their lives together. This Thanksgiving would be their 67th anniversary.

Throughout their lives, Doris and Max spent their time raising their children, traveling, skiing, and hosting other people in their home. They had four children, four grandchildren, and are awaiting their sixth great-grandchild. They met some wonderful people, and made some great memories. Doris’s advice to college-aged people is to travel and see the world, make time for yourself to enjoy life, and be your own person. I hope to live a life as fulfilling and adventurous as Doris has.

Doris Crandall, Western Home Communities Senior
Sydney Roberts, UNI Human Relations Senior

Trouble in Paradise

Mary Cooley has led quite an interesting and well-versed life. A native of Lake Mills, Wisconsin, she has spent a majority of her life in the state and in the Midwest. However, when she met her husband Jack, they married and decided to move down south to Florida. She and Jack set up their home in a beautiful beachside house which was a part of a lovely neighborhood just south of Daytona Beach. There were many wonderful neighbors and good times to be had: the sun usually brings out the best of people in this way. There were lemon and orange trees blossoming around the house, filling the area with a nice, tangy scent. Of course, the two didn’t come down to Florida alone; they brought their two beloved and fluffy poodles with them. Together, the four of them made a home and settled happily into their new sun-filled life. Even though she would eventually return to her home state, she still remembers happily these eight years down in
the sun. From these happy years comes a wonderful example of her strength of spirit, character, and caring nature.

However, that’s not to say that there weren’t any bumps in the road, as making a cross-country move isn’t easy by any means. Additionally, when there are a lot of people concentrated into one area, the potential for crime and other devious activity increases. Luckily for the couple, there wouldn’t be any dramatic crime stories to tell for ages to come. However, there were incidents that certainly wouldn’t be ideal in any situation.

One night, while out walking the poodles, there was a sound that began to draw Mary’s attention: the sounds of shouting. This of course was a noise quite uncharacteristic to their location, so she went to investigate. Once she arrived on the scene, she saw an older teenager, the one who lived next door, being picked on and taunted by his so-called friends. “A situation of extreme bullying,” Mary would recall. It was at this moment where she would choose to be a savior of sorts and defend the victim. She put herself between the two factions and tried her best to distance them, while simultaneously berating the guilty party on the error of their ways. This eventually broke up the potential fight, and she then turned her attentions to the younger kid and made sure that he was all right before sending him off home to finish his own nightly business.

Although this action may not have been earth-shattering in its scope, one can be sure that it certainly made a difference to at least one person. Whether or not her choices affected the teenagers is actually quite irrelevant, as what matters more is how it affected Mary herself. Since she had the courage to stand up for her beliefs and help someone in need, she then had the power to stand up for herself and put her faith in a cause much bigger than just herself. This is true strength, and it is one of the many qualities that Mrs. Cooley possesses. There are a myriad of other stories that can serve as examples for additional traits that describe her, however this one was true with its authenticity and message.

In short, Mary is someone who has used her positive influence as a teacher, a mother, a wife, and a friend to make a difference in more than one person’s life, and that is something that we can learn from and take to heart.

Mary Cooley, Western Home Communities Senior
Paula Schmidt, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Tough Old Bird

“You’re a tough old bird” Betty’s husband, Larry, would always say to her, his eyes twinkling and a grin on his face. Some people might not take this as a compliment, but Betty knew it was. In her 99 years, Betty has been through a lot, experiencing both some of the best and the hardest times that life can offer a person. These experiences and the people who have been with her throughout those times have shaped Betty into the “tough old bird” that she is today.

Betty had a happy childhood. She was the oldest of three girls and had parents who loved and cared for them very much. The only cloud in their lives was that her father was not well. When Betty was just 19 years old, she lost her father. She was very close to him, and his death truly turned her life around. With this new absence in their family,
Betty had to grow up quickly, helping to take care of her two younger sisters. She learned how to move forward with this hardship that life had dealt her with help and encouragement from Larry, who was by her side throughout these sad times.

Larry and Betty met when she was 16 years old. They were introduced by mutual friends and were quite the match, even though Betty was originally unimpressed with him! The two were married for 60 years and had two children, Roger and Paula. Complications came up with their daughter’s birth when she born prematurely and needed transfusions. Paula was born RH negative, and there was not as much knowledge about RH in blood as there is now. This made Paula’s birth scary, and Betty is thankful that her daughter was able to grow up healthy and strong.

Another hardship in their family came when Larry had a stroke. Betty’s job up to this point had been taking care of the children and keeping up around the house, but when Larry had his stroke she found herself having to take care of things like finances as well. She suddenly had a lot more on her plate and on her mind, as there was always the chance of Larry having another stroke. Together they weathered this storm and did beautifully, with Betty growing into the “tough old bird” that she now is.

Larry lived for 25 more years after his stroke and he and Betty had a nearly perfect marriage, the kind that we all dream of having. They took wonderful road trips and made true friendships while they split their time between their Arizona house and Iowa house throughout those last years together.

Betty knew that she was blessed to have those 25 years with Larry after his stroke, but that did not make her new life without him any easier. When he passed away she lost the first love of her life, but she was able to find love again. Larry and Betty had a good friendship with another couple, Marita and Wayne, throughout their life. Marita dealt with a sickness that she ended up passing away from and after her and Larry’s deaths, Betty and Wayne were left alone. Still being close friends, it felt like Wayne took care of Betty for Larry, and Betty took care of Wayne for Marita.

Betty and Wayne came to love each other and were married for five and a half years before he then passed away too. While this left Betty without a husband, she was not without a family that loved her. Her daughter, Paula, encouraged her to move up to Cedar Falls where she would be closer to family and has been part of the Western Home Communities ever since.

At 99 years of age, Betty has experienced both some of the best and the hardest times that life can offer a person. While I have talked of many of the hardships that she has endured and those things could have gotten her down in life, she never let those things stop her from living her life to the fullest and enjoying it. She told me “You can’t be a tough old bird if you haven’t gone through difficulties. You have to learn to cope with those difficulties”, and I could not agree more. Betty would not be the positive, inspiring person that she is today without having learned to cope with the hardships that life gives us. I am truly thankful for the time that I have been able to spend with her, and someday I hope to be a “tough old bird” too.

Betty Newport, Western Home Communities Senior
Erica Schultz, UNI Human Relations Senior
Around the World

Bruce McCart is a man of many stories, from growing up in the outskirts of Omaha, Nebraska to traveling the world. Bruce has lived an adventurous life, and has no signs of slowing down.

As a boy living on the edge of Omaha he had many adventures with his friends and family. Yet, Bruce’s younger days weren't all fun and games. He spent his summers helping his entrepreneur older brother in several business adventures. Bruce helped with it all, from concession stands to delivering ice cream. Imagine delivering ice cream in the dead heat of summer… without air conditioning! Bruce and his brother’s business adventures taught him many things, including the fastest way across Omaha when you have a trunk full of ice cream. He learned the importance of doing his best in all his work, and built himself a strong work ethic that would carry him many places.

After finishing high school Bruce was off, he attended Carleton College in Northfield, Minnesota. College led to some wonderful experiences for Bruce. While attending Carleton Bruce took part in some of the classic college traditions like the homecoming bonfire and taking part in some of the rivalry fueled events between Carleton and St. Olaf College. Bruce also was there for the now infamous Ytterboe events that received national new coverage. After attending a skiing trip during a winter break Bruce became a lucky man, he met and began dating Mariann (Pete) his future wife.

One year after they both finished their undergrads they were married and Bruce was off for graduate school. During his years in graduate school at Iowa State, Bruce experienced some struggles that came with growing up and becoming more independent. Luckily he had his wife beside him to help him through these struggles. As Bruce pursued a career in teaching physics at the collegiate level his wife pursued a career in faith becoming a pastor in the Presbyterian Church.

Bruce and his family settled in Rock Island, Illinois where they would begin to grow their family by having three daughters and adopting a son. Bruce began his career as a physics professor at Augustana College in Rock Island. As their family grew so did their dreams. Bruce and Pete shared a love for adventure and travel and they would share this love with their children and grandchildren.

Bruce has been around the world several times over. With his loving wife by his side Bruce and Pete have made it to five of the seven continents, hitting major countries and cities along the way. Form their exploring Egypt to building homes in Mexico Bruce became a world traveler over his life. Bruce and Pete have shared their adventures with the ones they love most to help foster the same passion for adventure and travel they have. From their cross country road trips as a young family to taking their grandchildren on international adventures around the world Bruce has created a love for travel and adventure in his family.

My time with Bruce has taught me many things and I would like to thank him again for sharing the story of his life with me. I have learned through his experiences as I am sure many others have in the past.

Bruce McCart, Western Home Communities Senior
Dylan Shaffer, UNI Human Relations Senior
Adventures of Esther

I have had the pleasure to be paired up with Esther Westendorf this semester. Although she is still so young, she has so many stories to share. I think I would have to meet with her every day for ten years to get her wealth of information and stories.

Esther was born on July 18, 1921 and grew up in Sumner, Iowa. She was born into the farm life and lived on the same farm for 73 years. She learned how to shuck corn, oats, and do many jobs around the farm. She also helped with all of the farm animals, such as cows, pigs, and chickens. Through working on the farm, Esther learned what it meant to be a hard worker and be able to persevere. However, whenever she milked the cows she made sure to give the hardest cows to the hired hand.

In the spring of 1935 her dad hired her favorite worker, Edwin Westendorf, who she ended up dating and getting engaged to. It didn’t take long for them to fall in love, and they were set to be married in January of 1941. To their dismay, on December 31st Edwin got drafted to World War II and didn’t return back to the United States for three more years. He finally got flown back to the states, and Esther almost went to Arkansas to visit him but he told her to lay low because he got word that he might get sent home. On July 13, 1945, on Edwin’s 27th birthday, he got the best birthday present; he got to return home to his beautiful fiancée. On September 1st that same year, Esther and Edwin finally got the wedding they had waited 3.5 years for.

Esther and Edwin stayed on the farm for the next 55 years. They were a team, working together on the farm and raising a beautiful family. Her family now includes her three children, Gary, Myrna, Glenda, 9 grandchildren, and many great grandchildren.

I am so lucky to have gotten to meet Esther. She has such a warm personality, and has always been willing to share all of her wonderful stories with me. There’s not a single story that I didn’t like, and every time I went to see her, I was excited to hear what she was going to tell me that day. At the beginning of this semester together, Esther told me how much she loves playing cards and one of her favorites is garbage. We said we would play cards together but every week when we meet, we always get so lost in talking and would forget to play cards!

Thank you Esther, for opening up each week about your life. I genuinely value your stories and our friendship, and I know that you are someone I will never forget.

Esther Westendorf, Western Home Communities Senior
Kristine Shaw, UNI Human Relations Senior

Hard work = Respect

Jim Doud is one of the hardest working men that I have had the pleasure of meeting. His hard work began at an early age and has continued on into his adult life. He has shared countless stories with me that it was hard to choose just one to talk about. Thinking back about all the stories we’ve shared, the main word that kept being brought up and repeated was respect.
Jim first talked about hard work when he was a young boy growing up with his family. The work he did at an early age were different odd jobs; such as shoveling snow, mowing lawn, taking out the garbage, cleaning bedrooms, and delivering newspapers. He specifically talked about his newspaper delivery job. He would deliver newspapers in the afternoon after school, while many of his friends would stay out and play at the local swimming pool.

It was tough for him to do sometimes because he would want to hang out with his friends, but he knew he had a responsibility for his job, whether he wanted to or not. Jim knew he would have to learn to deal with it and just roll with it because he knew he was working for himself and not anyone else. He had to do his job to collect money for his family and for himself. He was proud of himself because he had his own money he made from the paper route and he didn’t have to go to his mother and father to ask for money. Jim’s friends became jealous of him that he had a job earning his own money. Jim told his friends, if you wanted to have money, you have to earn it. His friends asked him if he could get them a job with a paper route. Jim said he could, but it would only be for a week or so during the summer if or when he went on vacation. Jim earned the respect of his parents and friends by showing that he worked hard at his own job for his own benefit.

Jim’s hard work transferred into his teenage years as well. He and his family moved from Marshalltown to Belle Plaine before the beginning of his junior year. Jim’s father took a new job at the Phillips 66 Bulk Plant and delivered oil. Jim noticed the family finances increased but he still wanted to earn his own money by mowing lawns, shoveling snow, and other odd jobs. He wanted to prove his hard work could earn him his own money. Making new friends at his new school was hard work as well. He said it was tough for him because he was the outsider coming in to a new environment when friendships were already established. At that time, it took a little while for his new classmates to accept him into their circle. Jim eventually earned their respect by showing his new classmates the same respect he wanted them to show him. It was during his final two years of high school where he would meet his future wife Janet.

Jim went on to both Coe College and Drake University to earn a degree in Elementary Education. Jim started out at Eagle Grove for 5 years and eventually became a principal of the 5th and 6th grade wing of the middle school. His official title was building administrator because he had to have 3 years minimum of teaching plus a master’s degree to become principal. He then became principal at Van Buren and Grant Wood Elementary in Cedar Rapids for 5 years and received his masters to officially become a principal. In 1965, Jim became the Elementary Principal at the Price Lab School for 17 years. Jim was also the head of the department at UNI of student teaching coordinators for 7 years. During his tenure at Price Lab and at UNI, Jim groomed many successful students and teachers into respecting one another, growing into their own responsibilities, and becoming quality teachers.

Jim then decided to take a position as head of the Educational Leadership department at the University of Florida. At first, Jim was hesitant to take this job offer. It took a lot of convincing from his wife, Janet, to accept this new job. Jim ended up accepting his new position and served at the University of Florida for 17 years. He described the college of education at Florida as more of a Publish or Parish College rather than a teaching university. The department taught students to be school administrators.
rather than teachers, which was a different department. Jim retired in 2007 and spent some time in Florida with his wife Janet before moving back to Cedar Falls this year and making their residence in the Prairie Winds Western Home Communities.

Jim Doud, Western Home Communities Senior
Trever Shores, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Lightning in February?

When Helen Newton was a brand new teacher, she got a job in the town of Arlington. She lived with her good friend, who was also a teacher, in a house where two elderly ladies rented rooms to teachers.

Helen and her friend went to eat dinner and play games with the music teacher and her husband. While they were eating dinner, they saw the flash of lightning outside. They thought it was so strange. Lightning in February? Usually means storms! Meanwhile, they began playing board games. After, Helen and her friend went to leave and discovered that it had snowed and that the snow had gotten deep!

She and her friend decided to brave the snow and walk back home. They knew it wasn’t really worth it to have someone dig their car out to drive them when they could just walk. On the way, there was a divot in the road and snow had covered it up. Helen slipped, fell, and couldn’t get her bearings to get back up. She told her friend to leave without her, “Just leave me here!” But, her friend started pulling on her, helped her up, and together they made it back to their house.

This story is a good representation of life. While good times usually prevail, there are bad times that sometimes trip you up and make you fall. There will always be someone there to help you up and brush you off.

Helen’s life can be reflected in this story, too. Her life has been very good, with a few dips here and there. She grew up, became a teacher, got married, and started a life. Helen taught second grade while her husband owned a car dealership. “You don’t really remember the bad times,” she told me, “It’s easier to think about the good times.” I think this is a great mindset to have. It’s easier to be optimistic than pessimistic.

Gardening has always been a stress release for Helen. She’d putter around the yard, tending to plants. She still has some of the plants that she’d tend to at her old house. She took slips off of them and was able to grow them into little bushes that sit by her windowsill. Helen has always enjoyed making things as well. She has knit sweaters for her grandchildren or made cross-stitch sayings for the people in her life, such as her pastor. Some of her beautiful cross-stitch is displayed in her home.

It feels like every time I visit Helen, I complain about there not being enough time in the day. “You’ll have time, eventually,” she tells me, “it’s better to be busy than have
nothing to do at all.” As my semester has worn on, I’ve kept this anecdote in the back of my mind and have repeated it to myself often.

Helen is a wonderful lady with a beautiful soul. I’m so thankful to have gotten to know her over this semester. I hope I can be like her one day when I’m all grown and settled into life.

Helen Newton, Western Home Communities Senior
Allison Stowe, UNI Human Relations Senior

Once a Farmer, Always a Farmer

Farming is often described as the backbone of America, but in an age where urbanization and technology are more prevalent than ever, it’s not always evident. That’s why I believe everyone should know Willie Irvine, one of America’s finest, a farmer. Willie was raised on a farm, he farmed his whole life, and if he were able to, would undoubtedly be out working there at this very minute. Even though he isn’t on the farm nowadays, he has no trouble keeping himself busy, and is himself the proof of the benefits of hard work.

Farming has always been his passion, but he acknowledges that there were aspects he didn’t enjoy. Growing up on a farm with his parents, he said his least favorite tasks were planting and harvesting potatoes. He said these jobs were the worst he had, as you’d have to bend over to plant each potato, then again after the potatoes were dug up, you’d have to bend over and pick up each one individually, making for a long and grueling day of labor. He came from an Irish family, so one of their norms was always having potatoes to eat, even though Willie always thought they planted too many. In our conversations, I made the remark that he probably didn’t plant any potatoes of his own when he had control of the farm, but he replied, “Well, we did plant a few rows, but I’d be darned if we grew them for the whole town!”

We got a good laugh out of that, but that statement is really revealing of Willie’s character, and highlights one of his greatest traits: he has the gift of appreciating and seeing purpose in his hard work. In this particular instance, he hated growing and harvesting potatoes, yet instead of quitting that practice altogether and just buying potatoes from the store, he kept growing them. He recognized that even though that work was terrible, it was work worthwhile, and continued on with his own heritage. It’s one of the greatest gifts farming can give you.

This was far from his greatest hardship, however. In addition to the trials that all farmers experience to some degree--unpredictable weather, season-to-season yield variance, dependence on volatile markets--he had also at a young age developed cancer. With a two-year-old marriage, a one-year-old child and more on the way, and a farm to run, the cancer diagnosis couldn’t have come at a much worse time. To make matters worse, the doctors in both Waterloo and Iowa City had two possible diagnoses--a treatable form, or a terminal diagnosis with only a few months to live--and couldn’t decide which one it was. Finally, after a trip to the Mayo Clinics in Rochester, Minnesota, they discovered they could treat it, but this really took up a lot of time away
from the farm which is something any farmer will tell you is time they don't have in abundance.

Willie was blessed to have defeated cancer, yet this was still what he described as the most difficult time in his life. Spending so much time running to and from appointments, and recovering from the physical toll and the cost of the operations was really hard on him and his family. However, Willie was born and raised a farmer, with resilience and perseverance in his blood. He did what all great people do: he overcame all the obstacles in his path.

I really wish I could convey more about Willie Irvine than a couple of instances of his life, as there’s really no way to capture who he is in this short of space. If you wish to know more though, you can find him at Windhaven, playing sevens, pulling shenanigans, giving people a hard time, and having a good time. One thing he said a lot to me was this: going through hardships lets you stop fretting over small things and appreciating life better. Anybody who has had the pleasure that I have of meeting Willie can see that he really does appreciate and enjoy life for everything it is.

Willie Irvine, Western Home Communities Senior
Spencer Westhoff, UNI Human Relations Senior

This semester, I have had the absolute pleasure of meeting with Bernice every week. Bernice has a heart of gold, and a work ethic that few can match. As we have talked about the meaning and importance of gratitude over the course of the semester in Human Relations, it is impossible not to make connections between this topic and her life. Her gentle spirit and heart for others have been so evident in every meeting, and for this reason, I have the opportunity to talk about the central roles hospitality and giving play in her life.

Bernice did not come from a wealthy family, but this increased her desire to work hard and serve others in her life. Growing up on a farm, she did things like yard work, housework, babysitting, planting, and much more. She worked hard to save money for the things she wanted. This included money to buy fabric to make beautiful dresses, and even saving up to purchase her first car! During one meeting, Bernice provided a piece of advice that I think we all can benefit from. She said “Do a good job of it, the best you can.” Her faith is very important to her, and she definitely exemplifies Luke 16:10 when it says, “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much…”

Her willingness to develop a strong work ethic growing up has allowed her to touch and be touched by the lives of others even more so today. Bernice loves to volunteer, and did so through serving with Meals on Wheels, helping in a local school’s kitchen, volunteering at church events, and especially by serving those in her church community. She used to provide rides to people at her church, and would also drive a couple of ladies to the grocery store to shop who were unable to get there on their own. Even today, she likes to introduce herself to those who move into the Western homes, knowing from experience that it can feel big and overwhelming. Today, others are able to reciprocate what she once was able to do, paying it forward by providing her rides to church.
This semester has been filled with many conversations about our pasts, our faith, our family, and much more. Bernice has even come to fill the role of grandmother for me, as I lost both of my grandmothers at a young age. I have come to realize that family are not just the people you are born to, but they are also the people who choose to love you along the way. Showing up every week to someone who always wanted to know about my week, and would never cease to end the conversations with a heart-warming hug filled my heart with joy that remained present long after I left the building. I do not deserve the blessing that Bernice has been in my life, but I am forever grateful for the imprint that she has left on my heart.

Bernice King, Western Home Communities Senior
Allison Bailey, UNI Human Relations Senior

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From English Woman to Iowan

Throughout this past semester, I have had the opportunity to visit Wendy every Friday. The time I have spent with Wendy is something that I will always hold dear to my heart. Above all, Wendy is someone that I look up to and has made an impact in my life. When I asked Wendy what she would want me to write about, she had so much information that she wanted to share with others, so here is Wendy’s story.

Wendy was born in 1940 in Norwich City, England during the war days. Norwich City is located on the Northeast Coast of England and during WWII was a target for air raids. In Norwich City, there was a tall old cathedral and a castle. These two places never got bombed during the war because the enemy bombers used these places as landmarks so they knew where they were.

Wendy lived with her mom, dad, and two siblings: Colin, her older brother, and Jackie, her younger sister. As a child, Wendy’s mother was home a lot and her dad was out helping clean up after the bombings. On one particular day, Wendy, her mom, and her siblings went to visit her grandma who lived nearby. Suddenly, the air raid sirens started going off. Thankfully, her grandma convinced her family to stay and take shelter. When Wendy and her family returned, the windows in their house had shattered into their beds.

Due to the frequent bombings, Norwich City was evacuated to a little town in the country. Wendy and her family moved into an apartment at a big house. During her time in the country, Wendy attended kindergarten and loved playing the tambourine. Six years later the town was built up again and everyone began moving back. During her time in school, Wendy met Queen Elizabeth when she was a princess and also graduated from school at age 15 when graduation wasn’t as big of a deal as it is today. Skip forward a couple of years and you could find Wendy working in a shoe factory. In order to get to work, she had to either walk, bike, or take the double-decker bus.

In 1960, Wendy met and married an American Air Force man named Chet who was stationed over in England. After getting married and his duties were up, Wendy and Chet were planning on staying in England but Chet’s family missed him and requested that he and Wendy move back to Iowa. However, Wendy had never been to America before. Soon after they moved to America, they bought an apartment, had a baby and
continued to have a baby every two years ending up with five daughters. Because she had so many young children, her mom came over to Iowa to visit three times.

In the 70’s she got divorced and remarried to her husband Bob in 1989. When they first got married, Wendy worked at Allen Hospital in housekeeping. Bob and Wendy soon moved to Harpers Ferry where they built a home. While living in Harpers Ferry, Wendy was part of the booster club where she helped with a monthly newspaper and also learned how to use a computer! Wendy’s husband got an early retirement so they went fishing a lot because enjoyed it. Bob and Wendy got a dog together named Toby who still lives with Wendy. Sadly, Bob passed away last year in May.

Since moving from England, Wendy has had multiple opportunities to visit England, where she stayed with her younger sister. During her time in England, Wendy visited Stonehenge plus a lot of other historic towns and places. The last time that Wendy visited England was three years ago.

From England to Iowa, Wendy has had an amazing life. Her story has made her who she is today and if you ask me, I think that she is a pretty amazing person. Thank you, Wendy, for all that you do and for being you.

Wendy Schmitt, Western Home Communities Senior

Lauren Barnett, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Someone Unpredictable

Have you ever sat down to think about how perfect God’s timing is? How he just knows when you need that certain person to come into your life, so that you can see why everything you went through was totally worth it? Well, I was fortunate enough for that to happen to me when God placed an amazing woman, Cy Haugen into my life.

Cy grew up in Northeast Iowa on a farm that had no electricity or running water. She is the youngest of 13 children, so it wasn’t uncommon for her to only see about four of her brothers and sisters on a consistent basis. Her job was to wash and dry the dishes, sweep, maintain the garden, feed the pigs, chickens, and calves, clean the cream and separate the milk from the cream, and to mow the lawn when needed. Did Cy mind any of this? No, because she had a mindset unlike most starting off at a young age. Her mindset was to think of something that she loved to do, while doing something she didn’t like to do, and that would set the tone of how she would live the rest of her life.

At the age of 17, Cy went through one of the biggest hardships in her life when her mother passed away. She didn’t always get along with her mom, but she was still the one person that she wanted to stay close to forever! Cy’s mother would push her to take into consideration what she might like to do once she graduated school, what she wanted to become, if she was going to college. With no money, Cy quickly ruled out college, but her mother didn’t necessarily agree with it. Upon graduating high school, she was given an opportunity to train and work at a law firm, but this would mean more time away from her mom, and more money invested into finding somewhere to reside. As she sat back and looked at all of the amazing opportunities coming her way, she realized that none of it really mattered if her mom couldn’t celebrate with her due to the constant arguing and disagreements they had. So, she decided to head home that day to make things right! As
she walked into her house enthusiastically and nervous she begin to call out to her mom, soon realizing that no one would ever answer to her saying “mom” again…

Soon after, Cy decided to move to the Waterloo / Cedar Falls area, where she would reside for the rest of her life. As she got older, a lot of opportunities that she enjoyed came her way. She was in a group who made humorous skits and songs about different people, she took a couple of different classes at UNI and thought she wanted to become a teacher at some point in time. She became a mother and wife who loves to tell jokes, play the piano, and sing.

If you didn’t know, Cy is a very unpredictable woman who surprises you more and more when you get to know her. She is hilarious. In fact, after her son was returning from a camp with other parents and children she decided to dress up in a long sleeveless blue dress, with an undershirt the color of the rainbow, and two different shoes on just to get a kick out of things! When you look at Cy Haugen and meet her for the first time, you may not realize all of the astonishing characteristics that she possesses, but she a blessing!

Everything that she has gone through has made her into a humble, positive, open minded person who will honestly accept anyone for who they are. Her story has changed my life and my outlook on things. Her positive energy, and love has rubbed off on me and she has taught me that no one is promised tomorrow, so always make things right before it is too late. I just wanted to say thank you for being that blessing that has changed my life for the better!

Cy Haugen, Western Home Communities Senior
Kailai Brantner, UNI Human Relations Senior

Journeys of Life

Upon going to meet Margaret for the first time, I was beyond excited to meet her, yet a little nervous. When I arrived, she welcomed me with the warmest smile and greeting. At that moment, I instantly knew this experience was not only going to be eye-opening, but very enjoyable. Throughout our times together so far, she has shared so many aspects about her life including her family, vacations, careers, and values. Although what stood out to me most, was the happiness in her voice when she shared about the vacation trips she has taken throughout her lifetime.

The first trip she shared with me was when she went to Greece with her friends. She described the land so full of color and the water so clear that I could mentally visualize the beauty she experienced. Throughout the trip, they traveled the land and the surrounding waters, and she insisted that she was not going to swim no matter what. However, after being talked into it, she joined her friends in the beautiful clear water. She had laughter in her voice when she explained to me that because the rocks were so sharp, they each had to take turns using and throwing over a pair of shoes to cross the rocks to get into the water. It was a memorable trip with her friends that she will never forget.

Another story she was excited to share was a bus trip taken to our own capital, Washington D.C. One of her favorite memories was when she woke up early one morning, and explored the Rotunda alone. The guards were just opening the doors, while
everyone was still asleep and it was empty. There were no lines or voices crowding the area. She described this moment as a peaceful experience, as she was able to explore it before it flooded with people.

The last trip she shared required a leap of faith. She decided to take a three week solo trip to her family’s homelands of Scotland, England, and Wales. This is the land where her relatives are buried, and where some family still lives today. As she has experience of traveling these same places from a previous trip with her husband, this time it provided the opportunity for her to branch out and talk to locals, where she might not have if she were traveling with others. She described it as a rewarding trip full of new opportunities, and takes pride in her independent trip, as she should.

Margaret expressed to me that although she has not taken many trips, each have been eventful and hold a special place in her heart. I am so thankful that I met her, and have the opportunity to visit with her each week. She has such a delightful personality and presence, and each time I meet with her I feel like I am visiting my own grandmother. There needs to be more kind-hearted people like Margaret.

Margaret Willoughby, Western Home Communities Senior
Courtney Burmeister, UNI Human Relations Senior

Persistace and Perseverance

The world is a fascinating place with so many opportunities to learn. Lyle has been a wealth of knowledge and conversation for the numerous hobbies and fields he has had and been a part of. I have thoroughly enjoyed learning from him and he has taught me so many useful concepts and enlightening ideas. One of the most interesting tracks of conversation we have had over the course of our last few weeks together has been on the subject of his work experiences. I would’ve never suspected it, but Lyle has worked with a lot of important people on a lot of important projects in his lifetime!

Going through high school, he developed a love for science that he took with him into the military, where he worked with aircraft as a repairman. During his time in the military he had many different roles due to some of his shenanigans, but he was eventually given his role with aircraft maintenance where he learned a lot about how to fix, repair, and create.

After some time in Vietnam, he finished his tour before he headed to Northwestern Technical Institute to become an electronic technician. Following this he headed to the University of Minnesota with hopes of becoming an engineer. However, his plan took a different course when John Deere came to visit him. He said after they had explained the type of person they wanted for the position, he was convinced “that they were looking for someone else.” He was a hot commodity because of his experience and hands-on understanding.

Despite his hesitancy, they persisted and he ended up moving from Minnesota to his new home in Cedar Falls, Iowa. He knew how to fix almost any machine and said that if he was ever stuck, he and his buddy would stop for a coffee break and by the end of the break, he had the problem figured out. He told me it wasn’t always simple, but they did
whatever it took, which included fixing machines that were up and running, ready to steal a finger with a mis-movement.

During his time with John Deere, he did a lot of work with agricultural equipment, testing, manufacturing and designing fixes. He also contracted for the Atomic Energy Commission, aircraft manufacturers and other companies throughout his life and did some very important work for well-known companies. He tested, repaired and built all kinds of machinery and products and still can explain the details to me years later while sitting in his living room.

The second week I visited Lyle, we discussed gardening. He has a few plants in his windowsill that he takes good care of and I was hoping to get some advice for my aspiring green thumb. One thing that struck me was when he said “gardening takes patience, persistence and perseverance”. I have heard this ring true in so much of his life and seeing him weave this truth through all his stories without even knowing it has been encouraging. In his work, his faith, his childhood, his hobbies, and all the ways he contributes to the world, he is always living patiently and persistently, never giving up on the things he cared about. So thank you Lyle, for all the shared stories and wisdom imparted. I love learning from you and I hope my listening ear and countless questions were worth your Tuesday afternoons.

Lyle Erlanson, Western Home Communities Senior
Moriah Cooper, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Love Not at First Sight

Jerry Junge has always been a hard worker and had worked in Construction for many, many years. He was often away doing construction work and would only go home about once a month. On one of these visits home, Jerry met the woman that he would later marry. In the details that follow, and as the title suggests, you will learn that it was not love at first sight, but it is an endearing love story.

Jerry lived in Inwood, Iowa and his dad worked as a parts man at a company. Jerry said that the best paying job in northwest Iowa was construction. Jerry found a job opening in Brookings, North Dakota and his brother and he went there. Once there, they were hired for bridge construction and got sent to Fairview, Iowa. He was pouring footing in the pier stems and caps.

About 8-9 miles out of Inwood, Iowa, the parents of Shorty, Jerry’s wife today, owned a grocery and her and her parents lived right behind the grocery store. Jerry would see her in town when he would stop into the grocery store to get cigarettes. He worked for six months and went to Sioux City, where he worked on bridges. Jerry saw Shorty off and on about once a month or so for about a year and a half and he talked to her a little bit on Saturday mornings. He would go fishing on the weekends at the Big Sioux River and he mentioned to Shorty one Saturday morning that he was going fishing and she wanted to go. So, they went fishing together.

Two years later, in Winter, Jerry got laid off for about a month and got to know Shorty a little better because he was back home, and they started hanging out. Shorty worked 6 days a week from 6:00am - 9:00pm and they didn’t like ice fishing, so they
would go to Canton, South Dakota to go fishing. In Spring, Jerry moved to Spencer, Iowa and would only see Shorty when he would come home, which was a couple of times a month. He later went to Sioux City and the surrounding area and stayed in motels and boarding houses. At this time, Jerry was about 30 years old.

Soon after, Jerry was led to believe that Shorty was pregnant, and he asked her to marry him, but he was not necessarily in love with her when he asked her to marry him. They got married the following spring, which was Spring 1971, and they moved to Sanborn, Iowa. They rented and lived in three different places in Sanborn in three years. Shorty actually got pregnant in January of 1972 and they had their first child in September of 1972. Jerry was gone 6-8 months of the year and would only be home on weekends, so he did not witness the birth of his first child. Shorty and Jerry had their second child in January of 1975. Jerry was in the delivery room when his second child was born, and it was then that he realized that he loved Shorty.

Jerry Junge, Western Home Communities Senior
Anthony Daye, UNI Human Relations Senior

For the Love of the Library

Growing up in Iowa in the 1920’s was no easy task. It was filled with small farms which took lots of dedication and hard work from the whole family. On one small farm in Chickasaw county on April 24th 1925, Iva was born. She grew up with 2 brothers and 1 sister with her mom and dad who worked on the family farm. Iva enjoyed working hard by driving the tractor to show her brothers how it should be done when they teased her about not being able to. Even after all the hard work she put in, Iva enjoyed taking care of the animals and helping as best she could. She loved living on the farm.

Iva eventually graduated from the local high school and went on to become a country school teacher before she meet her husband Roger. They fell in love after meeting at a dance in Oelwein after Roger came back from World War II where he was stationed in Germany. They married on June 1st, 1948 and lived in Evansdale where they had 4 children 3 boys and 1 girl.

In Evansdale, there wasn’t a library for a very long time but with lots of donations and support from the community one was eventually opened. At first it was only 1 room in the city hall with shelves for books but Iva still enjoyed volunteering for them. A library is important to a community because it is place where people go to learn and relax. Education was important to Iva after teaching. Just like on the family farm, the library was hard work but she enjoyed keeping busy so this was the perfect job for her. She had to write down books for catalogs as well as organize all the shelves. She also helped kids get their first library card, which was always very special to her and the kids.

Overtime the library grew and grew, gaining more support from the community and dedicated people like Iva. She worked hard to plan fun programs for the children in the community like starting summer reading programs and making crafts with them. She eventually became the Head Librarian and stayed in that position for 12 years.

Iva is an inspiration to many for her dedication and commitment to one of her many passions. Recently, the library has even given Iva a plaque when she retired for her
dedication to her job and the library of Evansdale. Her children would always say that if they ever lost her in a store they would always find her in the book aisle looking at new books for the library. She is a great example of how hard work goes a long way and with pray, patience and perseverance you can accomplish your goals and make the community a better place.

Iva Meaney, Western Home Communities Senior
Dana DeLang, UNI Human Relations Senior

The Best of Both Worlds

Jerry Kramer is a man who has always been able to enjoy the best of both worlds in terms of life in rural Iowa and the opportunities a city had to offer. He currently resides in an apartment with his wife as a part of the Western Home Communities in Cedar Falls, Iowa. I believe he is happy where he is and much of that happiness may lie in his ability to take a short drive back out to their farm and schoolhouse whenever he gets an itch to step out of the city, and back in time, even if only for a short while.

He and his wife both grew up just northeast of Waterloo in rural Blackhawk County. They both come from farm families so life on the farm is all Jerry and his wife knew growing up. The farm, especially in the days of Jerry’s childhood, could teach a young man a lot. It was hard work and took a lot of discipline to make a farm successful. It was a group effort that the whole family would take part in. This work ethic would serve Jerry well throughout his life and it is clear he appreciated all he learned on the farm growing up.

His schooling up to the eighth grade was taught in a one room schoolhouse just a few miles from his home. He could recall much of his time there and he seemed to really have positive memories there. Of course, it had its downsides but he spoke very highly of his teachers and his time attending the schoolhouse. I am sure that is why when the opportunity came he and his wife took it upon themselves to renovate the schoolhouse in which his wife was taught when she was young.

The first jump Jerry really made off the farm came when he began high school. He attended the East Waterloo High School in downtown Waterloo. He talked of his anticipation and concern. Going from the farm and schoolhouse to the city for school would be a turning point in his life, as many from Iowa at the time can relate.

He talked briefly about first stepping into his high school. There were so many students and faculty. The atmosphere was very different from his previous experience in school. He was lucky his older brother had paved the way, as he would say, so his transition was not quite as scary as it may have otherwise been. In high school he learned and experienced a lot that I think he is really grateful for. Through high school he still lived and worked the family farm but he also was given a new perspective of what the lives of those who didn’t grow up on a farm were like. He had the best of both worlds and in time I think he knew it. High school for many are very transformative years and I think for Jerry that was also the case.

It was these positive experiences in schooling that I believe pulled Jerry into the career path of education. After his time in the service he first attended Iowa State
University pursuing agriculture like many in his family had before him, but he learned fairly quickly it was not for him any longer. He then attended what is now the University of Northern Iowa and got his degree in education. He would go on to teach in the Waterloo school district for many years. He now had the chance to teach in the very district that made such an impact on him growing up while again living outside of town on one of the families acreages again getting the best of both worlds.

Jerry Kramer, Western Home Communities Senior
Josh Dyer, UNI Human Relations Senior

My aunt Patty was born and raised in Dubuque, IA. She attended catholic school for her K-12 education, and attended UNI to become a teacher. After school, she moved back to Dubuque, got married, and got a teaching job in the Western Dubuque school district - a short 15 minute drive from the farm where she and her husband John raised their family.

Growing up, Patty was always encouraged to stay hard at work until the job was done. Her mother had her and her younger sister (my mom) do a lot of household chores, and they would be made to redo them if they weren’t right the first time. This value was also instilled at school, where she received a citizenship grade as well as her other content class grades. Patty says she notices that a lot of younger people today do not have this work ethic. When she was a teacher, she noticed student teachers would arrive 10 minutes before school started and leave as soon as they were able. Teaching isn’t a clock-in-clock-out job, and Patty wanted to make sure that is something that I know as a future teacher.

In her experience as a teacher but also as a mother, Patty has learned to put people’s strengths to use. Not everyone is going to be good at the same things, but Patty believes that all people have something positive to bring to the table.

She also learned this through her friends. Patty stays in contact with friends from as early as elementary school, and frequently gets together with her college friends to go out to dinner, and even on vacations. She also attends get togethers with her husband’s college friends, and has merged the two groups pretty seamlessly.

Now, being retired, Patty keeps up with trips to Des Moines and Waterloo to babysit her 6 grandchildren. She is also involved in a retired teacher’s organization. If she could pass on one message to people who know her, she would say that things are going to go wrong, and that’s okay, but there is always a silver lining to every cloud.

Patty Bries, Dubuque area Senior
Christine Efferding, UNI Human Relations Senior
Barb has always been quite the go-getter. She started her life by helping out on the farm she grew up on, whether it was helping outside in the field or completing indoor chores with her sister. Barb and her sister were practically inseparable, growing up as each other's best friend. So, when Barb got to grade school, she was excited to learn and make more friends.

She attended the school in Hudson, and got involved in everything you can think of. There was not any women's sports at the time so she got involved by being a cheerleader, and that is where her friend group seemed to stem from. She had known most of them growing up as well, since her parents were friends with all of their parents. They all grew up together, and then somewhat went their separate ways after high school.

Barb’s life after high school consisted of getting married, and moving across the country to start her family. She had two boys, but not everything comes easily. Barb and her husband at the time, decided things were not in a good place. Barb moved herself and her boys back to the Cedar Falls area, to raise her family close to family. She raised her children on her own, always making sure they had what they needed. She moved her way up in the company she worked for, by always being the one willing to try new technology, or new ways to complete tasks.

Once her kids were grown, Barb ran into someone, at a wedding, she had known since high school. He was four years older than she was, but she knew who he was. She asked him if he was going to dance with her, and they have been together ever since. They built a good life together, including accepting each other's children into their lives. Once again, Barb was surrounded by comfort, and the strength of her family grew.

The strength of her family continued to grow as they added grandchildren to the mix. Many of them are very successful in the extracurricular activities they choose, as well as in their college careers. Both Barb and her husband, Gordy are retired now and enjoy taking trips to visit all of their grandchildren, and watch them play sports. She enjoys living life this way, but also stays busy by working part-time at Menards, and volunteering whenever she can.

Many people think retirement means you slow down, but the complete opposite seems to be true for Barb. She keeps busy with her job at Menards, volunteering at the Western Home and church, or with the UNI students. She has taken on so much in her life, and for that I admire her greatly. She has been through many tough times, and always has found a way to make it through, with the support of her family and always keeping her head up.

Barb Ubben, Western Home Communities Senior
Allison Gandrup, UNI Human Relations Senior
A Woman after Her Heritage

Everyone has a past. Everyone has ancestors who have come before you. The question is whether or not you will pursue it.

Growing up, Marcia’s father did a lot of research about family heritage, but it was not organized in any way. When her mother died, he gave Marcia the boxes of certificates, letters, and historical documents for her to sort through.

Marcia has three sons: Mike, Pat, and Bill. In Junior High, her son, Mike, had a good friend. He would often go to this friend’s house and he would come over, as well. One day, Marcia received a call from the mother of Bill’s friend and invited her to a Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) meeting. Marcia said she didn’t think she could ever join because she didn’t have reason to believe that she had any heritage to relatives in the American Revolution, but she attended the meeting anyway.

After attending the meeting, she began to look through the box of her family heritage that her father had given her. She kept digging for information that could potentially lead to proof that she was indeed a Daughter of the American Revolution. In her search, she found an interview that was written on a typewriter when her father’s cousin had interviewed his grandmother about their trip across the country from Maryland to Illinois in 1855.

In this interview, Marcia found out that her great-great-great grandfather, John Felker, had served in the American Revolution. To become a member of the DAR, one must have documents to prove their heritage. To prove this, Marcia wrote to the historical society of Pennsylvania and Maryland to find out more information about her heritage. Unfortunately, neither historical society could provide the services to research her family. However, historical society of Maryland gave her the name of a woman who would do it for $17. The woman found a copy of John Felker’s will that included his son and Marcia’s great-great grandfather, Abraham Felker. Through this document, Marcia was able to conclude that she was, in fact, a Daughter of the American Revolution.

The process to become a member of the DAR did not just stop there. She had to search through several birth, death, and marriage certificates to prove all of the connections between her and John Felker. When she had found all of the needed certificates, Marcia only had proof that her great-great-great grandfather, John Felker, served in the Revolution, through a family interview; she needed a more credible source. She went to the DAR registrar where they told her they knew people in the Iowa Historical Society who would be able find the historical documents and find John Felker’s name in the military roster. Sure enough, the historical society collected military information that found John Felker’s years and branches of service. The society sent her copies of the documents for a fee of $2.
After several occasions with different people, Marcia was finally able to become an inducted member of the DAR and be confident in her family heritage. In total, she spent $19 to find out her ancestry and about 1.5 years. From my discussions with Marcia about how her time spent sifting through historical documents and her family history, I found out that she a passion for patriotism and supporting family lineage. Through her investigation of her heritage, Marcia was able to find a sense of identity, as well as meet several new women who are also passionate about their ancestry.

Marcia Colwell, Western Home Communities Senior
Megan Goemaat, UNI Human Relations Senior

Never Ending Love Story

When you meet the right person in your life that you’re going to marry, you immediately know. That’s what happened 35 years ago for two people working at separate booths during the National Cattle Congress fair in Waterloo, Iowa. Nowadays, people would ordinarily keep their heads down and not talk to anyone, simply only paying attention to what they were doing. But luckily, priorities were different back then.

My grandma was running a snack booth whereas my grandpa was running a toy booth not too far from where she was at. After hours of standing and helping customers, my grandma needed to use the restroom. Rightfully so, she packed up her cash box and she took it with her. When she returned to her booth she had the most pleasant surprise that she could’ve hoped for. My grandpa was standing at her booth, waiting for a customer so she wouldn’t lose a sale. My grandma was immediately attracted to how thoughtful he was, while my grandpa took a liking to her ‘ass’ets along with her personality. After many trips to the beer tent and hours of talking, you could say the rest was history.

May 24th, 1986 was the day they decided to spend the rest of their lives together at the Little Brown Church in Nashua, IA. This was both their second marriage, my grandma had my mom and my aunt as her bridesmaids and my grandma’s brother walked her down the aisle. They celebrated their marriage with approximately 100 people at the bowl in, in Waterloo, IA. Instead of finding a caterer like most brides do now, my grandma decided to make all the food by herself.

No marriage is a perfect marriage, but my grandparents have plenty of happy memories to last them a lifetime. From my grandpa falling into the Mississippi River to memories of their best friends that lived across the street. From nights of watching my grandpa bowl to my grandpa admiring my grandma’s beauty. My grandparents live a life full of traveling to Cancun, Belize and numerous states in the U.S., but the most important thing is that they are enjoying each other’s company every single day. Being husband and wife means your spouse is going to annoy you at times, but you can always count on them being your best friend throughout life.

My grandpa made a promise to my grandma’s mom as she was passing away. She made him promise to always make sure she was taken care of and loved. He has kept that promise since that day, and according to my grandpa, “She can’t fire me yet!”
In conclusion, I admire both of you for your dedication, and love for one another even when the storms hit. Thank you! I will forever cherish the stories you both told me. I love you!

Grandparents, Cedar Valley Community Seniors
Elizabeth Hansen, UNI Human Relations Senior

Soul Traveler

Marlys Simpson. How lucky am I to know Marlys Simpson? She has had a full life that inspires me in many ways. Marlys grew up in Waterloo, Iowa during the mid-1900s. If I could live half the life she has lived, I will feel very accomplished. She has experienced so many things in her life. In a way, you could say I have enjoyed living vicariously through her stories during our visits.

She grew up in a home that was not as wealthy as the neighbors around her which at times caused her to become somewhat envious. Her mother was a great seamstress and made most of their clothes because they didn’t have enough money to buy store bought clothes. Luckily, you could hardly tell that her mother made them, but she was sometimes envious that she didn’t have store bought clothes like her classmates. Her family did not own a car so she walked to school which was about a block or two from her house. She believes her childhood made her a better person because she now knows what it was like to not have a lot of money. It taught her to spend her money wisely and that it is possible to get through life without the latest trend. Marlys also believes that because of that time in her life, she can get through almost anything.

Marlys has a unique love for school. She was never married, nor did she wish to be. I think this is amazing. It shows that you don’t need a man to become successful in life especially coming from someone who grew up in a time where marriage was something you did because men provided security. Because she was never married and never had children, she was able to devote her whole life toward God, school, and teaching which made her an amazing person for the job. Although I was never there, I believe she was an amazing teacher who cared so much for her students and encouraged them to be the best version of themselves.

I believe she was an amazing teacher because she believes that we, teachers specifically, can learn something from all generations. New teachers can learn something from the older teachers just as older teachers can learn something from the new teachers coming in. The new teachers are coming in from a fresh education and have learned the latest ways in which students have the best chance to learn. The older teachers can teach the new teachers their wisdom that they have experienced through their time in the classroom. I think this is a great attitude for a teacher to have because instead of thinking you know the right way; we teachers can work together for the children. It’s all about the children.

Another unique fact about Marlys is that she taught internationally in Norway for 40 years! She went to the University of Northern Iowa for two years and got her Kindergarten Primary Certificate. She went on to teach in Delaware County in eastern Iowa for two years. She then went to Colorado State College to go a little farther away from home and got her bachelor’s degree. Marlys had plans to get a job in California but
her plans changed and she got a job in Baltimore instead. She taught 1st grade there for five years. While in Baltimore, she was inspired by another teacher to travel to Norway and ended up loving it there. She then decided to take a risk and teach internationally. She believes that you don't learn anything without taking risks. I absolutely agree with this. It is important to get out of your comfort zone and get after life. You never know what opportunities you could miss if you don't. Something that surprised me about Marlys is she is an introvert, yet isn't afraid to travel with groups of people that she doesn't know. She loves meeting new people. This inspires me because I am also an introvert, but I could never imagine traveling in a group where I don't know anyone. She is such an optimistic person and doesn't worry about not knowing people. She doesn't let that get in the way of her seeing the world. I wish I could be more like Marlys. Everything about her and her life is an inspiration to me.

When Marlys had plans to get a job in California and ended up getting a job in Baltimore instead, she believes she probably wouldn't have gone to Norway. This teaches her that sometimes what you believe is going to be the best fit for your life, isn't the best fit for your life. The closer and closer I get to graduation and having a real teaching job, Marlys's experience has taught me that if you don't get the job you want, it could open a door to another incredible opportunity so try not to stress out about it. It will all fall into place.

As you can see, Marlys has had an amazing life that has encouraged me to try to be at least half as amazing as she is. She has impacted my life in so many ways and I will cherish our time we spent together forever.

Marlys Simpson, Western Home Communities Senior
Ashley Hersom, UNI Human Relations Senior

If you were to walk around Cedar Falls, Iowa and ask some of the locals if they knew John Focht, I’m sure the first thing they would do is smile and have a story to share. In fact, everywhere John and I go, he knows at least one person, and they always have something to share, or they tell me how lucky I am to be placed with him. John is also a story-teller, and would much rather tell a story than hear one about himself. However, there are so many stories that he could tell, but he once told me that he used to tell his sisters, “Talk to me about myself.” I am like one of those locals, and I sure have a lot of stories that I could tell about the one and only, John Focht.

When I first met John, he welcomed me into his home with open arms and it seemed as though we had known each other for years. We instantly connected and the conversation never dwindled. I’ve always been told that I could make a brick wall talk back to me because of how much I talk, but to be completely honest, I’m not sure who ended up talking more. Our time together flew by quickly and our hour long visits turned into two. Our lunch dates at his house turned to picnics by the river and bouncing from garage sale to garage sale around town. I have never met someone so full of life and who has so much love for others. He shared with me his favorite childhood memories, showed me pictures of his family, and gave me lifelong advice that I plan on taking into my future education career.
John Focht is known for his dedication to the Cedar Falls School District. Since his retirement he has been volunteering for the past 25 years at the local elementary schools which has also granted him the Governor’s Award for Volunteering. If you were to ask some of the kindergartners or 1st graders at Southdale, he would be known as the man with the rocks and silly songs. John started an activity with students called reading rocks or sometimes referred to as “pet pebbles.” These rocks are used as an incentive to get students to want to read more and with this rock they have “something” to read to.

With this activity, John reads aloud a book all about rocks, and then has the students decorate these little rocks in whatever fashion they want to. The students’ reactions to their shiny new rocks and something they have created is absolutely priceless. This is only one of the many reasons John continually does this with students.

John has impacted many lives in his years within the Cedar Valley, and my life is definitely one of those. He has given me a “family” here in Cedar Falls, given me the confidence that I can conquer anything, and has helped me build my educational toolbox to use in the future. I have enjoyed every week that I have been able to spend with him and his wife, Judy. I am grateful that John and I have been lucky enough to be placed together. There is no doubt in my mind that John and I will remain in contact even after this experience is over because of the imprint that he has forever left on my heart.

P.S. John, you rock.

John Focht, Western Home Communities Senior  
Taylor Hilbrands, UNI Human Relations Senior

Scarce Sorrows

Lura Treloar grew up on a farm in Ogden, Iowa and walked ¾ of a mile to country school. Lura loved school. She enjoyed being able to listen to what the younger grades were learning as a review for herself, and she loved listening to what the older grades were learning so she knew what would be coming next. One thing very unique about Lura’s education is that she was the only student in her grade in country school. She often felt like a “dummy” and an honor student all at the same time because she was by herself when learning the material.

They usually had a new teacher every year at the country school but one teacher in particular was very important to Lura and made a lasting impact on her. She developed a very good relationship with her 1st grade teacher and she loved it when the teacher held her on her lap. Lura struggled at learning how to say her “R’s” early on and this teacher worked with her often during reading. At the end of the year, this teacher gave Lura a book with a note written in it. It said, “May the sorrows in your life be as scarce as the R’s in your reading lessons.” Lura still remembers this quote and has a good laugh every time she thinks about it. Most importantly however, this statement by her teacher really reflects Lura’s entire life. Lura is so thankful because she really hasn’t had many sorrows in her life. The death of her grandparents, parents, husband, and other family members were very hard, but their death was expected and something she knew she would have to deal with. Lura hasn’t experienced many other tragedies and she is so grateful for how blessed her life has been.
Fortunately, Lura learned to say her “R’s” and the sorrows in her life have definitely been limited just like her favorite teacher hoped for her. Lura’s teacher made a huge impact on her life which is similar in the way that Lura has had a significant impact on mine. I’m glad I’ve gotten to take a glimpse into Lura’s life to discover the love we share for education, faith, and family. Her beautiful smile, contagious laugh, and the very best hugs are what I look forward to every Friday afternoon.

Lura Treloar, Western Home Communities Senior
Taylor Holman, UNI Human Relations Senior

A Schoolhouse History

A chilled wind nips at my cheeks as the schoolhouse door stuck before finally opening for JoAnn, Jerry, Josh and I to walk in. We step first into the entryway where JoAnn and her peers used to hang their coats and fetch water for the water cooler.

Another few steps and we enter the main room of the schoolhouse with four or five rows of six or seven desks. Smaller desks for younger children, larger desks for older. A wood burning oven sits in the back center of the room, not the original, JoAnn and Jerry explain, but an authentic oak stove from the early 1900s. Chalkboards line the walls and in the front of the room, a piano and teacher’s desk.

I picture JoAnn as a young girl sitting in the desks, and Jerry mentions how he went to a school only a few miles away, but the only interaction his school had with JoAnn’s was beating them at softball held on afternoons some Fridays. JoAnn and Jerry also discuss their teachers. JoAnn explains that her school went through many teachers with women getting married and leaving the profession. She says how Jerry was lucky to have a man that stayed with the school many years and was passionate about teaching.

Then JoAnn and Jerry show us pictures of the state the school had been in when they started the restoration. I am in awe to see how now the school looks as if it has been untouched by time, but it didn’t start that way. The floors of the school had rotted. Windows needed to be replaced. The entire exterior of the school house had chipped away and more. Jerry mentions how JoAnn really drove the restoration effort, finding grants, and is dedicated to continue to promote community use of the school house. In this great effort and devotion to preserving a piece of history and her own history, JoAnn teaches me to look for the value in my own history. The sticky door shuts behind us as we walk back to Jerry and JoAnn’s car and I’m filled with appreciation.

I appreciate where she and schools have come from to get where we are today. I hope that I can share this piece of history with future youth be they future students or my own children with the same amount of care as JoAnn has shown me.

JoAnn Kramer, Western Home Communities Senior
Tessa Noel Horn, UNI Human Relations Senior
Sweets & Selflessness

Donna Pohl has touched the lives of many people through selfless acts of love, kindness, and generosity. Donna grew up with her mother, father, and two sisters, Ellen and Esther Marie. After leaving home, she ventured to Marquette to obtain her bachelor’s degree in dental hygiene. Donna went on to pursue her talent of teaching by accepting a position to teach in the dental hygiene program at Marquette and Madison Area Technical College. Eventually, Donna moved back to Cedar Falls where she lives with her sister, Ellen and Ragdoll cat, Muffin.

Baking and decorating cakes and pies are Donna’s special talents. The cakes she creates have beautiful, intricate designs of fondant and icing that are perfect for every occasion. Donna’s nieces, friends, community members, and church members frequently request her masterpiece cakes. Whether the cake is for a wedding, anniversary, birthday, or church gathering, Donna rises to the occasion to make each cake unique. Lemon meringue pie is Donna’s specialty, along with a low-calorie strawberry pie that is delicious. She learned to bake from watching her mother and reading a Betty Crocker book she received when she was young. She impacts those around her through her wonderful baking and decorating skills.

Donna has a strong faith in God that has become an important part of who she is. She enjoys being involved in her church community to serve others and God. She is selfless by giving up her time to volunteer and bake desserts for various events and gatherings at the church. Donna and her sister, Ellen have a close bond, and are a great example of sisters that love and care for one another through the ups and downs that life brings. Donna and Ellen bought their cat, Muffin together and have had her for fourteen years. Muffin is a beautiful Ragdoll cat with white fur and blue eyes, who is so spoiled and loved by her owners.

Donna’s friends and family have been blessed to have such a selfless woman in their lives who satisfies everyone’s sweet tooth. We have bonded over our faith and the highs and lows the week brings. It’s been a great experience getting to know Donna and laughing with her each week. Donna will continue to touch the lives of those around her through her warm personality and willingness to share her talent of decorating baked goods with others.

Donna Pohl, Western Home Communities Senior
Allie Ingalls, UNI Human Relations Senior

A Change for Education

Judy Finkelstein first set on her path as an educator when she moved to Cedar Falls where she was a student at the Iowa State Teacher’s College. In 1952, she received her kindergarten/primary certificate and became a licensed teacher. Upon graduation, she returned home to Joliet, Illinois and continued her education at the University of Illinois receiving her BA in Elementary Education in 1954. However, Cedar Falls had not seen the last of Judy and her passion for working with children.
In 1964, Judy returned to what was by then the State College of Iowa. She became a demonstration teacher at the Malcolm Price Laboratory School where teachers for the first head start programs in Iowa were being trained. For two summers, 1965 and 1966, she taught head start in Cedar Falls before it became a year round program.

In 1968, Judy earned a master’s degree in early childhood/elementary curriculum from the State College of Iowa, and became a faculty member at Malcolm Price Laboratory School. For the next twenty years she continued to guide in her nursery/kindergarten and first grade classrooms not only the students in her class, but also State College of Iowa and University of Northern Iowa teacher education students, who were completing field experiences and student teaching. To top it off, after receiving her Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota, Judy accepted a position as a professor in the Department of Curriculum and Instruction at what was by then the University of Northern Iowa.

After twenty years of teaching at Price Laboratory School, Judy began to focus on a new interest. This project, with time, has proven to be something she was genuinely passionate for. In the early 1980’s, Judy became UNI’s representative on a statewide committee whose charge was to create developmentally appropriate guidelines for the pending introduction of four-year-old preschools in the public schools of Iowa. Here Judy worked on a team with representatives of Iowa’s major universities, including the University of Iowa, Iowa State University and University of Northern Iowa. In addition, the council also included representatives from the Department of Education, Department of Human Services, Department of Health, Department of Early Childhood Special Education, and Head Start. Together, these representatives met once a month for over a year. Their guidelines for good, developmentally appropriate 4 year-old programs were widely accepted and received much praise.

When this committee finished its work, Judy had a strong desire for them to continue to help educators across the state and nation to implement these guidelines in their programs. She and colleagues at UNI wrote a proposal for a center which could carry on this work. It was presented to the legislature and in 1988, a legislative mandate created such a center and placed in the College of Education at UNI. It was named the Regents’ Center for Early Developmental Education. Judy was its first director. Its Leadership Council was made up of colleagues from the same groups who had worked so well on the statewide committee. They developed guidelines for the work and purpose of the center, which included research, development of materials and dissemination.

In 1995, with the Regent’s Center now in the hands of a new director, Judy moved her teaching focus to early childhood curriculum and instruction. With colleagues, Judy built a rigorous, but seamless early childhood program that puts great emphasis on guiding, rather than instructing students. To this day, her work with both the Regent’s Center and the early childhood curriculum and instruction department do not go unnoticed. It is because of Judy and her late husband, Melville that the Regent’s Center continues to flourish and be an exceptional place for early childhood educators and those interested in helping children discover their potential as learners to gain resources and ideas for challenging activities for their own classrooms.
Judy’s exceptional career and work toward quality curriculum is inspirational to all educators. Her drive and determination over the years is evident in each of her accomplishments, and to think it all began with a woman who had passion for young minds is truly nothing short of amazing.

Judy Finkelstein, Western Home Communities Senior
Morgan Ives, UNI Human Relations Senior

Definition of Perseverance

When I think of the word perseverance, I think of Cherie Dargan. The woman never quits. Though I have only known Cherie for a short time, I can see that perseverance shine through in everything that she does, and the circumstances she went through have caused her to be extremely empathetic and genuine.

Cherie was a single mother for a great deal of her life. This was not an easy life. She went back to school when her daughter and son were very young. During this time she experienced many hardships. She had to go on welfare for a short while. She also had to come to terms with her church abandoning her despite her giving several years of her life to the ministry. However, Cherie was not without a support system. Her parents helped her out a great deal, and she had a few friends that stood by her. I find it extremely impressive that she was able to persevere through all of those circumstances. She ended up graduating with a teaching degree in English.

However, despite Cherie now being certified to teach in the K-12 system, getting into teaching was not easy. At the time there had been an influx of teachers, and jobs were scarce. She went up against vast numbers of applicants and received many letters of rejection. She did not give up, though. She was eventually hired, but she did not stop there. She briefly had a job in Des Moines in which she helping with curriculum. It had a long commute, but she enjoyed it.

However, after a year the job was cut due to budgetary reasons. This stung, but this was not the end for her. She eventually was hired on by Hawkeye Community College as a writing teacher. Here she was able to change lives around her for the better. Because of her experiences, she was able to help her students that were struggling. Cherie helped connect many students with resources and was willing to listen to them. It is her perseverance that put her in a position to be able to relate to and assist others.

Also, though she is now retired, she still is always busy doing something. She blogs, is writing a book, and writes articles for a few different organizations, such as the Cedar Falls Authors Festival. She is sorting through archives for a few of her organizations as well as collecting information about her family history so she can pass it down to her children and grandchildren. I am so grateful to have met Cherie. I have learned so much about what it means to persevere and be empathetic from her. I believe knowing her has made me a better person.

Cherie Dargan, Western Home Communities Senior
Emily Johanningmeier, UNI Human Relations Senior
I began meeting with Helen during September of my Human Relations class in Fall, 2017. In the beginning, I had no idea the impact we would have on each other during our time. Immediately, Helen and I connected because of people we knew and our faith in Jesus Christ. However, I don’t think Helen understands the impact she’s had on me as we spend time together every week. Helen has shown me a love for Christ that is refreshing in this world we live in, as well as a wisdom about life that I couldn’t hear about from anyone else. We’ve shared many stories with one another, but one of my favorites she has told me about was her 40th wedding anniversary she celebrated with her husband and family.

Helen celebrated her 40th wedding anniversary with her loved ones in August 2002. Her five kids hosted a celebration in Bristow, Iowa at the Northeast Iowa Christian Service Camp. This was a very special place to her family because all five children grew up going to this camp over the summer. This is also where her children devoted their lives to Christ when they were young. In addition to all her kids being there, Helen and Gerald’s siblings, cousins, nephews, aunts, uncles, and even many ministers and the minister who married Helen and Gerald all came from all over the states to celebrate this wonderful time.

The day of celebrations was wonderful as they shared lots of memories and laughs. This day became even more special later on. Unfortunately, this was that last time the family got to get together in whole. Less than a year later, Helen and Gerald lost their daughter Lynette unexpectedly due to an unknown heart condition while on a mission in Monte Cristi, Dominican Republic.

When talking about the event, Helen said, “In the joy of our special day and in the heartache of Lynette’s going to be with the Lord, we saw God’s love, guidance, and comfort working in and through us. My life verse of Scripture is Romans 8:28 – ‘And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose’”.

Helen has no idea the inspiration she gives me through seeing her strength as life goes on. She has shown me no matter what troubles life brings, the thing that will continuously give strength and everlasting comfort is Christ alone.

Helen Lund, Western Home Communities Senior
Emily Jones, UNI Human Relations Senior

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“\nI like to help people. I like to make other people see the good in themselves.” This describes a passion that Don has channeled into a life goal. He has always been a man wanting to serve others. One of my favorite stories that Don shared with me, revealed his compassionate heart. He was an only child growing up, so he spent a lot of time with friends and neighbors.
His friend’s father was in a wheelchair, and they did not have any kind of lift that could take him upstairs to his bedroom. They lived near Don so he came over often to help. He and his friend would act as a human lift to carry his friend’s father upstairs. They would lock their arms together to create a chair. I assume this was not an easy task to carry a grown man up a flight of stairs, but Don was there to help whenever he could. He did this for almost a year while his friend’s father was rehabilitating after having a stroke.

I recently have seen this passion instilled in myself. Don and I were having lunch a few weeks ago and since he is a business guy with a lot of experience, I asked him to look over my resume. I was starting to doubt my abilities and lacking self-confidence while working on completing my applications for graduate school. He acknowledged that I had good grades and plenty of experience to go with it. He made me feel more confident, and to see the good in myself.

Don has spent a lot of his time serving others. He volunteered at United Way, and also worked as a mediator for small claims court. Another way he has generously offered his time is by getting groceries for a few ladies that live at the cottages at the Western Home Communities that are not able to anymore. He likes to do anything he can to help others.

It has been such an honor to get to know such a compassionate guy. I look forward to my time with him every week because it is a few hours where I can forget about school and other stress and just focus on enjoying a nice conversation. I love hearing about his time spent in the Navy, his work and volunteer experiences, and other stories that have shaped his life. He is a very special person and I know that it is evident to others how caring he truly is.

Don Tamisiea, Western Home Communities Senior
Kinsey Juergens, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Making Connections

As I walked into the Dargan family household I wasn’t sure what to expect. Mike and I quickly got down to business. First impressions were quickly thrown out the window as Mike started to talk about his life and work. One thing that was apparent from our very first meeting was that Mike is a fixer. Problem solving is a central part of Mike’s work and has been a drive for him through challenging situations.

“Mike’s father was a “setup” man in the Deere factory heat treat department for 30 years. This job consisted of checking the configuration of all machines and fixtures to ensure that they were working properly. He wasn’t much for production, but did focus on finding and fixing problems. These teachings from his father shaped the way Mike handled his own problems in life. Mike has had to repeatedly reinvent or retool his schools to adapt to worsening physical problems caused by his affliction with Stickler’s Syndrome, a connective tissue disease. Each time physical functions were reduced, he learned to do something. Oddly, the new directions tended to be more interesting and lucrative.”
Mike has gone on to be an integral part of the Cedar Falls and Waterloo Public Libraries for twenty-one years as technical systems administrator. With the help of a few people who recognized his potential, and through his own self-determination, Mike has been able to achieve a satisfaction in his work that most never accomplish in life. In early school experiences Mike had to figure out how to get through school without much help. “The 1960s were the height of the baby boom. Children were abundant, classes were packed, and students with perceptual issues—such as hearing and vision—were often overlooked. He learned to walk at age nine after being on crutches for 31 months with a frozen hip joint. Teachers were not observant of his obvious difficulty and judged him to be a bad student.”

“Upon reflection, Mike recalls that, when placed at the back of the room he was soon lost due to his inability to follow lectures and discussion. The black board was difficult to see; conversation was hard to hear. He had a tendency to get distracted by whatever reading materials happened to be available.” In turn, Mike used his intelligence to prove just how bad he could be. “Pranking teachers, principals, and classmates became a favorite sport and a better application of time than school. Pranking also taught him lessons in coping through passive/aggressive behavior. Instead of confronting authority or power directly, he would disrupt activities in ways that were hard to attribute to him. He learned about asymmetrical conflict early on.”

“Despite some negative impressions from school—he flunked out of both ISU and UNI--, Mike went on to become a part-time temporary adjunct instructor of English at UNI, Wartburg, and Hawkeye Community College.” At UNI he found teachers he could respect and who respected him. Role models such as Bob Gish, Scott Cawelti, and Mahmood Yusefi taught him about more than just teaching. They also provided lessons he would employ throughout life. As Mike put it, “As a teacher you have to have status, but you have to admit mistakes too.” When I listen to Mike talk about his relationships with people in his communities, I hear this very same principle in his voice. To put it simply: treat people fairly and you, too, will be treated fairly. “Usually. Sometimes, people will not reciprocate. However, in the long run the odds are in favor of those who treat others well without expectation of immediate benefit. Casting one’s bread upon the waters will usually result in benefit. Taking care to sow what one wishes to reap will also pay off over time.”

If there’s anything I’ve learned from my time talking to Mike it’s that you have to value the people in your life. Even if at times they may stretch his patience, Mike continues to help people. Growing up in a time where the Women’s Rights and the Civil Rights Movements were exposing many problems within our society, might have had some influence on Mike. But to hear him talk about it, it seems as simple as this: you should help people because you never know when you might need help one day.

“Mike retired recently and had several parties thrown by co-workers, friends, and family. He marveled at all of the notes and gifts from people who recalled help that they had received from him—in some cases decades ago. Mike hasn’t always been a good person and has his regrets. However, he has learned that even after appalling bad behavior, if he keeps his mouth shut and does something good (advice from a perplexed professor) things can work out.”

Even after retirement Mike is still thinking up ways to improve the communities of which he is apart. With his technical expertise he has been able to provide consultation
and support to his wife’s project, the League of Women Voters and his former places of employment. Mike is interested in utilizing social media and web conferencing software, such as Zoom, to expand the potential of projects like the League of Women Voters. Using technology, he believes small programs like these can have a bigger outreach and be more accessible to their senior members. He is also working to improve internet access to public libraries, which he says sometimes unfairly restrict internet for patrons to save money. Using Mike’s method, internet would be practically free for libraries and give greater ease of access to patrons. Looking at the work going on in Mike’s workshop, there is no doubt he will not slow down into retirement.

Mike Dargan, Western Home Communities Senior
Derek Kellison, UNI Human Relations Senior

A Tale of Dolls and Dogs

You would be hard pressed to find a friend with more passion than Jean Thompson. If I have learned one thing from Jean, it is to follow what you are passionate about and to find the beauty in everything. We discovered that we are both avid creators and consumers of art and interesting artifacts. We also share a passion for dogs. Jean showed me her impressive collection of art, and I introduced her to a new furry friend.

Being a teacher has taken Jean to many places throughout her life, and introduced her to many interesting things. Along with her lifelong passion for teaching, Jean enjoyed collecting artifacts. Along her journey, Jean enjoyed hunting for fossils and minerals. She and her husband would go to known locations to find interesting rocks. She acquired quite a collection over time, some of which are now on display at the University of Iowa, in McBride Hall on the second floor.

Along with collecting rocks and fossils, Jean is passionate about art. She enjoys painting, as well as collecting art and relics from different places around the world. Her collection contains a wide variety of beautiful things, from iron wood sculptures to Navajo wedding vases, to hundreds of Russian nesting dolls. She has a story to go along with almost every piece that she has. During her time living in Arizona she discovered a local flea market. She became acquainted with a vendor at the market who had the dolls shipped to him from a family member in Russia. Across her time spent in Arizona she acquired many of these dolls. Each one is lovely and painted in a unique fashion to tell a story. I loved exploring her apartment while she told me about all of the wonderful pieces of art that she has.

One of the earliest things I learned about Jean was her love of dogs. This was brought up in our very first day together. She used to breed English Springer Spaniels. She told me about the dogs she used to have, and how they would have full run of the property. Her husband would sneak them food from the drive through, like hamburgers and ice cream. She told me that she missed having a dog, so I began bringing my dog Watson with me when I went for visits. He was different from what she was used to, but they got along just fine. Jean enjoyed giving him treats and petting him, and he ate up the attention. It has been very fun for both of us to have Watson with us on visits.
All of these things are only the tip of the iceberg when it comes to the depth of Jean’s passion. She is one of the special people in the world that looks for the best in everything and everyone. I feel very lucky to have Jean as a friend, and cannot thank her enough for all she has shared with me.

Jean Thompson, Western Home Communities Senior
Hannah Mallow, UNI Human Relations Senior

Her Contagious Smile

The first thing I noticed when meeting Marilyn is her smile and positive attitude. Marilyn is always so caring and easy to talk to. Our conversations flowed seamlessly and the time we spend talking goes by so fast. My favorite part about meeting with Marilyn is having the opportunity to hear her humbling stories and how she has become the amazing person that she is today. Marilyn shared many stories with me over the times we spent together. She talked about her late husband, traveling, and her beautiful family.

Marilyn is one of the most caring and hardworking people that I have met in my lifetime. She greets everyone with a smile and a hello. When walking through the hallways of the Western Home, Marilyn is always starting conversations with the other residents and introducing them to me. This has made me feel very welcome and comfortable in the Western Home.

One of the things that Marilyn has always said to me, was not to rush through life and enjoy it. Marilyn truly lives life to the fullest. She continues to take advantage of new adventures, whether this consists of traveling with her family or taking the bus trips that the Western Homes have to offer.

I have always prided myself in being an independent person, but after meeting and getting to know Marilyn, I now see what it means to truly be an independent person. When getting to know Marilyn, you will soon discover how much she values the people in her life. She talks proudly about her family and friends. Marilyn cherishes the time she gets to spend with friends and family, but she also enjoys the simplicity of reading a good book.

Marilyn inspired me to live my best life and never take anything for granted. She has taught me to always take advantage of opportunities that come my way and go with the flow of life.

Marilyn Roseberry, Western Home Communities Senior
Morgan Renfer, UNI Human Relations Senior

A True Western Home Girl

Marlys Cook is one of the most compassionate women I have ever met. Every time I go to visit her she always has the biggest smile on her face, no matter her mood. She is a woman of many interesting and funny stories. I love to listen to her stories because I am inspired and awed at every single one. I am so grateful to get to share the
one story that seemed most reoccurring and fascinating. Her story is truly remarkable, and she is the epitome of why you should never stop chasing your dreams.

Marlys and her husband, Cecil, desperately wanted the grocery store that was located on the hill in Cedar Falls, Iowa. So, she got the money from her mother to buy the store from the previous owner. They bought the store and named it Cook’s Food Fare. She felt like this store was a blessing because her family was all able to work there together. Her husband worked the meat department, and her son, Bradley, worked the cash register. Marlys’ favorite part was stocking the shelves. She loved to keep the store clean. Every Friday, people would be lined up outside of the store for their meats. Unfortunately, another grocery store moved to the area and they slowly lost business. They had to end up selling the store, but that didn’t stop Marlys.

Marlys then cashed in an insurance policy that belonged to her dad so she could go to the University of Northern Iowa where she could study long term care and administration. Cecil started to work for the city of Cedar Falls while she took classes at UNI and worked at the Viking Pump. Marlys got a degree from both UNI and Des Moines Community College, and was very excited to begin working in the field.

Her first job was at Western Home, the same place she currently resides in today. She was the first activity director at Western Home. Her favorite part was hearing stories from missionaries that worked there. Marlys worked here for eight to ten years. She had a lot of fun at Western Home, but ultimately wanted to do more with long term care. She always tells me that Western Home has not changed much since she worked there, but there are still a lot of things that are different. She and her husband then moved to Burlington, Iowa. In Burlington, she was the director of the nursing home she worked at, which was her dream job. Burlington was not for her, and she wanted to move back to Northern Iowa. From there, her and her husband made a few more moves around Northeastern Iowa before retiring and living in the Cedar Valley area.

This story shows that you should never give up on your passion. I think that all of us can learn something from Marlys’ story. I am thankful that I know someone who worked hard for what she believed in, and never gave up!

Marlys Cook, Western Home Communities Senior
Maddie Reynolds, UNI Human Relations Senior

Heart Over Hardship

Throughout my life I have participated in sports. My coaches in the sports I played would always recite to us a quote by Lou Holtz whenever something did not go the way we had planned, “Life is 10 percent what happens to you and ninety percent how you respond to it.” In my conversations with Lori Freet, this quote plays through my head.

Lori grew up in a small town, much like myself. Her parents raised her to have a helping heart. Sure, her family was similar to many of the time and had hardships along the way, but they never strayed from offering help where they saw fit. This inclination to help followed her through life. She has volunteered and helped in any situation where she is needed. She has done many things, some of which include Meals on Wheels, starting a
marriage group, helping in church, women’s organization and hospitality house, and helping in homeschooling. These are only a few of the many things she reflected on during our meetings. Never seeking praise for doing these, but seeing them as ways in which she was shaped as a person and helped those who she could.

Lori’s life has not always gone the way she had planned, and obstacles have gotten in her way. However, she has nothing but a positive outlook on these experiences and events. Life is hard and far from fair, but Lori is my reminder that it is all about how we approach these obstacles and how we respond in adversity. In only my second week of meeting with her, Lori told me, “Hardships make you a better person because you learn to deal with things you wouldn’t otherwise. You learn to depend on others. You can be an individual, but depend.” I thought this was powerful and drew me back to the quote by Holtz. Lori knows she is in charge of her own happiness, “I have to be the one that moves forward.” She isn’t content with letting life happen to her, she approaches it with control and ambition. Even in the hardest of times, she reflects on her family support and the support she can provide them.

Even though this is only a glimpse of the person Lori Freet is, I feel this may be the part she is most proud of- her incredible ability to see the good in misfortune.

As she said, “What looks risky for a while turns out to be good.”

Lori Freet, Western Home Communities Senior
Taylor Rodgers, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Pride of Responsibility

There is a man by the name of Louis Hellwig. He’s got a lot going on in his life; a lot more than I can explain in such a short space. If you’ve got a deck of cards or want to discuss travel experiences, I encourage you to travel out to Prairie Wind Apartment 302 and have a conversation with him! You better be at your best and make some smart moves to beat Lou!

Louis grew up in the great state of New York. His father owned a grocery store, so it was his job to help there whenever he could. This wasn’t always enjoyable, but he stuck with it. Persevering through this struggled, helped him learn to appreciate the difficulties that came with working. Working on anything is a hassle, but finding ways to make what you do meaningful and enjoyable is something Louis excels at. Throughout his life, Louis has had many experiences that have both challenged him and rewarded his life.

Responsibility is something that Mr. Hellwig takes great pride in. “The challenge and determination of persevering through something that you put your mind to” is how he defines responsibility. Lou has had the responsibility of being a professor at UNI in the psychology department, volunteering with numerous organizations, and working throughout mission trips. The thing he holds most near and dear to his heart, though, is the life with his daughter. She is someone who he raised from the very beginning. Early on, it was a struggle like any other parenting experience. Eventually, it became a very
enjoyable experience. Louis would go shopping, have picnics, and go on vacations just to make his daughter happy.

Lou did love taking his daughter on vacations, however, there were some that he took strictly for his own enjoyment. He didn’t do a lot for himself, but this was something he could do to continue living a healthy life. The trips he took involved going to the mountains, foreign countries, and visiting people. For example, he traveled to Nicaragua for a mission trip during winter break of one academic year here at UNI. While there, college students and faculty helped the natives harvest the coffee beans that they were struggling to finish on time. I don’t know of too many people who would travel to work during a time when they could relax.

Louis, however, loved to work and felt he had a responsibility to help. He experienced some uncomfortable circumstances while on the trip, but some fun ones as well. One person who came to visit the location he was at even asked him about Michael Jackson. This encounter was one that Louis found hilarious. “This was when the Jackson 5 was starting to emerge, so that must’ve been all that this person knew about America.” There were many more encounters with people while in Nicaragua, but this was his most memorable.

Many people would look at the things Louis does and possibly make different decisions than he has, but the things that he has experienced have helped make him the man he is today. Responsibilities are something Mr. Hellwig loves to have in his life. It gives him the sense of being that he’s desired in many other areas, so no matter what he can do to help, he will do it! He’s one of the most respectful, kind-hearted, and amazing people that I know. Thank you, Louis, for who you are and what you believe in.

Louis Hellwig, Western Home Communities Senior
Victor Sanders, UNI Human Relations Senior

Journey Across the Midwest

It all began right here in Iowa, Dunkerton to be exact. This is where Clair and Florine Rowe first met. Little did they know, just seeing each other in the school where they both worked would lead to a world of adventure. For a period of time Florine and Clair worked in different school districts in Algona, IA. But this did not stop them from eventually getting married in Cedar Rapids, IA. After their marriage, this is where their journey started.

The first destination was Indiana. Clair had been offered a job at Ball State University as the Head of Marketing. He spent the next four summers studying at the University of Iowa to receive his PhD. At the beginning of Clair’s studies, he and Florine had one child together. By the completion of his PhD, they had three children. With the completion of his PhD, Clair was also able to become the Assistant Dean of Business at Ball State University. During this time, Florine worked as an elementary school substitute teacher in Indiana. According to Clair, the book titled Middletown USA is an accurate portrayal of life in Indiana. He didn’t know about the book until they moved there but it
depicted typical people in a typical town setting. 15 years later, they took their next step in their journey across the Midwest.

This next destination was North Dakota. Florine said that when Clair told her that he was offered the position as the Dean of the College of Business in the flat land of Grand Folks, ND, she said, “Are you kidding me?” Even with this remark, the both of them ended up loving North Dakota. With Clair as the Dean of Business, Florine decided to quit teaching and instead became a full time entertainer for Clair and his colleagues while also volunteering at many different organizations. They decided to embrace the lifestyle of the area that they were living in. One of the things they began doing was going to hockey games, something that they had not done before. Clair has also said that the native residents of North Dakota wanted to change the name of the state. They thought that if they dropped the “North” that maybe people would want to go there more.

A memory that Florine and Clair reminisce about North Dakota was the airbase that was there. Specifically when Clair and his bomb crew were able to have a reunion at the airbase. Clair served in WWII for the Army/Air Force as a tail gunner. At the reunion, they said that soldiers lined up and thanked them for their service. Along with this, they were also able to enter a B-52 which is something they had not been able to do for roughly 25 years.

After 15 years of living in North Dakota and a total of 30 years living out of Iowa, this is when Clair and Florine returned to their homeland. The deciding factor in this was that they both had family here and Clair wanted to retire. With moving back to Iowa this brought another job opportunity for Clair, this time at the University of Northern Iowa. This time while at UNI, Clair served as a professor, Interim Head of Marketing, and Active Interim Dean of the College of Business until he retired again. This is when the Rowe’s went to Western Home living. They lived in a villa for 10 years before moving to Wind Ridge this past year. They stay in Iowa for a majority of the year but during the winter they go out to California to be closer to their family.

Since Clair and Florine travel to California for the winter, this is the first time that they have taken a Human Relations student. I must say that I am incredibly grateful that they did so. Not only have I been able to hear great stories from the two of them, but I also have been able to receive people who are like grandparents to me. For that, all I can say to the two of them is a huge thank you. You have truly made an impact on my life, even though you might not have known you did.

Clair and Florine Rowe, Western Home Communities Seniors
Katie Sandman, UNI Human Relations Senior
Decades of Round Robin

Alice was born in the Iowan country and attended a one-room schoolhouse before her family moved and she attended a two-room schoolhouse. There were very few girls around her age that she could befriend and play with while growing up. This taught her to appreciate friendships from a young age.

About forty years ago, Alice was one of twelve friends that wanted to stay in touch no matter the distance. So, they decided to start a Round Robin, a letter that they send throughout their group so they can talk about what is happening in their lives. When it reaches the last person, they send it back to the first and it continues. Forty years later, eight of them are still sending it around. One of the twelve decided not to participate anymore, and three have passed away.

They have a variety of occupations. There is a piano teacher, a nurse, a doctor, a professor, a secretary, and a lot of teachers. They have been with each other through weddings, funerals, kids, and grandkids. Over the years some of them have talked about switching to email instead of paper, but most decided they would rather continue using pen and paper. Some would type their letter before sending it, but computers crashed and printers stopped working so they decided to start handwriting their letters again. To this day, Alice can recognize everyone’s unique handwriting.

Sometimes it will take 6-8 months for the Round Robin to make it through everyone, other times it only takes 1-2 months. Alice told me that no matter how long it has been since she received the letter, she still gets excited. She loves opening her mailbox, seeing that big envelope, and sitting down to read what has been happening in everyone else’s lives.

Alice Hansen, Western Home Communities Senior
Brianna Tucker, UNI Human Relations Senior

Patches of Pearl

Meeting with Pearl has allowed me to gain a new perspective on life and how our stories can mend together to make something beautiful. One of Pearl’s passions in life is quilting. I have enjoyed watching her eyes light up as she talks about quilt shows and preparing for the Western Home craft show. However, quilting has more of a meaning to me now than just a cozy blanket that my grandmother made for me after I graduated high school. Instead, I now view our lives and our stories in the form of crafting the perfect quilt that is unique to us.

Each time I meet with Pearl, we add a new patch to our quilt and as conversation flows, we are adding new patches onto our elegant quilt pattern. Her stories of growing up on the farm and facing different challenges in life have allowed me to reflect on how much I can identify with an individual who has many years of life over me. Despite the generations between us, Pearl and I are very similar since we are both farm kids, prefer white wine over red wine, and find it important to keep our faith present in our lives, especially in times of hardship. Our meetings have allowed for us to cut the fabric of each
other’s story and thread them into our own lives so that they stick with us throughout our lifetime.

The craft of quilting is not something we can pick up in a few hours. It is a process that takes time and skill that is only obtained through practice. Like Pearl, I am learning through my trials just like she did when her husband, Dick, lost his job a few decades ago. This patch of life is what landed Pearl and Dick in the Cedar Valley and they adjusted their threads to be associated with the John Deere plant and volunteer at the Western Home.

This stitch pattern ended up curving and landed them in a new place that was outside of their comfort zone, but landed them in a place that they could grow and have a home. Much like the process of making a quilt, Pearl and Dick mended their patches of Wisconsin and Iowa together throughout time and both learned to master their craft at their new jobs and volunteer interview.

Quilts are what keep us warm and offer comfort in a time of need, but what is important is that other people can also be our quilts. Dick was a quilt for Pearl and offered his love and comfort during the trials of her life, and he accepted her for who she was, height and all. They are patches in each other’s lives, just like Pearl is now a patch in my life. With the time we have had together, we have managed to create a quilt that is full of laughter, identifying with each other, and creating conversation that moves and bends much like a stitch pattern would. We have threaded our needles and taken a chance on one another, and somehow we have mended a few patches that are only a small portion of our quilts.

Pearl Hanson, Western Home Communities Senior
Emilee Upah, UNI Human Relations Senior

The Joy of Making Music

You only need to spend a few minutes with Marleta Matheson to see that the majority of her life revolves around music. Almost every story she tells can be related back to some performance or rehearsal or moment spent at the piano. Marleta clearly has a strong love for music, and her dedication to the craft is incredibly admirable.

Marleta began playing piano at the age of 8 when her mother began to give her lessons. She learned from her mother for a couple of months until her mother signed her up for piano lessons with a woman in town.

Her musical journey continued in junior high, where she played piano for the chorus but never really sang. She also performed in state contest in high school on both piano and French horn. In college, she majored in music and really enjoyed playing piano and being a part of her college’s sorority. When discussing her musical ability throughout the different stages of her life, Marleta said, “It’s just something I was born with or naturally good at. I was talented but probably could have worked harder.”

Following her education, Marleta taught music at a school in Fairfield, Iowa for two years. After that, she went to graduate school in Michigan and earned her Master’s degree. Then, her career led her to accompanying at the University of Northern Iowa, where she met her husband, Charles, a voice professor who she claims gave her a lot of
confidence in her piano playing. Some of her favorite memories from this time were performing with colleagues, students, and guest artists. At many of the performances, Marleta recalls moments where the soloist began playing a passage differently than they had in prior rehearsals, but somehow, in “a moment of mutual inspiration,” they made the change together and created a wonderful musical moment. She claims that these times where one person has an idea in the moment and the other person feels it and picks up on it to create something better are “the joy of playing.”

To Marleta, music is all about the connections to other people, rather than the pure expression of making music. She enjoys music because she gets to work with other people, and it’s a way to be of service to others. Marleta said, “I never played piano because I had to; it was my way of helping other people. There are times when it really just warms the heart.”

Marleta experiences hearing loss, and even with the help of hearing aids, struggles to listen to music like she used to. However, she still makes an effort to go to different musical performances around the community, especially at UNI. While she may not be as active in the musical world now as she used to be, Marleta clearly still has a great love and support for music and loves how it connects her to other people. Her dedication to music and her fellow musicians is impressive and commendable, and the music community is much better off for it.

Marleta Matheson, Western Home Communities Senior
Mallory Vallentine, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Lorna’s “Dash”

At the age of 83, Lorna Ericson lives in a cozy apartment at Western Home Communities. Her four cats keep her company while she cooks and crafts. On a sunny day in September, Lorna and I met for the first time. Her warm and welcoming spirit immediately eased my nerves for this new experience. Little did I know that Lorna would not only bring me joy this semester, but completely disrupt my outlook on life.

Lorna introduced me to a poem called “The Dash” by Linda Ellis. On every gravestone, a person’s life is summarized by their birth and death years separated by a small, thin, and stretched-out, line. Within this simple punctuation marking rests the years in between. It holds life. I came to the realization that through meeting with Lorna, I would not only make a dear friend, but get to know the ways she has spent her own “dash”.

Family. One of the most important ways Lorna has spent her “dash” is by surrounding herself with the love and support of family. Growing up in the small Iowa town, West Branch, with her parents and one sister, Lorna remembers going to church alongside her extended family. When Lorna grew up to pursue a teaching career, she stumbled across a man named Laurel in summer school. They would soon marry and eventually have three beautiful children of their own. As Lorna’s “dash” continued, the family grew and grew. She now has eight grandchildren and three more great-grandchildren! Although she is quite humble, Lorna takes great pride in the accomplishments of her hard-working and talented family. They live spread out across
the country, yet their faces rest smiling on Lorna’s hallway so that she can be grateful every day for the love woven through her “dash”.

**Resilience.** Lorna’s dash has also been marked with tragedy, yet she found the strength to carry on. The sudden passing of her hard-working and loving husband came as an unbelievable shock. Lorna was faced with a choice. To either find herself in constant grief, or to live each day in optimism. With the fierce support of family and friends, Lorna chose the latter. Scattered throughout her apartment, Lorna’s memory lives on in beautiful wood workings. Although it has only been over a year, Lorna finds reason to smile, laugh, and love every day. Lorna’s “dash” has been strengthened by outstanding resilience.

**Faith.** Lorna’s dash has been shaped by her Christianity. One of the very first similarities she and I shared was our faith. Throughout her life, Lorna’s faith has grown and shaped her into who she is today. On Sundays, you’ll find Lorna at First United Methodist. On several of our meetings, Lorna shared beautiful bible verses that spoke to her. They always seemed to come to me at exactly the right time. God has always provided her with strength, especially in times of grief. He sent her a wonderful support group of church members, family, and friends. On Lorna’s dining room table sits a beautiful portrait of Jesus to remind her of the unending love He has placed in her “dash”.

Lorna’s “dash” is beautifully made of family, resilience, and faith, along with many wonderful things that make Lorna, Lorna. Her remarkable positivity, contentment, and humility inspires me to see the light in any darkness. I’ve learned to live passionately for the love of others and yourself. God absolutely intended for Lorna and I to meet, and I am truly grateful that He made our “dashes” overlap.

Lorna Ericson, Western Home Communities Senior
Dawn Vickers, UNI Human Relations Senior

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**Sister, Sister**

Who would have thought when I went to meet Donnabelle Miller, I would be going to meet my sister. When I first met her, we began talking about all of our similarities such as our passion for teaching and the University of Northern Iowa. As we continued talking, she had asked me what I was involved in on campus while attending college. I had mentioned that I was in a sorority. Immediately, Donnabelle told me that she was in a sorority as well while she attended the Iowa Teacher College. I was very intrigued and told her that I was a member of the Gamma Psi chapter of Gamma Phi Beta. Her eyes widened and she smiled. She told me that she too was an alumni of the Gamma Psi chapter and my sorority sister.

Donnabelle Miller was first a member of the chapter Delta Phi at the Iowa Teacher College. She joined Delta Delta Phi in January of 1950. She spent many years as a dedicated member of this organization. After she graduated from college, she became an advisor for Delta Delta Phi on campus at the University of Northern Iowa. Gamma Phi Beta came to campus around 1968. The chapter of Delta Delta Phi was then asked to become a part of Gamma Phi Beta. Donnabelle had been asked as an alumni member of Delta Delta Phi to continue as an advisor as these two organizations joined together. She
was then initiated into Gamma Phi Beta and continued being an advisor for six to seven years.

I remember her telling me all of the memories she had made with her sorority sisters during her college years. She once spoke of a time when she lived in Lawther Hall. At the time, there was a curfew for all residents to be back in the dorms by a certain time. Her and her sorority sisters had found out about a secret tunnel underneath the road leading to what is now known as Campbell Hall. She spoke about how they would sneak around the dormitories in their pajamas. They thought that they were so sneaky doing this without anyone ever knowing about it.

Hearing all of these stories from Donnabelle about her college friends and sorority sisters makes me feel oh so lucky. Through this I have realized how thankful I am for the friendships I have made during my time at college, especially those friends I have connected with through Gamma Phi Beta. Donnabelle, today, stays in contact with many of her sorority sisters. One of her sisters and her talk monthly and exchange gifts with one another even though they live on opposite sides of the United States.

This proves distance has nothing on a strong friendship. There are also several Gamma Phi Beta’s and Delta Delta Phi’s that are currently still living in the area that Donnabelle regularly spends time with. This gives me hope that even though my life as a college student is coming to a close, the friendships I have made will last forever.

Donnabelle Miller, Western Home Communities Senior
Emma Zern, UNI Human Relations Senior

Marlys Cook has always been a giver. From an early age she desired to be a respectful daughter, a caring sister, and a dedicated friend. It was no surprise that when the time came to get married, she strove to become a devoted wife. Marlys knew that life isn’t always sunshine and roses, but with a good friend, life can be taken on with compromise and trust. Marlys and her late husband, Cecil, had many plans. At certain points in their relationship they had plans to have six kids, to begin a dairy business, and to run a grocery store. Although none of those plans exactly panned out the way that they had anticipated, the love for one another that they planned to last forever never tarnished.

In sixth grade, Marlys attended the Janesville Country School. It was here where a young man named Cecil Cook had transferred in from a different country school to attend seventh grade. He had just about the biggest dimples she had ever seen and soon became friends with him. During that year, terrible news came to that country school when Cecil had been told that his mother had passed away. After that time, Marlys and Cecil remained close friends, sharing the pain that comes along with heartache.

Things became different their freshman year at Janesville High School. There was a hayride event that year where many couples at the high school were able to breathe in the fresh air and sit alongside their significant others and friends. Not dating at the time, Cecil brought up the idea that he and Marlys should go run behind the wagon instead of riding. Marlys agreed and mentioned that, “At that moment, we realized that had more feelings for each other than that of just being friends.” The rest was history. Marlys and
Cecil would spend “every single night” together after school. Sometimes these days consisted of going out to movies, while other times were spent driving around in Cecil’s 1949 Ford pickup truck. However it was spent, it brought them both much joy.

On October 25th, 1952, Marlys Cook became united to Cecil Cook in marriage. Since the church was not finished being remolded, the ceremony was held in the Janesville High School gymnasium. She was only 18 years-old, while Cecil was 19.

Not too long after the two were married, a “shivaree” took place in November. A “shivaree” was where family, friends, and neighbors kidnapped a newlywed couple and had them perform a crazy task. For Marlys and Cecil, this task entailed Cecil pushing his lovely bride in a wagon up a hill while one of the front wagon tires was deflated. It was not the easiest, but Cecil proved himself manly enough for Marlys. At the same time the big event was going on, other friends raided the couple’s house and sprinkled Shine-A-Dish dry dish soap all over clothes in the dresser and the bed. Despite all shenanigans, Marlys and Cecil provided candy bars and cigars to all who took part in the occasion.

While the first few months of marriage were enjoyable, it came time for Cecil to leave for the Korean War on February 1st, 1953. Marlys’ best friend and companion left to serve the country, and she had to choose how she was going to make the most of the situation. She decided that preparing for an ultimate homecoming for Cecil would motivate her to stay strong during the next two years. She borrowed two-thousand dollars from her father to make changes to the farmhouse and land that she lived on with her father-in-law.

The house was raised to install a basement, a heating system, and running water. The pantry space was also converted into a fully-functioning bathroom. The lawn which was usually covered with wandering chickens was made into a luscious green-grassed area with the selling of the chickens and elimination of the cement tank and windmill. Cattle were also sold, so fences were also taken down to make a clean, open space. Marlys still had a loan on her hands. She made it a goal to pay off her debts before Cecil’s big arrival.

During these years of remodeling, Marlys worked at the Roy F. Aarons Real-Estate Office during the weekdays in Waterloo and at a grocery store on the weekends. Not only did she work hard enough to pay off the two-thousand dollars for the remodeling project, but also for the other two-thousand-dollar loan that she and Cecil took out from her dad to buy a green, two-door Chevy the day before their wedding. When Cecil came home on January 1st, 1955, he was so pleased with Marlys and loved the improvements to their household. Her devotion to him did not falter and his did not for her either. It was the ultimate homecoming. They had a few places that they called home over the course of their marriage after that initial farmhouse. But there was one thing that didn’t move, and that was the love that lived in each other’s hearts.

Marlys Cook, Western Home Communities Senior
Maria Ahrens, UNI Human Relations Senior
“You cannot be afraid to do something,” said Richard. Fear could have prevented Richard from entering our military and serving as a pilot in the United States Air Force. Fear while flying could have led to disaster in the air and even death. Fear could have sent Richard down a very different path in life. “Many people are afraid of failure,” he explains, “but some people are afraid of success.” Bette Midler says in “The Rose,” one of Richard’s favorite songs, “(It is) the soul afraid of dying that never learns to live.” As a pilot in the Air Force, Richard has lived out many situations where fear could take over, but his perspective on fear has allowed him to avoid tragedy and to find success.

The Air Force strives to protect their pilots as they train and learn to fly. For this reason, pilots are to be accompanied by an instructor in their plane as they learn new flight strategies and maneuvers prior to conducting such skills on their own. In such fashion, Richard had conducted two or three night flights—a task more difficult than flying during the day for lack of visibility—with an instructor prior to his first solo night flight. From Webb Air Force Base in Big Spring, Texas, Richard was given the mission to fly to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas, refuel the plane, and fly back to Webb; all of this was to be done at night. The T-38 Advanced Jet Trainer was fueled up and ready to go.

Taking off down the North runway, the plane left the ground. Richard pulled the landing gear up and turned out of “traffic.” As he settled into his headings for San Antonio, he checked his engine instruments and found that the oil pressure gauge for the right engine was bouncing; it was supposed to be stable. This was the only indication in the plane that there was a problem. Changing the radio frequency from departure control to the operations channel, Richard reported the oil pressure problem. “Declare an emergency, shut down the engine, and return for a single engine landing.”

 Barely into his first solo night flight, Richard had to turn around and conduct a single engine heavy weight landing. Flying a two engine plane with only one engine is something that is practiced with an instructor, but landing the plane without losing the extra weight of the fuel with only one engine at night is not practiced. Richard understood from his training that landing a “heavy” plane (i.e. a plane full of fuel) would require him to maintain a higher air speed to counter the extra couple thousand pounds of fuel. “Declare an emergency, shut down the engine, and return for a single engine landing.” Richard had his command, so he got right to it by turning around and getting into pattern to land. “I did not think much of it,” said Richard.

The plane came in and the wheels made contact with the runway. A high speed landing requires extra runway space to stop, so it was critical to slow the plane carefully and quickly. Richard noticed a fire truck midway down the runway, which is typical for “declared emergencies.” As he slowed to driving speed, he began turning off the runway and noticed two more full-sized fire trucks and a smaller truck at the end of the runway. The fire department stopped him to inspect the brakes to make sure they did not overheat, which could have then led to a blown tire and a hydraulic leak, culminating into a fiery disaster. All concerns check out, so they instructed him to park the plane.

As he was documenting the problem in his log book, the fire department explained to him their anticipation of the plane not stopping and hitting the precautionary
barrier at the end of the runway. This explained the company of firefighters at the end of the runway. A student making a single engine heavy landing at night was not in the plans for Richard’s mission to San Antonio, but it played out better than expected by many. He was left with a “Great job,” and a pat on the back from his Student Squadron Commander and Flight Instructor, and a “Thank you,” from the fire department for sparing them the work required from a plane hitting the precautionary barrier.

Richard did not give way to fear when the call was made to declare an emergency and shut down an engine. He recalled thinking, “This is what I’m supposed to do.” When flying a plane, you don’t have the luxury of taking a break from flying to worry about the situation. His lack of fear in the circumstances provided him with a clear mind to take appropriate action and to land his plane safely. “You cannot be afraid of failure, and you cannot be afraid of success.” Richard has learned to live and to succeed as he has developed his perspective on fear. The night flight to San Antonio well exemplifies what can result when you avoid fear in troubling circumstances.

Richard Betterton, Western Home Communities Senior  
Kevin Conger, UNI Human Relations Senior

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From Immigrant to Hall of Fame

Don Erusha grew up in Cedar Rapids, Iowa to a small Bohemian family. His mother's maiden name was Jebousck and his father's was Jrusha. When his family came over and entered Ellis Island, the person changed their name to Erusha. From then on their names were changed by dropping the J and adding the E. When he started school they put him in a special education class because he did not speak English very well. His parents spoke Bohemian. Once he started learning English, he subsequently began to forget how to talk his first language because he was so young.

Once in high school he wanted to start playing football, but his parents thought it was too dangerous so they forbid him to play. Instead of telling them he had been playing football, he would tell them he was at the school on the stage crew for plays. After he graduated high school, he and two of his friends went to enlist in the military. After arriving, his two friends were not allowed to go with him because they had too high of blood pressure, consequently he was stationed in California alone.

Upon returning from his two years in the military, he realized he wanted to play football. He was able to go to Coe College in Cedar Rapids and play for four years while getting his degree. Don was especially proud because his parents did not earn a high school degree until they were around 60 years of age. He was able to get a high school degree and undergraduate degree along with a masters. From there his love of football grew. He was fortunate enough to find coaching jobs at several places before ending up in Cedar Falls. He began coaching for Sheriff at the University of Northern Iowa where he was inducted into the Hall of Fame. He also helped coach at Cedar Falls high school and from time to time even at 90 years old, makes it over to a few practices a year.

Don Erusha, Western Home Communities Senior  
Cole Cook, UNI Human Relations Senior
Growing up, Audrey lived in New Hartford, Iowa with her parents. Growing up, Audrey’s family never really had a lot of extra money to spend on things. She did not become aware of this until later in life. She always had food on the table, and the cupboards were full, she did not know anything different. She always knew she was loved and cared for. Starting at a young age, Audrey helped around the house.

One of the first jobs Audrey had was going to her town, door to door, selling garden seeds. This job did not last very long, but it was the first job to earn a little bit of money here and there. She then started to sell boxes of greeting cards to her neighbors. This also did not last long. While doing those, she would also be helping out on her family farm.

During high school, Audrey tried to work in a restaurant, but that was not the job for her. During one of the summers, she and her friend tried detasseling. They would get picked up in the morning and take a bus to go collect others who were also detasseling. They would then go to the field and start walking the fields picking the tassels off the corn. Halfway through the first morning, her friend decided this was not what she wanted to do and convinced Audrey to go back to the bus and quit. Audrey followed along but then soon realized that sitting on the bus all day was not going to be fun. That she was not a quitter when the job or task got tough or complicated. Audrey then went back into the field after lunch and finished out the summer working in the fields detasseling.

During her time at Iowa State Teachers College, Audrey was going for her education degree, and she worked as a secretary in the science department. She did not fit in with this department, but Audrey stuck it out and continued to work there through her time at college. Audrey graduated and became a 1st-grade teacher. She worked there for several years before she had children and stayed home to raise the kids. Once the children were in school, she became a substitute teacher, and she was very busy working most of the time, as she was the only qualified substitute that lived in the town.

Through Audrey's life, she was worked hard and became dedicated to the many different jobs that she has worked. She has not enjoyed some of them, but always finished what she started. Through work, she has learned how to conquer challenges and also has helped raise her self-confidence through the process of facing the many challenges life has thrown her.

Audrey Schoeman, Western Home Communities Senior
Abigail Dolan, UNI Human Relations Senior

My time with Bob Robinson began in September when I was assigned to make visits at The Western Home Retirement Facility for a class I was taking at UNI. I feel that it’s appropriate to reflect on our conversations and my relationship with Bob on Veteran’s Day. Each time I’d enter his room, Bob greeted me with “Grab yourself a beer.” So joining him for a beer, our visits began. I enjoy visiting with people and Bob was very willing to share himself as well as put up with my questions.

“Grab Yourself a Beer”
We talked about his 22 years of service in the Navy, history, fishing, family, and he even gave me some advice for the future. I gained a lot from this time with Bob. He is an intelligent and friendly person. Many times when we met we lost track of time due to the conversations we had. I look at Bob’s life and see the interests and things we have in common. I certainly appreciated the historical topics we talked about because I used to be a history major.

Bob was born in 1928 with a little Irish and German in him. His father’s side of the family was from Ireland and his mother’s side was from Germany. I was happy to share our interest in Johnny Cash. Bob remembers listening to “Wreck of the Old ‘97” by Johnny Cash when he was young. I had this same interest and in middle school, I made a poster and report about “The Man in Black.” This common interest led us to many open and good conversations.

As I mentioned, Bob served in the Navy for 22 years from 1946-1973. He joined right out of high school. He is a well-traveled man who has been all over the world with a few more spots left on his bucket list. These places include Athens, Georgia to see his last grandchild and then back to Hawaii. I could tell that Bob had a good work ethic that fit well with military service. A person isn’t in the military for that long without developing a strong work ethic. Bob is very knowledgeable and educated. Bob’s favorite military location was Taiwan.

I could tell Bob would do what is best for his family. Bob is a big family man and he is proud of his family. I admire Bob for his faith and his honesty. We have very similar views on faith with the main focus of religion is love. Here's the thing; Bob’s a big fisherman who likes to fish for trout and walleye. I have grown up fishing with my brother, uncles, dad and grandpa. We both have an interest in cooking. We both like history. So many visits were filled with information that Bob knew about the Cold War. In fact Bob is going to give a speech in February covering the Cold War.

To close, there are a lot of values that we have in common values, family, history, fishing, cooking. I remember a story he told me about being unsure with what the future held at an age very close to mine. Well, things turned out pretty good for Bob and his advice I’m sure I will be okay too. Cheers to you, Bob, on this memorable Veterans Day!

Bob Robinson, Western Home Communities Senior
Ben Schnurr, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Traveling Around the World

Having children who live on two opposite side of the country it was often hard. To get everyone together in one place can be a challenge. Because of this, it was often difficult for Pete McCart’s grandchildren to get to know each other. Pete and her husband Bruce decided they were going to take their grandchildren on a trip they would never forget.

Growing up and as an adult, Pete moved around a lot. Traveling and camping is one of their family’s favorite things to do. The McCart family has camped and traveled through most of the States in the US. They have also traveled through Europe with their
kids and earlier this year ventured to Egypt. When camping they prefer to go old style with the tent. Camping is something Pete and Bruce still love to do in the summer and the fall. Their fun adventurous spirits have allowed them to share some unforgettable memories with their grandchildren.

The McCart’s have two daughters and a son. At the time, one daughter was living in Iowa and their other daughter was in California. Traveling to these places was always much easier for Pete and Bruce to do instead of their kids coming home. The two decided they would pair each grandchild up with one cousin and take them on a trip to wherever they would like to go.

The oldest children from the respective families were Andan and Jacob. The two boys went camping and canoeing in Maine with their grandparents. This was a fun intergenerational hostel with other kids and grandparents. Following this they went to New Zealand. The young boys were passionate about The Lord of the Rings at the time, so of course they went to visit the set. A tour guide informed them about the exiting details of where and how things were filmed. Their adventures continued with interactions from a Kangaroo and they even feed penguins.

The second oldest grandchildren, Robby and Elliot wanted to travel to a very different place. These kids went to Utah first and had fun rope climbing and riding in a hot air balloon. Following they headed to the tropics of Costa Rica. Between the seven volcanoes which surrounded them, they white water rafted. The most exciting part of their trip was watching turtles come out of the ocean to lay their eggs in the sand. The boys got close enough to the turtles that they got hit with dirt as the turtle dug its hole to bury the eggs.

The last grandchild, Maddie, got to have a fun one on one trip with her Grandma Pete. After plane complications, the girls finally made their way to Oregon. The week was spent tie-dying shirts and doing crafts. The two also got to make many other friends along the way. Pete got to experience her first zip line across the Oregon country which as was something she will never forget. From there, the two made their way to Paris and Normandy. Maddie was adventurous when trying new foods. She liked to eat snails and thought she would try oysters for the first time, but discovered it may have been a one-time adventure.

Pete and Bruce grew so much from their experiences with their grandchildren. The eyes of Pete and Bruce along with their grandchildren were open to new cultures and parts of the world in which they knew little about. The people they met were influential as well and allowed them to learn first-hand about the countries they were visiting. The McCart’s biggest hope for these different trips would be for their grandchildren to get to know one another even though they live far away.

I have been able to hear about Pete’s adventures around the world. The stories and relationships which have been built are amazing. Pete truly lives with a kind and gracious heart who is up for any adventure. Who knows what their next big trip will be and what memories will be made.

Pete McCart, Western Home Communities Senior
Lauren Soukup, UNI Human Relations Senior
This is the story of how I met Rebecca, and the incredible impact she has made on my life as a future teacher and a human being. I was told in my Human Relations class that I would be paired up with a senior citizen out of the Western Home. I was nervous and excited, as this was something outside of my comfort zone. Our story began with a few hiccups. I had a few bouts of illness back to back that prevented us from being able to meet for the first four weeks or so. I didn’t want to get her sick or her husband, so I made the decision to keep my distance for a while. I was able to talk with Rebecca on the phone, and we developed a small relationship through just hearing one other’s voices.

Rebecca called me and insisted that we meet that following Saturday no matter if I was sick or not. Our first meeting was held in the dining area of the Willowwood facility. Rebecca offered me a drink and a warm smile, and I instantly felt comfortable and relaxed in her presence. We sat and talked about everything you could imagine. She shared stories of her childhood, her loving husband, and her years in teaching. We visited for nearly three hours, and even after all those hours, I didn’t want to leave. I couldn’t wait to come back the following week to get to know her even better.

Rebecca shared many, many stories with me, but the underlying theme under every story was how much she enjoyed being a teacher to students, elementary through adults, and others in her life. Rebecca is the type of person that will always offer guidance and an honest ear to those that wish for it. She always finds a way to make the best of a situation no matter how grim things may look. She is a determined and fierce force who deserves respect and love because that is what she gives to every person she meets. She is a Godly woman who knows the power of her Lord, and trusts him with everything in her life.

I was able to connect with Rebecca on a level that not everyone can experience. We both have a disability. Her disability is visible, and mine is not, but she has offered me hope and guidance in how to deal with my disability in all of the situations that life can bring. Rebecca has changed my life and my outlook on life. Because of Rebecca, I let my husband know I appreciate him every single day. Because of Rebecca, I crave a deeper relationship with God. Because of Rebecca, I want to be a bright light in my students’ lives, and cheer them on through every phase. Because of Rebecca, I now have a life-long friend.

Rebecca, Western Home Communities Senior
Casey Viers, UNI Human Relations Senior
A Meeting Memoir

It was a jiving Cedar Falls evening in 1968. Steve McCrea, who had just returned from working at Woolco, was casually enjoying an evening bath in his house on Olive Street. Steve was a student at UNI (or State College of Iowa) at the time, and lived with three other housemates. That evening, word was spreading among the household that six beautiful women were to come visit for a spaghetti dinner. (The number, in reality, turned out to be fewer.) Steve, still in the bathtub, was one of the last ones to find out about this. He received a knock on his door. Her name was Kathy, one of the visiting women. From the other side of the door, Kathy told Steve that everyone in the house was going out. “Why are we doing this?!” Steve thought to himself. Kathy was also there to tell him he needed to buy the wine (he was the only one of legal age). Eventually, Steve obliged, finished his bath, and went out with the rest of the group.

That night, Steve asked one of the six women out to the movies. At that date, Steve found her to be as “hard as ice”… a no-go. The next weekend, Steve asked the next girl out – Kathy. Hitting it off, they went off on a second date. (From that point on, Kathy was already convinced Steve was the man she wanted to marry.) Steve continued to date a few other women for a short time… but after several months of knowing Kathy, they eventually became exclusive. Steve and Kathy were a definite “thing.”

Later in 1968, Steve decided to spend much of what he had earned on a multi-month road trip with one of his friends. He left Cedar Falls and returned later in the summer to return to school. At this point, Steve and Kathy’s relationship had grown. Steve had a few rocky years in school; Kathy graduated soon after.

1971 was the year Steve proposed. Steve and Kathy had lived in multiple places in Iowa by this time. Steve was also to meet Kathy’s family. Over Christmas, Steve met and bonded quickly with them. Perhaps the biggest “in” for Steve was playing 500 – he was on a team with Kathy’s grandmother, where they swept the competition. (From that point, she was totally sold on him.) He was a part of the family.

The next year, Steve and Kathy married. It was a Methodist wedding in a Catholic church, and the reception was held in the Methodist church after the wedding. From before and after that point, Steve and Kathy have loved each other dearly ever since.

Steve McCrea, Western Home Communities Senior
Alex Lafrenz, UNI Human Relations Senior

Overcoming Adversity

John Falk is the senior citizen I’ve had the privilege to meet during my time in my Human Relations class. John Falk came from a small town in Iowa called Dunkerton. When John was young he always looked up to his father. His father was a mechanic and had his own garage in which John helped out whenever he could.

John lost his dad in a tragic accident, where he was hit by drunk driver and was killed. John was only a senior in high school when it happened. At a young age he had to already overcome adversity with his father’s passing. He was quickly turned into a man overnight. John’s plan was to take over his father’s business, but that was dashed when his father died.
John’s first risk in life was getting a job at Goodyear. Since John was a very good mechanic, he had the opportunity that he couldn’t pass with the company of becoming a manager for a store in Iowa City. He was scared at first but made the most out of the situation. This was during the time when television became big so he had to find ways to enhance his business. John took the opportunity to market his business without having a ton of experience in the marketing aspect of the job. With this experience, John created an opportunity that he couldn’t pass up.

John was given the opportunity of managing 30 stores in the Milwaukee, Wisconsin area. John was hesitant at first due to having a couple of young children at the time but eventually accepted the job offer. For many years, John ran the stores and was driving pretty much the entire time going from store to store. He eventually took a step back because it was cutting into his family time. At this time John had nine children back home that his wife was taking care of due to his constant driving. John was getting paid well, but he was a family-man first and wanted more of that for the future.

John Falk is the role model that all young children should have. He has faced a lot of adversity but in every shape or form has overcame those obstacles. For the short time that I have met with him, I’ve learned a couple of ideas that I’ll take to my future life: volunteer, exercise, and determination. He truly is someone who cares not only for himself but others as well.

John Falk, Western Home Communities Senior
John Jones, UNI Human Relations Senior