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S.T.O.R.I.E. Time, Spring Semester 2018

University of Northern Iowa. Human Relations: Awareness and Applications (Spring 2018)

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Live. Create. Tell the Story. Repeat.

S.T.O.R.I.E. TIME

Seniors Teach Others Real Intergenerational Experiences

Western Home Communities & UNI Human Relations
Seniors Teach Others Real Intergenerational Experiences

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The cover of this book is only one example of the endless amazing art pieces that Delores has created. This experience was intended to push UNI students out of their comfort zones, but my experience was the exact opposite. From the moment I met Delores, I was everything except uncomfortable, I felt like I had known her my whole life. Delores has loved a lot as well as lost a lot, but her steadfast faith has held strong despite any circumstance in her life. She is a strong, loving woman, and her passion for art, serving others, her children, and her grandchildren shines through in all she does. I strive to live life in a way that she does; never taking a day for granted, letting my loved ones know that they are appreciated, and serving others. Delores now has a chapter in my own story that I will share with my future students and my own children.

*I AM . . . Delores Stibal*

*I am creative and serving*

*I wonder how that would look in orange*

*I hear the longing in my mind to not be afraid to create*

*I see the beauty in portraiture*

*I want to paint portraits in watercolor*

*I am creative and serving*

*I pretend to go to Italy and paint during lavender season*

*I touch the hearts of many*

*I worry about the world that my grandkids are growing up in*

*I cry for all the things I have lost*

*I understand what life is all about*

*I know there are things that matter in life beyond the worldly*

*I dream about being able to travel more*

*I try to keep fit and stay upright*

*I hope for the happiness of my kids and grandkids*

*I am creative and serving*
**Human Relations’ Reflection**

Through our Human Relations class at the University of Northern Iowa, we have been given the opportunity to work with seniors in the Western Home Communities. Having this opportunity has allowed the others and myself in this class to hear stories from individuals that lived during a widely different time then we live. We have been able to create bonds with these individuals and relate to them in ways most of us never thought was possible.

Personally, I have been able to gain a lot of insight through this experience. I am very close with my grandparents and have heard many of their stories time and time again, but being able to meet a senior that I am not related to has allowed me to understand what other individuals went through in their lives. I was able to hear stories about how they met their significant others along with what struggles they have had to go through. This has given me the ability to reflect on my own life and understand that all individuals go through good and bad times. This experience has allowed me to become a better person by simply forcing myself to listen closely to stories that I may never have heard otherwise.

Thanks to all of the individuals at the Western Home Communities for allowing us to experience this opportunity. Thanks for inviting us into their homes. We are better prepared for working with individuals that have vastly different lives then our own. We understand that the lives they live make them who they are.

*Montana Watkins, UNI Human Relations Senior*
Dear Seniors,

Thank you cards create an opportunity for the writer and establish affirming anticipation for the receiver. There are a variety of ways to express positive feelings, heartfelt thoughts, and appreciative actions. Your remarks were distributed across a wide spectrum of possibilities. They spoke to what I had hoped to be and wanted to do in my time with you. I only wish I could have sat across from each of you and heard you read your remarks. I would have felt even more deeply about the ways we belonged to one another during the time we had together.

I particularly enjoyed reading the intentional way you are using gratitude to positively address your good qualities and actions, to appreciate and savor people affirming experiences, to imagine a future wherein gratitude will fuel your investment in students and pen the story you are writing with your life. I couldn’t have done what has been my privilege to do without the benefit of Kathy’s invitation to participate in the human relations class. Sharing class sessions with Kathy elevates my enthusiasm and fortifies our friendship. I like being included in her people inspiring approach to learning and the energy she expends to do something that stretches our imagination and strengthens our resolve to be something special.

Not that you need an additional assignment, but while you are intentionally committed to making good use of gratitude, I suggest you use the class to write down three ways you appreciate yourself, three ways you more confidently believe in yourself, and three ways being a teacher is a good expression of who you are and want to be. Put the answers in your desk drawer at school. Occasionally and gratefully refer to them before the school day begins. You do want to be happy.

Remember gratitude is the lifeline to happiness,

Len Froyen
DEDICATION:
Bob and Judy Brown

We dedicate this book to Bob and Judy Brown.

We are grateful to them for . . .

speaking to our classes, sharing their life stories,

and sharing their love story.

Thank you for teaching us . . .

the five love languages and insights on marriage

We will use this information to guide us through our personal adventures.
“But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”
Luke 14:13-14

Adopting Hospitality Through Stories

Hospitality is defined as the friendly and generous reception and entertainment of guests, visitors, or strangers. I have been meeting weekly with Bob Brown, a resident at Western Home Communities’ Windridge facility. By simply meeting and sharing stories with Bob for the last few weeks, I have gathered that he is the ultimate exemplar for what it means to be hospitable.

Bob met his wife while visiting the National Bank of Waterloo. He stopped to deposit some money and meet with the vice president of the bank. In order to meet with the vice president, Bob had to go through his secretary. The secretary happened to be a beautiful woman named Judy Schmidt. Judy agreed to go out with Bob the second time he asked her. They were married on June 10, 1962.

Bob and Judy wanted to have children, but a few years into their marriage Bob became concerned about his age. Bob suggested that they try adoption, and after talking to a friend Judy agreed. They were put on a waiting list by their doctor, who said it could be about a two year wait. Miraculously, six days later, their doctor called notifying them that there was a boy waiting for them if they were ready. At first, Judy wanted to turn down the offer; she did not think she was quite ready. However, Bob and Judy decided to adopt this baby. Being that it was only six days after they told their doctor that they wanted to adopt a baby, they did not have anything ready for the baby yet. Panic and excitement filled air as they began getting things ready. They raced to put together a nursery and collect diapers, formula, and clothes for the new member of their family. Despite the spontaneity of the offer, they went to pick up their new baby.

When their son was twelve months old, they decided to adopt another baby. This time they went through Hillcrest Adoption Agency in Dubuque, Iowa. Nine months later there was a baby girl available. Less than two years after that they adopted another baby boy. In less than four years Bob and Judy opened up their home to three babies in need of a family.

At one point Bob asked his mother if he himself was adopted. He questioned this because when he went into the Navy he did not have a birth certificate. However, his mother denied this. Later, after Bob lost both of his parents, he asked his paternal aunt if he was adopted. At fifty-eight years old, Bob found out that he was adopted. This was shocking news to his children, who always knew they were adopted. Perhaps, on some level, Bob had known this since the time he was missing a birth certificate when joining the navy in his young adulthood. Throughout his adult life he opened up to others and invited them in just as he had been brought into a loving family as an infant.
Throughout my time with Bob, he has reaffirmed the importance of generosity and hospitality in my eyes. Just as he opened his heart and home to three wonderful children, he continues to do the same for his community. Bob is still making generous contributions to his community by volunteering and being involved in a great number of organizations. He has inspired me to open myself up to those around me and always try to lend a helping hand. I aspire to be as hospitable as Bob is someday. I am truly grateful for the life lessons and values I am learning during the time I spend sharing stories with Bob.

Bob Brown, Western Home Communities Senior
Jordyn Meyer, UNI Human Relations Senior

What is a Family?

While I met with Evelyn Boice over the past few months, we sat in her living room rockers by the fireplace. We talked about what was important to us: Our family. Evelyn met Carl her husband, through the FBI in Washington DC. When Evelyn talks about the FBI, she tells it as it was an opportunity she had, her senior year of high school and she took it. She didn’t know a whole lot about it, but she thought it seemed like a good opportunity. She was able to gain a lot of knowledge while living in New York. While there, she was lucky enough to meet a man from Pennsylvania named Carl. Carl and Evelyn later got married. Once they became pregnant, they deciding that they wanted to raise their family in Iowa, so they packed their bags and moved back to Evelyn’s hometown of Cedar Falls.

In the living room rockers, Evelyn and I talk a lot about life. We talked about our families and how some people are majorly different while others are very much the same. How do you define family?

It wasn’t until Carl had a family of his own that someone contacted Evelyn and Carl saying that they were Carl’s sibling. Carl’s family was not your traditional storybook kind of family. Instead Carl’s family was a little like mine; a little untraditional and secretive. Carl found out that after his father left his family, his dad had actually started another family. The new family knew nothing of Carl and his siblings until they started looking into family history for health reasons.

Our untraditional family qualities were not the only similarities we had. My sister will be a freshman at Wartburg this fall. When Evelyn found that out, she began to tell me how her granddaughter is currently going to Wartburg. That same granddaughter is dating a man named Justin, in the Glee Club who is a Resident Assistant here at UNI. I am dating a different Justin from the Glee Club and we are both Resident Assistants.
As Evelyn and I talk, we never run out of things to talk about. Even though we started out as strangers, Evelyn and I have quickly become friends. We’ve learned throughout our conversations by the fireplace that we have a lot in common. We came to discover that our family is most important to us and that although our odd families are very similar, everyone's definition of family is different.

*Evelyn Boice, Western Home Communities Senior
Abigail Agan, UNI Human Relations Senior*

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**Calleta’s Big Day**

Music is one of life’s purest beauties. This is something that Cedar Falls resident and UNI alumna, Calleta Koefoed, knows well. In her youth, Calleta played the bassoon and the organ, and minored in organ performance at UNI. She understood the connections that music was able to make with others and worked hard to be able to share them.

When she was a junior in high school, Calleta travelled to Minneapolis, Minnesota to compete in a national music performance competition on the bassoon. Rebecca, her good friend, came along to accompany her on the piano. She had practiced her classical piece for hours and hours in preparation for the big event.

She and Rebecca stepped onto the stage nervously and excitedly. Rebecca sat down at the piano while Calleta arranged her music on the stand. She announced her name and the name of her piece before beginning. She performed well, and felt confident about her performance after the final notes had sounded. Now, it was time to wait for the results of the competition.

After some deliberation, the judges announced the 3rd place winner. It was not Calleta, and she felt a mixture of excitement and apprehension. The judges announced the 2nd place winner. Again, Calleta’s name had not been called. Her emotions heightened even more. Finally, after a dramatic pause, the judges announced the 1st place winner, Calleta Koefoed of Iowa on the bassoon. She was overjoyed! All of her hard work had paid off, and her musical interpretation was validated by professional musicians. Later, when she applied to college, her winning this national competition contributed to her receiving a scholarship to attend UNI.

*Calleta Koefoed, Western Home Communities Senior
Rachel Bearinger, UNI Human Relations Senior*
Measuring Life’s Success

Sitting in our usual spots in the living room, Carl in the black leather rocker and myself in the tan lazy boy. He says to me, “Your life’s success is measured by the way you respond to failure. It is easy to respond the right way when life is going great for you.” I thought back to what he had told me about his life and drew all the connections to that quote from the experiences he had told me about growing up in Pittsburg, working for the FBI, and developing himself in a skilled trade as a toolmaker.

This the norm for us as we talk about so many different aspects of life during our weekly meetings. I have often come to him for advice despite his knowing of it and try to apply the knowledge he gives me each week. I saw that quote as one that shaped my life and was obviously one that shaped him to be the successful and selfless person he is today.

All of the stories from Carl’s life have had a valuable lesson to learn that usually have a great quote to go along with it. Carl has an uncanny way of making you think about situations differently and tying it all together with a simple quote. However, I have come to admire him for the stories he has told about his life during the ten years as an advocate for children in foster system. When telling these stories you can tell he truly cared about each one of the children he looked after and wanted nothing but the best for those kids.

The story of a brother and a sister that came from a broken home, or the story of a girl that was finally finding confidence in herself to do well in school but got moved to a new town in a school district that didn’t want her. Carl was there to be a great supporter in the best way he could and it didn’t mean the stories always had a positive outcome. These are the stories that impacted me the most because in these stories you get a glimpse into the true character of a person and just what they might mean when they tell you, “your life’s success is measured by the way you respond to failure.” The kids he looked after had to learn to respond positively to the tough situations they had no choice to be in, otherwise they could possibly fail. However, if they listened, they also got to learn from the life lessons of Carl that will last them a life time.

I have been lucky enough to grow up with family, friends, and mentors that are great at so many different aspects of life. Carl has been very similar to those same people I look up to and now has become one. The aspects of life learned from his experiences are going are invaluable to me as I have gotten to know him over this semester. His outlook on life is one that I admire because of his selflessness and acceptance to all of those willing to be a part of his story and thank you, Carl, for becoming a part of mine.

Carl Boice, Western Home Communities Senior
Brett Becker, UNI Human Relations Senior
A Father’s Daughter

Not daddy’s ordinary girl. Betty is an inspiring woman with great stories that not only teach you about her but about yourself and the world around you. Though all of her stories are amazing, there is one that really stood out to me. It is not the most glamorous, has a jaw dropping ending, or makes you sit on the front of your chair, legs twitching and palms sweating. It is sincere and from the heart however.

“Who is someone who has impacted and helped shaped who you are?” I inquired as I sat cross legged on the little wooden chair sideways from her. Betty’s eyes began to twinkle more than usual, her radiant smile beamed brighter, and as she pridefully sat up in her seat I knew this was going to be a mesmerizing story.

“My father was the one who impacted me the most and who pushed me to be the best I could be,” she said before diving into her story. Her prideful hand gestures and exuberant vocal expressions captured my attention and painted her love for her father on a canvas so beautiful it would be hung in the Louvre in Paris. Every night after work no matter how exhausted he was Betty’s father would sit down and help her with her homework and every night their bond grew stronger. They both connected on their thirst for knowledge, powerful work ethic, and love for education. They spent hours thinking and working on how to solve problems and understand how something works. They would read and work on it until they found an answer. This continued all throughout Betty’s life and in fact grew stronger because as Betty always reminded me “People say kids ask a lot of questions but really as we grow older we ask even more questions because we have more to question.”

As I look at Betty and begin to picture her as a darling daddy’s little girl she quickly reminds me that even being the only daughter in a house full of sons her father didn’t treat her any differently. She could do everything they could, she proclaimed with a wave of her finger. She could hang with the boys running the bases in the dirt or hang with the neighbor boys down the street. She could compete just as well in math and science and in fact while the other girls where in Home EC class she was the only girl in her high school to take all 4 years of math and one out of only two girls to take all 4 years of science.

As her story began to come to an end she looked up into the air almost like she could see her father and the smile on his face looking back down on her. Joy took over her face as her body eased back into the matching wooden couch to relax. She appeared perfectly tranquil as she looked back on her past with gratitude. Then she turned to me, looking me straight in the eyes and said, “My father's happiest day was when he saw me graduate college, that was his dream.” Graduate college she did, Betty received the second, but should have been first if it hadn’t been for her last name being later in the alphabet, Distributive Education Major from Iowa State University. Betty was also 1 of the 97 successful women to score high enough in Curtiss-
Wright’s engineering program which crammed two years’ worth of aeronautical engineering into 10 months, 40 hours a week, of study. These amazing women proved that women were not only qualified but capable to take over jobs requiring high levels of math and science while the men were gone fighting in WWII.

As I put my key into the ignition and began my short drive back to UNI campus I thought about Betty’s story and the amazing relationship she had with her father. It reminded me of my own relationship with both my parents who from the day I was born encouraged me to be myself and pushed me to dream big and achieve my goals. My parents who too spent countless hours helping me with homework and family vacations traveling to historic landmarks, museums, and parks. As I pulled my car in between the fading yellow lines and moved the handle to the P for park I realized how grateful I am for my parents and will always think of them the same way Betty remembers her father. With that twinkle in her eye, beaming smile, and proud posture.

*Betty Goettsch, Western Home Communities Senior  
Jayd Brown, UNI Human Relations Senior*

**10**

**God First, Mother Second, Nurse Third**

Connie Hansen has taught me more about friendship and life in a few short visits than I have learned in 22 years. During one visit she shared a story with me about the letters that her and her friends pass around to each other to keep in touch. She says that she has not one close friend but a group, and the group has been in her life since early on. In that story, I learned the true meaning of friendship.

It showed me that even through all of the years of life and living your life, making an effort to keep communication is important. Everyone eventually goes their separate ways and have their own agenda in life. Connie devoted hers to saving other lives. She is a retired nurse that worked in the nursing field for over 40 years! It came to be a true test to whether or not that was her true calling, for she had to overcome many barriers to get where she is.

One barrier would be that she couldn’t marry her husband during her nursing education, it was forbidden back then. Another barrier is when she got a form of polio her senior year. Not only did that affect her schooling but it almost hindered her wedding day after college. After all, she did prevail.

Nursing helped her push through hard times as she often said that they were “post-depression” kids. Through nursing, Connie, learned how to work and in that she learned more about herself. She describes herself first, as a child of god. Secondly, as a mother, and lastly as a nurse. Her husband and her would travel and do mission trips together to such places as Machu Picchu, Peru. Her nursing knowledge has helped her travel the world and help others.
From Connie I learned friendship. Friendship can short, can be lifelong, but it will always leave an impact on others. Sometimes we don’t realize our impact on others until we get older. Through her I learned that unplanned visits from people are ok, it is ok to make time for others. The letters showed me that what you do with your life is important, but do not lose your friends in the process. What have you done with your life?

Connie Hansen, Western Home Communities Senior
Riley Buchheit, UNI Human Relations Senior

We Needed That

“Well, Jim,” I said, easing into one of the reclining chairs in the sunroom, “I brought my lady along and you said you’d promise to tell you and Ruth’s love story.”

At my right, Mikayla giggled, which made her curls quiver. She drew in her knees up to her chin on the lazy boy, and I knew this to be her position of rapt attention. Sucking the air in through her teeth, she made big eyes at me expectantly.

Jim and Ruth, across from us, peered at each other, smiled, and shared a giggle of their own. They almost rocked in unison in their chairs, looking upwards to the ceiling and getting lost in reverie. “Well it’s just been sixty-five years!” said Ruth, winking at Mikayla and me.

“Well? That’s incredible.”

“And we’re still getting to know each other,” added Jim. To myself, I did the small, mental division and realized that amount of time is longer than my parents have been alive. A lifetime of learning; now, that was/is something hard to wrap my head around.

“Yeah,” intoned Jim, clearing his throat. He looked up again at the ceiling, and I could see the memories being brought forth from some indiscernible depth.

Ruth chimed in: “We just got done celebrating it down in St. Louis with our grandkids and great-grandkids.”

The sound of soft rocking and anticipation filled the room. This was a story I had wanted to hear since I first began to meet with Jim some weeks ago. He had one stipulation though: I had to bring my ‘special lady’ along, whom I had been telling him about. I didn’t know it at the time, but I am beginning to suspect that Jim and Ruth somehow knew their story would come to be an invaluable lesson for us both. Jim worked his hands together, as Ruth smiled and rolled her eyes at him. He clucked his tongue: “well, where should I begin . . .”

In the summer of 1952, a young man by the name of Jim Peterson found himself back home in New Hartford, Iowa. For two years he served time in the Navy at the naval depot on
Guam in the South Pacific. He experienced sleeping quarters on ships where men slept only inches apart from one another on their sides, beneath, and above. His workspace, as a technician, was deep under the decks and in the dark cramped spaces of the ship’s underbelly. After all this hard work, which he is deeply grateful for, he was able to come home. He intended to go to a technical school in Rhode Island, but he did not plan for meeting Ruth along the way.

It was a blind date, of course. Ruth and Jim had friends who were going steady with each other, and they conceived a master plan. Jim’s friends, Herb and George, said they’d set him up on a date. At a dance hall in Iowa Falls, about an hour away from Cedar Falls, Herb and Sarah, George and joanie, and Ruth and Jim road together. Amongst the two couples already going steady, Ruth and Jim met each other. Jim wore civilian clothes, and Ruth wore a sweater and skirt meant for dancing. And that’s what they did; they danced and they talked.

“Do you remember your first thoughts when you saw her, when you met Ruth?”

“Oh yes,” nodded Jim, working his jaw with his hand. He cracked a small smile and looked back into the living room where Ruth was sitting and reading the newspaper. “I remember thinking this girl looks like a fun person.”

“It was a real whirlwind,” admitted Ruth. After the night at the dance hall in Iowa Falls, Ruth and Jim continued to see each other. However, they always had to go on double dates because neither of them owned a car. Awkward. However, they didn’t mind too terribly. They loved spending time getting to know one another. They would talk and share their ideas for hours.

On Valentine’s Day, Jim made his way up to Waverly with a serious purchase in mind using the ‘travel money’ the Navy gave him. First, he bought a 1938 Chevy, so he and Ruth could go on dates by themselves. That was long overdue. The second purchase found Jim at a jewelry store where he bought an engagement ring. That year, in 1953, Jim proposed to Ruth. It seems like their friends’ intuition was spot right on about compatible chemistry.

After a weeklong engagement, they went to pastor’s home in Cedar Falls. There, with twenty guests of friends and relatives, Ruth became Mrs. Peterson and the man standing next to her, in his uniform, couldn’t be any happier. A week after, Ruth bought Jim a plane ticket (remember he used his traveling money up) and promised to meet him in California after the end of the school year.

Ruth made it to Los Angeles with a few of her friends all piled up in a little Henry J. (It took them 10 days and Jim is still not sure how.) On the weekends, Jim would take the bus to Los Angeles or Ruth would ride down to San Diego. They didn’t really have a place of their own. Fortunately, Ruth had a sister in Los Angeles, and they slept on the floor together at her place. Money was still tight. A wage of $130 a month was hard to live on. They eventually got a place with a fellow Navy couple. Their flat only had one room, but they were lucky and drew the
lot which said the bedroom was theirs. The other couple took the pull-down bed in the living room. Ruth signed up to be a substitute teacher to help out with bring in some extra cash.

‘Magically’ and somehow (as she puts it), Ruth became pregnant. James “Chuck” Charles was born at the Naval Hospital sixty-four years ago for $5.25. They were still poor, especially with a kid, but that didn’t stop them from trying to build a home, nor did it pull them apart. Learning how to be parents was a trying experience, but they were happy to have the help of Ruth’s sister.

“We were so poor,” laughed Ruth, “but we had each other.”

Jim added, “We were both from poor backgrounds. We didn’t have any money and our parents didn’t either.”

He looked at Mikayla and me for a small space of time before building on this: “I always thought,” he began, “that God was putting us together. We had so many mutual friends that it didn’t feel like coincidence. So we knew we had something special going on.”

“That’s incredible,” I said, lamely. It was difficult to find the right words.

“At first it wasn’t ideal, but we managed. Now, we have four children, twelve grandchildren, and fifteen great-grandchildren. After all these years, we have a good family.” He said this all with the gravity of a thoughtfully slow pace. Again, Jim looked at Ruth and smirked, “We’re still friends.”

“Oh sure,” said Ruth mischievously.

“We take care of and learn from each other every day,” laughed Jim.

Later, in the car as we were driving back home, Mikayla was the first to break the silence of inadvertent introspection.

“I think I know why Jim wanted us there, together,” Mikayla said. She looked over at me, bathed in the sunlight of the setting sun.

“Yeah? Lay it on me.”

“He wanted to show us, like, how important our bond is and no matter what, we will have each other when it, life, gets difficult, and more importantly, we are still getting to know each other. Even after four years.”

“You ready to still want to get to know me when I have a dad bod, grow old, and snore?”

“You already snore, but yeah. You?”

Even though it has been four years with Mikayla, I realized when I looked over at her that, just like Ruth and Jim, so much will change as we get older. Mikayla will grow wrinkly, her hair will become white; maybe she will become irritable at life or she becomes utterly devoted in
her field of study; maybe she will change some of her habits and hobbies. Change. A lot of it. But that’s who we are and will be. Just like our storytellers, we will continue to learn about each other for a lifetime. I felt sure I knew how to answer her question.

“Of course, I’m ready.” We looked at each other, smiled, and shared a laugh. It felt like we were kind of like Ruth and Jim.

“We needed that.”

“Agreed.”

Jim Peterson, Western Home Communities Senior
Mitchell Christensen, UNI Human Relations Senior

12

To Whom It May Concern

It’s a difficult task to put greatness into words. It’s like putting all the grains of sand in the world into one bottle. How do we accomplish such things? Today I am faced with the similar task of illustrating the hardest working man I have met into one memoir. I know this short story will never do justice to his name and cannot hold a candle to his character. This is my firsthand account of meeting a man who could have been a straight A student all the way through school and college. Instead of stressing on text books and homework, he looked to enjoy life and maximize his potential as he felt suited him. College isn’t for everyone. Let’s stop pretending it is. There is more than one way to skin a cat and when God closes one door; he opens many more where we never know what is on the other side.

While most people get off work and reflect on their day, he’s still working doing a little extra. It’s fascinating how far a bit can go. When everyone is giving 100%, he is putting out 110%. This is the work ethic that was developed in the military after years of service. Upon high school graduation, this man amongst men had his heart set on farming. College wasn’t needed in any shape or form, especially when you grew up in a 3 bedroom house on a farm already. A book can only teach so much, experiences touch us and last forever. Why sit in a class listening about life choices, when we can be out enjoying the world making life choices!

Returning from the army, farming took a backseat to construction. Working his way up the later he became foreman in no time mentoring others; with his resilient work ethic. Among construction followed maintenance and ___. All jobs that require experience, vigor and gumption. Things you cannot always get in a classroom. Better yourself and tend to your responsibilities. Don’t get caught in the riff raff of drama and meaningless confrontations.

Words cannot accurately describe this man drive. His given me advice and experiences that will guide me into future years. He has touched and motivated me in way I cannot describe
and will never be able to repay. When contemplating what kind of man, I seek to be, it is no wonder or doubt his name comes to mind. He is a provider to his family, he is a dedicated father, he is a loyal husband, and I am very honored to call him my senior! Allow me to introduce Mr. Allan Tapper.

*Al Tapper, Western Home Communities Senior*  
*Gary Crawford, UNI Human Relations Senior*

13

**The Value of Work**

Looking back on your life, what are you going to remember? Who will you talk about? What will you have done? Nothing defines the life of Don Tamisiea better than one word: work. I’ll discuss some of his work experiences later on, but Don grew up in Waterloo, Iowa and attended Iowa State University. Don joined the Navy, and later on worked for all kinds of companies before his retirement. Throughout all of my meetings with Don, he connects all of his life lessons he learned back to the vast amounts of jobs he held and what those experiences were like.

Don actually gave me a list of all of the jobs he has held all through his life. Some were simple earlier on; things like mowing yards and shoveling driveways. Later on in his life Don worked mainly as a manager for a various manufacturing companies. After all was said and done, Don had worked close to 20 jobs throughout his life. 20. It filled up an entire page. I thought to myself “how could you ever work in so many different places? I have only ever thought of teaching!” But Don knew better than I that you can apply your values and approach to any occupation, no matter if you’re an expert or novice.

One value Don discussed was his focus on helping others in a positive way. Don volunteered as a mediator for the small claims court. He handled nearly 1,600 cases over the course of 18 years, and he had a vast amount of experiences dealing with people in extremely heated situations. Don said this:

“You have to ask questions that focus on the issue at hand and help these people stay focused. Sometimes in the heat of battle you don't really think of the information that will lead to a resolution. Some of them are scared because they have never had a conflict, so you try to help them get over that and guide them to something reasonable.”

Don’s main focus was helping each side reach a solution as smoothly as possible, even if the clients were as he stated in our conversation “madder than hell.” Thinking about dealing with these enraged people with all kinds of claims almost 1,600 times, it made me realize how immensely passionate Don must be about helping others in need. He loves this work because to
him it is not work at all. Don has a true understanding of what drives him, what his values are, and he aligns those things with his daily work, a virtue many of us struggle to live by.

I admire Don for his work ethic, and I have truly enjoyed meeting with him for the past few months. Don has been an incredible role model for myself, particularly regarding these lessons around work. The most powerful lesson he has taught me is to always ask these three questions at a job: What is my job? How am I doing it? What can I be doing better? That’s it. Those three simple questions can clarify any troubles I might face in a career, as well as keep me focused and appreciate the daily grind of a professional life. The work we do is truly valuable, and it is leaders like Don Tamisea that help us realize what we all have to offer.

Don Tamisiea, Western Home Communities Senior Hunter Flesch, UNI Human Relations Senior

Hay to Students

Steve McCrea, now 70, looks back on his career as an educator with pride; as he should. Spending countless of hours of planning unique lessons and units for his class. Continuing his education to better serve his students’ needs. He made changing students’ lives his passion, something that he was called to do. He worked hard to be a great teacher and he attributes that to a terrific work ethic that he learned from his grandfather.

When Steve was a young boy, his father and mother separated due to his father having a psychological illness what now we would call PTSD. His grandfather soon became his father figure and the person he looked up to when growing up. When thinking about where he received his work ethic he thinks back to those hot July days bailing hay with his grandpa and neighbors. When it was time to bail hay at a farm, it wasn’t only the farmers of that land that bailed it. The farmers in the community all came to chip in. This was how small farms could conquer big projects such as the one Steve and his grandfather were about to embark on.

As he was getting ready for the day, by putting on his work boots and bib overalls, he was thinking about the day ahead of him. He knew exactly where he would spend be most of the day and what he would be doing; in the rafters stacking bales of hay all the way up to the ceiling of the barn. He went outside to find that many of his neighbors and family were already there after traveling upwards of 30 minutes away, ready for the day. It’s 6 am and it is time to get to work. As Steve watched grown men 40s, 50s, and even 60s shifting bales of hay on a moving trailer. These bales of hay weighed upwards of 70 pounds and these grown men were throwing them around like they were pillows on their bed. Baling was nothing new to these men who have gone through this process hundreds of times. Once the trailer is full that is when Steve and his cousin’s turn came high up in the rafters. The temperature was 87 degrees that day, however in the rafters it was an easy 105 degrees. They would place the bales of hay strategically so they could use them as steps to the ceiling. After all the hay was baled and the barn was stacked full of
baled hay they looked at the product of their hard work and felt accomplished; covered in dirt, sweat in all crevices, reeked of mud and sweat, but accomplished.

This is the story of the hard work and determination that Steve learned from his grandfather and community members that he used in his profession of education. I see Steve and how he talks about his classroom and students and I see his pride in hard work and determination of making the students in his classroom better people after having him. Just like he baled hay and felt accomplished he has transformed students and now feels even more accomplished with his work as an educator. This is the standard I have set for myself as an educator.

*Steve McCrea, Western Home Communities Senior*

*Gabe Gravert, UNI Human Relations Senior*

15

**Life Is Too Short**

Every time I visit Lois, she greets me with the warmest smile and invites me in. This smile truly represents her feelings toward those she cares about. Lois has the softest, kindest heart and she has resolved to be happy every single day.

I will never forget what Lois said to me the day she told me about her husband and his passing. Lois showed me a picture of her and her husband, and after telling me about the thirty plus happy years they spent together, she told me quietly that he had passed away some time ago. I expressed my condolences, but she looked up at me and smiled. “Life is too short to spend time being down” she told me matter-of-factly. She misses him of course, and things are different without him, but she finds happiness in the company of friends now. She has made the very conscious decision not to waste the rest of her life being sad, rather she searches for contentment in each day.

On more than one occasion Lois has told me how truly valuable good relationships are. Not a single visit has passed without Lois sharing with me how grateful she is for her dear friend, Mary. “Life is just so much better with a good friend” Lois tells me, her eyes glowing. Lois and Mary go to meals together, they accompany each other to the activities hosted by Western Home, they go to church together, and most importantly, they sit and chat. This is by far Lois’ favorite activity. She could sit and laugh at Mary’s stories for hours. And oftentimes, that’s exactly what she does.

Every visit with Lois reminds me how much I have to be thankful for. I am surrounded by amazing people, telling amazing stories, and like Lois, I can find joy in sitting, smiling, and listening.

*Lois Hagedorn, Western Home Communities Senior*

*Nicole Gustafson, UNI Human Relations Senior*
I AM . . . Mary Mortensen

I am friendly and family-oriented

I wonder how long I will be able to be active and my mind stay good

I hear my friends talking and joking

I see my family staying close

I want my mind to stay active

I am friendly and family-oriented

I pretend I will fall in love again and find romance

I touch the lives of my friends and family

I worry my mind will fail me

I cry when I think about all the things I can’t do anymore

I am friendly and family-oriented

I understand other people’s problems and lend an ear to listen

I say honesty is the most important part of a person

I dream about living in Chicago and the suburbs

I try to be kind and use my manners

I hope I don’t become too frank toward people

I am friendly and family-oriented

How Mary has impacted my life: I’ve learned a lot about how important family is from Mary. Mary is a very fun, loving person who has multiple stories to share. Being a good friend is a big part of who Mary Mortensen is! She is always willing to lend an ear and give her advice to her friends, because she expects the same in return. I will forever be grateful for this experience with Mary and cherish the time I’ve spent with her.

Mary Mortensen, Western Home Communities Senior
Shelby Courtney, UNI Human Relations Senior
Oh the Places You’ve Been

The spring semester brought lots of good into my life. One of the very good things that were brought into my life was meeting and getting to know Wendy. Wendy is a heart full of gold and always had a smile on her face and in her heart. You could always tell that she truly cared about what you had to say and wanted to learn about everything. Her pure smile lit up the room as Toby, her loveable dog, scampered around the room every Friday morning as I walked through the door. Seeing the two of them every week warmed my heart, and with every conversation, it wiped away all stresses of senior year. Wendy is a person that I truly look up to and hope to have a zest for life like she does someday. Her story is inspiring, and that is why I am going to share it with you.

Wendy was born in 1940 with her mom, dad, and two siblings Colin who was her older brother, and her younger sister Jackie. Growing up, hearing sounds of air raid sirens and having a father that cleans up after bombings was the norm for her. On a particular day, Wendy was visiting her grandmother and when she returned, the windows in her house had shattered into their beds. Because of the frequent bombings. Wendy’s hometown was evacuated to a little town in the country.

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 finished, Wendy and Chet moved to Iowa to be with Chet’s family. Wendy had never been to America before. Wendy had five daughters with Chet before they divorced in the 70’s. Wendy remarried a man named Bob in 1989. Bob and Wendy moved to Harpers Ferry where they built a home. While living in Harpers Ferry, Bob and Wendy bought a dog together named Toby who still lives with Wendy. Sadly, Bob passed away last year in May.

Wendy’s love for life showed through the amount of things she has been able to do in her lifetime. Though she has lived in the United States for many years, she had the opportunity to visit England three times to visit her parents before they passed, and her sister that still lives in England. Being able to still connect to her home country even after establishing a life in the United States is very special to her. Wendy was able to bring her children over to visit her homeland in England and build a relationship with her parents. Similarly, Wendy’s parents were able to visit the United States a few times before they passed and were able to see Wendy’s life blossom in America. Her parents were able to experience the culture of America and see Wendy’s family grow.

Wendy’s visits to England were not her only trips around the world. Wendy’s ventures to the United States introduced her to countless opportunities and unexpected adventures. Wendy met a friend through her time in Iowa, and this friend was staying in Tasmania for a time. Her friend wanted her grandchildren to visit her in Tasmania, but needed a trusted adult to go along with the grandchildren for the trip from the United States to Tasmania. Wendy was the lucky friend that got to accompany her friends’ grandchildren on a trip from the United States to Tasmania. Wendy got to see a country she has never seen before just on happenstance. This is
truly a perfect example of how once-in-a-lifetime opportunities can happen by happenstance, just by being present and living.

From England, to Tasmania, to Iowa, Wendy has had a riveting, engaging, and inspiring life. Her story and places she has been made her who she is today and that is truly an amazing woman. Thank you for inspiring me, Wendy. I will cherish our time together for a long time.

Wendy Schmit, Western Home Communities Senior
Maureen Hart, UNI Human Relations Senior

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It’s Okay to Be Silly

I’m not a silly person. Just thinking about acting “silly” in front of people makes me cringe. I’ve always been overly conscious how people perceive me. When I asked Cy, who is or was the most influential person in her life and what that person taught her, she excitedly began to tell me about her sister Harriet who taught her it was okay to be silly.

“When I was sixteen, I went and visited Harriet and her family in Chicago for an extended visit, via the bus. A few days into my visit Harriet and I decided to test the attention span of her husband who was enthralled with the television. Giving me two different heels, varying in height, she instructed me to walk in front of him and the television. Slipping and wobbling in the heels, trying not to laugh, I walked right past him. Harriet, hunched over in the kitchen, tried not to laugh out loud. He didn’t bat an eye. I would have given him an A for concentration.”

Hearing this story, I laughed. It was silly but Cy was in the confines of her sister’s home, a place where she seemingly felt secure. What about in public though, I thought to myself. No sooner had the question evaded my mind, did I receive my answer.

“Another time, I was getting ready to pick my son up from the airport. I wanted to make sure he found me (as well as have some fun) so I put on the brightest mix-matched clothes I owned. My dress was sleeveless and multi-colored with a glaringly purple blouse underneath. My shoes were bright orange wedges with clear heels. There was no missing me.”

I couldn’t help but laugh at the vivid image playing through my mind as she described her attire. The amount of confidence she exhibited through the telling of her story shocked me. How could this lady sitting beside me, who seemed so calm and practical, be the same woman who wore that attire?

“My mother-in-law, wanted to pick my son up with me so I stopped by her home on the way. As she slid into the car and looked at me, one question escaped her lips. “Why are you wearing that?”

“What did you tell her?” I asked, baffled and laughing.
“‘I just wanted to be silly’ … When we got to the airport, my son wasn’t pleased either. He looked at me and said ‘Mother!’ with a look of disapproval. He and his father were often annoyed with my shenanigans.”

My favorite silly moment was at Harriet’s funeral. When she passed, I wanted to honor her in the best way I could, by being silly. Years ago, she made me this hat. It was bright red and drew in everyone’s eye. During her funeral, I was asked to read scripture from the pulpit. When it was my time to read, I got up from my seat, that red hat firmly placed on my head, and read the scripture. Her children knew Harriet had made it and were delighted to see me wearing it.”

“Oh my, I’m sure it pleased them greatly to see you wearing that,” I replied, with a satisfactory smile on my face. It brings me such joy hearing this story. So often people are so concerned with how life affect them, they give little thought to how their actions can affect others. In Cy’s situation, her small act of silliness made a huge difference on day full of immense sadness.

Just recently, one of my professors also mentioned the importance of being silly, saying “you must be able to laugh at yourself and be silly when working with students, especially middle school students.” Cy would agree.

“Life is so serious at times. You need that break for silliness.”

Harriet taught Cy that silliness is needed in life to balance out the seriousness of it. Cy, through her memories of Harriet, has influenced me in that same way. It’s important to let humor invade into our lives. Cy has challenged me to embrace those moments of being nonsensical and remembering, it’s okay to be silly.

_Cy Haugen, Western Home Communities Senior
Natasha Heister, UNI Human Relations Senior_

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Beat to Her Own Drum

Peggi is a life living, never a dull moment, adventure around the world type of person. So many times when we are having conversations she is telling me about this one time when she went here or the other time when she went to this place. There is never a dull moment with her because if you can be doing something or going somewhere she will be doing it.

The story that I have about Peggi that I feel encompasses her as a whole is her drum. If there is something new to do or experience Peggi is all in! So when she saw there was a class to learn how to make an Indian replica drum you know she would be there. She said that they started by tanning the hide for the drum by soaking it in a die that was made from walnuts.

Then they had to tie the hide to the rim of the drum and she said they went step by step to show them how to tie it and to make a handle to hold onto the drum. Then they also had to make a stick to beat their drum with. When they had their drum completed she said that they sat in a circle and all played their drums.
Her favorite part was close to the last thing that they did and that was they asked each other what pictures that they saw in the drum. When I first saw this drum hanging on her wall that was the first question she asked me was what object I saw in the drum. I can't remember what I saw but when she pointed out all of the things she saw I was amazed by way she saw all of the pictures. I remember her pointing out three raccoons and showing me how she saw each of them. Why this sticks out to me so clearly was because I felt that her outlook on life was very similar to how she saw things in the drum. She is very open and optimistic on her outlook on life. One comment that she made one time I really loved was on the lines of I don’t usually know where we are or sometimes where we are going but I just enjoy the time that I am there.

I have really admired that quality about Peggi and have taken that to heart. Does it really matter where you are at and what you will be doing next if you are not enjoying the here and now. I will carry that with me for the rest of my life and I have found myself stopping and reflecting a lot more lately then I have. I have valued every minute that I have spent with Peggi and it is a shame that I do not live closer or I would continue to meet and get to know Peggi.

Peggy Chari, Western Home Communities Senior
Emily Huntington, UNI Human Relations Senior

Map of the Meanys

Iva Meany and her husband, Roger, met in the small town of Oelwein, Iowa. They were young, quirky adults who quickly fell in love. After meeting each other’s large families they married soon after. Roger and Iva were ready to start a family, so they did just that. Mr. and Mrs. Meany wasted no time to have children after they were married. After a short 11 months after they said “I Do” they blessed this world with their first newborn, a son. Iva and Roger agreed that this beautiful baby boy needed some company so they decided to try for some more. After a decade Mr. and Mrs. Meany brought a total of four beautiful children to life, three boys and one girl. They raised their children in Evansdale where she made an impact on the community people, young and old, with her love for books. As time went on her children grew older and started families of their own.

Her children got married and had children, and Iva became a grandma. Their children grew and had children, and now she is a great grandma. “Being a grandma is so special,” Iva says multiple times an hour.

Her children and grandchildren started moving throughout the United States. Iva is now a grandmother to ten and a great grandmother to four, with two more on the way. These loved ones who hold the Meany name are in states from Florida to Wyoming. She has family in Texas,
Tennessee and also South Carolina. There are miles and miles of Meanys in this country and the ones who started it all are located here in the great state of Iowa.

Iva Meany, Western Home Communities Senior
Olivia Meincke, UNI Human Relations Senior

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A Love Story of B&B

Bill and I are very different in ways that most people connect. For example, Bill likes sports and I like sport cars. But what Bill and I do have in common is our love for love. Bill and I would meet on the third floor of Prairie Wind, in the lounge that overlooked the parking lot. Here is where we would converse about life lessons and stories that changed our perspective on what we value most.

After our first time meeting, I had decided to create a list of questions that we could talk about during our time together. I asked about his favorite memories and values, but what I really wanted to know was what advice he would give someone my age about life. His answer was simple and to the point. He said, “Marry her.” He explained how there’s no point in waiting when you have found someone you love, begin the next chapter because you’ll never know what it might bring.

Bill, a wide-eyed freshman at the University of Wisconsin met a beautiful young gal by the name of Betty Lou, Betts for short. Bill and Betts started running around together their sophomore year. They went to all the dances, splashes, and university functions side by side. When classmates would see them in the hall they would refer to them as B&B because everyone knew they were going steady. They were a perfect match. During the summers, Bill would drive an hour to visit her at the Wisconsin Dells where she had worked as a waitress. On one occasion Betts came over to Green Lake where Bill had worked as a lifeguard and visited him at the beach. Bill explained how this had caused quite a stir because she was “easy on the eyes”.

Bill was drafted into the war separating the young and in love couple. But the moment that he found out he’d be staying state side he called up his brother to order an engagement ring. They were married shortly afterwards in June of 52 and lived all around the United States. They were in Washington D.C, Colorado, Kansas, and right here in Cedar Falls. In 1966 shortly after having their third child, Betts was diagnosed with cancer. After battling cancer, she had returned for a five-year checkup where the doctors found that the cancer had come back. She passed away three years later leaving behind her children and husband Bill, and the memories of love they had shared together.

Bill’s story of finding his college sweetheart reminds me of Nicholas Spark movies we spoke of in the lounge that overlooks the parking lot. Bill and I have a love for love, and one day I desire to have a love like his.

Bill Thrall, Western Home Communities Senior
Jacob Moen, UNI Human Relations Senior
Risks You Don’t Know You’re Taking

The first thing I heard about Bob Robinson was from another student who knew him and she said, “He is so sweet, I wish he was my grandpa.” That is definitely one side of Bob Robinson. That is the small town Iowa, gentle man who loves his grandchildren side of Bob. That is the Bob Robinson who would write the grade he thought he deserved on the top of his tests. I got to know this side of Bob through stories of his family, his parents, his children, his friends and other stories of the love in his life.

However, there is another side of Bob that I’m not sure my fellow classmate knew about. That is the side of Bob that decided to enlist in the Navy as a young 17 year old man with all of the ambition in the world. Through my time with Bob I got to see the driven, hard-working, survivor side of Bob. This side of Bob is epitomized through his submarine career with the Navy that started right at the beginning of his military career.

When Bob was in his training portion of his naval career a day arose when his leader asked his class who would want to take a physical exam to see their ability with working in submarines. After Bob passed this test he went on to take an exam testing his psychological ability to work in a submarine. He also passed this test making him one of few people who could get assigned to a submarine. When his time in training came to an end he realized they were only taking two assignments for submarines and he was number three on the list. However, one of the top two candidates decided to go another route so Bob was assigned to submarine life. This would eventually lead to Bob being assigned to the USS Spikefish which is where our story begins.

This story came about when Bob gave me a log of his to read. It was the military log from this incident on the USS Spikefish starting at 7:53 Monday morning, May 10, 1948. Bob was stationed as a lookout on a bridge and on his watch duty the ship began to make its plunge underwater. At the sound of the diving alarm Bob and his companion, who were low-ranking seamen at the beginning of their naval careers, ducked under the guard rail and dropped to the bridge of the submarine. After some maneuvering they made their way to the control room and he took control of the bow planes. Later, at 10:41 the order was given to surface the submarine.

However, moments after the order was given Bob heard a scream from the Forward Torpedo Room that the forward room was flooding. The men had to act quickly because a lot of men and resources were in this room and the flooding could impact their ability to surface and leave them stranded underwater, or worse sunk at the bottom of the sea. Bob did not want to end up like the stories he’s heard of men being lost at sea underwater. When planes crash there is evidence and the family can usually have some closure with the situation. Most submarines lost underwater are not discovered for a while, leaving little evidence and his family stuck in the unknown.
Shortly after he heard this cry, several wet sailors entered the control room with fear in their eyes. After some time, Emmett Drake, the Petty Officer in charge, rushed in to the control room and reported that they had gotten everyone out of the forward room and shut the door. Bob rushed to surface the submarine and as they surfaced they realized they were surrounded by diesel oil. This led to a very slippery surface on the submarine but even though the men had surfaced and escaped the flooding they were not out of dodge yet. They rushed to the main deck to shut the loading hatch that caused the flooding and had a few other tasks to accomplish to secure safety. This led to a number of young men latching together in a long line to slither their way across the deck to complete their responsibilities in the mess of oil.

After they finished up this job, Bob had one more duty for the day, he had to get the mail. Bob vividly remembers, with the mail bag on his shoulder, seeing the commodore standing with his arm around the captain’s shoulders with a look of relief that they had survived. The next task was to figure out why this had occurred and to get to the root of the issue, but that is a story for another time.

This little glimpse into the naval career is just one of many things that I’ve learned from Bob Robinson. The most profound that I learned through this story was a quote that Bob told me as he reclined back into his lazy boy reflecting on this story from his past. This story arose from me asking Bob to describe the biggest risk in his life. As Bob pondered this he had a glimmer in his eye as he began to chuckle. He said, “Well, the thing about risk is that you don’t always know that you’re taking a huge risk until after the fact.” Bob didn’t know that he was taking a huge risk by submerging his submarine and that flooding would occur. However, in reflection that moment is the one of many risks in Bob’s life. We don’t always know the risks we are taking so we need to cherish life and enjoy the time we have.

The opportunity to get a walk in the life of Bob Robinson is not one that I could ever forget. This has been one of the most insightful and amazing opportunities of my collegiate career. Getting to take a walk down memory with Bob has shown me that one can balance the family life filled with love, with a life of adventure, accomplishment, and goal fulfillment. Bob has lived a life full of love, success, happiness, and joy and I hope I can say to some young person what Bob said to me when I am at his stage of life. Bob told me that he would not trade his life for anything, he wouldn’t trade the hardships, the risks, the trials, because of the love that his family and his life has brought him. Bob has truly changed my life and I am so grateful that through the risks he didn’t know he was taking, Bob could provide a platform to teach me so many life lessons.

Bob Robinson, Western Home Communities Senior
Derek Quinby, UNI Human Relations Senior
When I used to think of older individuals, I thought of wisdom. Picture a slow, gentle voice coming from a creaky rocking chair relaying ancient proverbs and sayings that sound inspirational, but are often cliché. Expressions like “an apple a day keeps the doctor away,” “curiosity killed the cat,” “all’s well that ends well.” Words so worn it seems a miracle that they even show up on the page. I won’t lie, I expected this when I first met my conversation partner, Pete McCart. As I sunk down into the burnished leather couch in the compact but comfortable Western Homes library, one of the first things Pete said to me was, “I don’t like to call myself old, I’m an antique person. Yes I am old, but I am also valuable.” I realized pretty quickly after that my expectations of this experience were about to be blown out of the water.

Nothing about Pete matched my stereotypical view of elder, or should I say antique, individuals. Yes she was wise, but not in the way I pictured. She was quick. In our conversations, I often felt as if I was only recognizing the brilliance of something that was said after the next joke already had been cracked, the next lesson had been gifted, or the next tale about her life had begun. That was another thing. She did not deal in overused expressions. She works as a pastor, so I suppose I should not have been surprised that much like Jesus, she shares her wisdom through stories. One of my favorites is the story how she met Bruce.

In 1959, Pete McCart was walking down an aisle. Her friends filled the seats surrounding her; ahead of her there was a spot next to her future husband. No, this was not her wedding day, not yet anyway, but it was the beginning of a 57 year marriage that is still going strong.

The circumstances that brought Pete and Bruce together were a combination of a lack of money, a love for fun and adventure, and a bit of fate. During Winter break at Carleton College, Pete couldn’t quite afford to go home for the holidays, so instead she took the opportunity head to Minnesota for a school trip. She and some classmates rode up in a couple of rickety school buses with all their gear and spent some quality time on the slopes and in the skating rink. After a few days of snowy bliss, it was time to leave. Pete was the last one to load up. Her friends had already found their spot on a separate bus, so she ascended up the steps of the second bus. As she walked down the narrow aisle, scanning the seats full of ski equipment and chattering college students, she realized the only spot left available was next to a young man who she recognized from a brief encounter her first year in college. She plopped down in the seat.

“If you want to, you can sleep on my shoulder” Bruce said.

And just like that, Pete was out. For the rest of the ride, Pete snoozed on Bruce’s shoulder and Bruce let her, feeling swell that he had a beautiful woman resting on his arm.

Over the next few weeks they went on walks, watched movies at the Grand Theater, which according to Pete “wasn’t very grand,” and sledded down snow covered hills, giggling like the children they had to borrow the sleds from. About a year later, they were married in Vermont and have been best friends and life partners ever since.
It is stories like these that make me think of my first encounter with Pete and her statement about value. This story is more than just a love story; it holds life lessons if you look close enough. Money isn’t the most important thing when building a relationship. Go out and do something (you never know who you are going to meet and how they will impact your life). This may be a classic love story, but it’s a valuable one too. Just like Pete, it’s antique.

“Pete” McCart, Western Home Communities Senior
Marissa Quinn, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Enlightenment

Life has many uncertainties that occur at any given moment, and they tend to happen at the worst of times. Western Home Seniors know this all too well, however they battle it without any hesitation. These seniors are the living embodiment of the mantra, “There is more than one way to get to Walmart”. (Grandma Carol)

The tools given to them at the beginning of life are no longer the same, however their ability to succeed through perseverance has never been greater. They wake up every morning enjoying life on Earth, and reflecting on all those who have made their life whole.

The knowledge gained from all these individuals is breathtaking and life changing. The most important aspect from my experience is to be adaptable. This idea of adaptability can be applied to anything, and it should be. This impacts pedagogy for me, as a future educator, to better myself every day. This idea of being afraid of the unknown should not be feared but embraced.

I will mess up here and there, as we all do, and the actions that follow speak louder than words. I will also learn from the students, as much as they will learn from me. I cannot emphasize enough how the bonds created this semester have been life changing. In the end this was an experience of enlightenment that I will continue to cherish, and maybe one day pass on to the next generation, as it was to me.

Anonymous, Western Home Communities Senior
Jose E. Robles, UNI Human Relations Senior

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A Beautiful Impact

As we sit and talk in her apartment, Nancy keeps a watchful eye on her newly acquired cat named Sunny. Numerous of cat toys are spread upon the floor, waiting for the cat to take interest in. Instead, Sunny is more interested in the tree standing in the corner of the room. Conversation is being held, but keeps getting interrupted by the pretty, playful, pest. While the young cat continues her adventure, Nancy shares stories about her life that show what she values
most in the world. In the short amount of time that I’ve known Nancy, I’ve learned she hardly ever talks about herself, preferring to put the focus on others. However, there is one particular thing that Nancy does talk about that gives a glimpse into her as a person: her love for horticulture.

Nancy, along with a few others, plan to help/coordinate the landscape between their homes by planting new flowers and possibly trees in the upcoming months. Keeping other people’s opinions in mind, Nancy tells me about the previous year’s plants and what improvements she thinks would be best. As the soft sound of wind chimes twinkle outside of her living room window, a colorful scene is painted inside my head as her ideas are voiced. Nancy has often spoke of her childhood and of her time spent in the garden while growing up. While she didn’t particularly like being in the vegetable garden because of snakes, she loved the flowers that grew. Although Nancy’s mother didn’t have a passion for gardening, Nancy was able to fuel her passion for it by traveling a mile up the road from her childhood home. She recalls vivid memories of time spent at her great aunt’s house, which always caused her to feel as if she had stepped into another world. Nancy can specifically recall the bleeding heart flowers that bloomed in her great aunt’s garden each year.

As years pass, in each home that Nancy has lived in, she’s made it a personal goal to have flowers planted outside her windows. Now, since moving to Western Home, Nancy’s goal is impacting others views in a delightful way. I guarantee the work Nancy will put into the space at Western Home will turn out beautifully for everyone to enjoy. Nancy’s plan reminded me that even doing small things can make a beautiful impact on others.

Nancy Colvin, Western Home Communities Senior  
Brittney Roby, UNI Human Relations Senior

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A Lifetime of Love

Esther is one of the strongest women I have met. She has worked on a family farm for the majority of her life where she has learned not only what hard work looks like, but what it feels like. Although she may have not had that much time to play between jobs, she contained a happy, kind spirit like no other. Kindness radiates from her presence as she enters the room. I can see why the hired hand, her later in life husband, was captivated by her. It seems as though for Esther her hard work paid off. She was in the right place at the right time for her future husband ended up on her doorstep.

In the stories she has told me about her husband, she had tremendous composure and flexibility that I strive to have in my own life. Her fiancé was suddenly drafted into the war just days before their wedding. This created a new way of life for Esther, waiting for him to come back to her. The wait lasted for three years but in this time, she never gave up hope or joy. Their
main source of communication was by letters. The postage was often grouped with weeks and even months’ worth of letters bundled together like a fresh bouquet of roses. I can imagine that when the mail was delivered to Esther, it felt like Christmas morning. It was like a movie when Esther had told me that of all the days in a year, her husband came home on his birthday. I can’t think of a better birthday gift than returning to the woman of your dreams.

This led me to reflect on my own life. I couldn’t imagine being away from the love of my life for three years. The amount of strength and patience to keep an uplifting spirit would be taxing but that is exactly what Esther did. She knew deep down that everything was going to be okay and treasured the moment of him coming home to her in her heart. I have realized from Esther that in life, not everything is going to go as planned. Surely in her own life, it hadn’t. Absence in Esther’s case did make the heart grow fonder and created a deeper meaning of being in love. It’s the little moments in life that make it that much more meaningful when you are with someone. When you love someone, you will wait a lifetime.

Esther Westendorf, Western Home Communities Senior
Lauren Sayles, UNI Human Relations Senior

Welcome to Cedar Falls

On a bright, sunny Wednesday afternoon, I went to Windhaven at the Western Homes Community to visit my senior, Betty Newport. It became our normal routine that we became used to, I would knock on the door and entered her quiet, cozy room. She was sitting in her chair like always, with a warm smile on her face as she greeted me in. We asked each other about how our week went and if anything, interesting had happened over the past week. Once we got past the normal greeting questions, we moved on to the more personal questions.

As I got comfortable in my chair, I looked over at Betty and asked her about why she chose to move into Windcove. “It all started when my daughter, Paula, heard about Windcove from a family friend that had asked her about how I was doing,” explained Betty. “At that time, Windcove only had one opening left, so you could say that I got lucky,” said Betty as she let out a small laugh. “I knew that I didn’t want to be alone in Bettendorf anymore because all of my friends were either moving closer to their families, dying from old age, or moving into a nursing home,” laughed Betty.

It was around 2005, when she moved to Cedar Falls and just like it was for me in 2015. Betty was nervous and happy to be moving. We were both nervous to be moving away from our friends and the place that we had called home for years. However, Betty wanted to be closer to her family, and I wanted to experience life on my own without having my family constantly there. Even though Betty and I were nervous about leaving our homes, we were happy to be moving to Cedar Falls. After a few months at Windcove for Betty and a few weeks at UNI for
me, we were both feeling comfortable in this new place. Betty had found that the residents and staff were friendlier than just the normal Iowa nice people you find here, and I felt like I was somewhere where I needed to be to find myself. “I started to enjoy this place, the people, and my new home,” exclaimed Betty with a smile on her face. We both felt like Cedar Falls was becoming our home away from home.

As Betty and I were finally getting use to our new surroundings, we knew that the only way to make things better was to find activities that we enjoyed doing. “Ever since I was a young girl, I loved to dance, and I found that Windcove had line dancing available for the residents”, stated Betty as she started dancing in her chair. Dancing was never for me, however, the student organization, UNI Dance Marathon, caught my attention fast and I feel in love with their purpose and bad dancing could save lives. Both Betty and I enjoyed playing cards. Betty found a group of people to play bridge with and I found a few people on my floor that liked to play card and board games. One could say that we both admired a little competition.

As a few years went on for Betty, she eventually had to tie up her dancing shoes and put her cards away as she was being moved to Windhaven because of a heart condition. “Even though I couldn’t dance or play cards anymore, I didn’t let that stop me from enjoying some of the activities that Windhaven has to offer,” as she started getting out this month’s activity calendar. “One of things that I enjoy attending is the discussion lady because it gives me a chance to talk and meet other people in the building,” she stated as we looked at the different activities available throughout the month.

Trying to meet new people was a major thing that we both cared about while in this new place. For me I felt like getting involved and leaving my dorm room door open would help me break out of my comfort zone and help me make new friends. For Betty it was trying to sit at a new table with different people each meal. “I was able to introduce myself to new people and make them feel welcomed at Windhaven,” she explained. As the months continue to come and go, we both realized that we made the right move by getting involved.

As I looked at the clock, I couldn’t believe that our time was almost up that afternoon. As she was sharing her story about moving into Windcove, I couldn’t help but notice that my experience at UNI was like hers here in the Western Homes Communities. After the first few times meeting with Betty, I realized that the things that Betty did throughout her life, was how my life was ending up. I couldn’t help but to think that Betty and I were meant to be matched for this class and to be honest, I hope my life continues to be like Betty.

Throughout this whole experience, I think Betty wanted me to know that when I become a teacher, not to be afraid to live in a new part of Iowa or even a new state. Before leaving that afternoon, Betty explained to me that a new surrounding and a new experience is good for
everyone to encounter at least once in your life. “Staci, the best way to feel like you belong in a new area is to get involved, find what you love to do, and don’t give up on your hobbies even if you have to travel to be able to do it,” said Betty as I started to leave her room.

Betty Newport, Western Home Communities Senior  
Staci Schmeling, UNI Human Relations Senior

Building the Foundation of Love

In 1979, the Newton family, Leroy and Helen, would do something that they have always dreamed about doing. They decided to build a house. This was not just something that was decided one morning. It was something that they have been wanting to do and after living in their old house for 30 years.

While sitting in Helen’s room trying to come up with a story to write, I began asking about the house they lived in. Helen’s face lit up as she began to tell me about the spacious room-filled house that they built together. It was 1979 in Arlington, Iowa. Helen and Leroy were selling the house that they had lived in for 30 years so they could start building a new foundation to their new house. She told me that this is something that they have always wanted to do.

Just talking about the house, Helen’s face just beamed with happiness. She couldn’t help but laugh and smile about all the memories they had created in that house. One of my favorite parts of the story that she told me was that she never really liked the television out in their living room, so they created a den in another room. This room could be turned into a bedroom when guests came over to stay, and they would use that as their living room. This was my favorite because she couldn’t stop smiling and giggling whenever she talked about it.

She just smiled and laughed about all the memories she was thinking about while being in that house. As I was sitting there listening to her stories about the house, all I could think about was when I moved houses and how much of a change that was for my family. We had only been in our first house for 13 years, and the memories that we take away from living there will last a lifetime. Helen said that this is something that she and Leroy had always thought about doing and finally, it became a reality for them. They created their dream home that they would spend another 30 years creating more memories, love each other in, and grow old with one another.
Over the course of this semester, I have gotten to know Helen very well. From learning about what it was like growing up, to when she knew that she wanted to be a teacher, to learning about her family and the dynamic they have. She is truly an amazing woman and I am honored to have gotten the privilege to get to know a kind, caring, funny, and selfless soul.

Helen Newton, Western Home Communities Senior
Mollie Sorber, UNI Human Relations Senior

The Price of Education

In a small community, in northern Iowa, a young girl grew up on a farm. Her name was Phyllis. She enjoyed watching her dad milk the cows on their farm in Burr Oak. Phyllis attended a small school in her community with her siblings and neighbors. That is, until she could not anymore.

When it was time for Phyllis to go to high school, the US was involved in World War II. Had the US not been in a war, high school would not have been a problem for Phyllis. She would have hopped on the bus with the other students from her small town, and rode the 12 miles to Decorah every day. However, in order for Phyllis to attend high school during the war she had to live in Decorah. The US involvement in the war had made high school much more difficult for Phyllis. There were no busses to take her to and from Decorah every day.

At just 13 years old, Phyllis spent 5 days a week in a home with 9 other women. She was the youngest, a freshman in high school. Many of the others were wives of soldiers, or students also. She wasn’t able to call her family often because that would mean paying 25 cents to call long distance. And yes, 12 miles was considered long distance at the time. For the first time in her life, she was able to experience running water, and electricity. However, for the first time in her life, she also had to cook and clean for herself. She describes her time away from her family as difficult, but that’s the price you pay for an education.

Then Phyllis Green would do the same thing, years later in her life, after she had already started a family with her husband Ted. With 5 kids in school, and a lot of encouragement from her husband, she made the choice to drive to Luther’s campus every day to finish her teaching degree. She worked double hard as a student this time, but was also a mother and wife now. She was busy but that’s the price she paid for education, yet again.

Phyllis’s story served as many good purposes for me. It showed me that no matter how tough my situation might seem in the present day; I can make it through it. If Phyllis could persevere through a crowded house just for a high school diploma, then I can make it through my two jobs for my college degree. It also reminded me that some of our most meaningful achievements come at a price. In order for Phyllis to complete high school, she had to leave her
family. Just as I left mine to go to college. And just as many people have before her and me, and just as many people will after us. Because that’s the price you pay for an education.

My time with her has been both inspirational and insightful. She is full of amusing stories, and wisdom. When my journey to finish my degree seems to get tough, she will serve as a reminder to how much it will be worth it in the end. Sometimes, there’s a price you have to pay to follow your dream.

Phyllis Green, Western Home Communities Senior
Abby Tupper, UNI Human Relations Senior

The Spark of Friendship and Love

Willie wrote his own story! You can hear his voice in every word:

I grew-up in Buckingham, Iowa. I had a good friend named Dick. Dick and I went to school together and we only lived a short turn of the gravel road (1 mile) away from each other. In fact, we even rode the same school bus. Dick’s father flew airplanes and owned a few himself. When Dick was older he went into the service and served overseas. When he came back, he learned to fly helicopters by taking lessons down in Cedar Rapids. I guess flying was in his blood. The day he got his license he flew over my house and saw me out in the yard. So what did he decide to do? Well, he decided he wanted to land that helicopter right in my front yard! As the helicopter curved down getting ready to touch-down, Dick forgot about the long steel radio cable that lead from the machine shed to the house. In an instant, the wire wrapped around the rotter of the helicopter and snapped off the house. Dick was one lucky duck because he was able to land it safely. Let’s just say he kept an eye out for wires wherever he landed after that.

My wife and I lived around 30 minutes away from each other. She was a city girl and I was a country boy. One evening my buddies and I wanted to go roller skating in Vinton. As I walked into the roller rink, I saw a young gal and her aunt (who happened to be younger than her). I thought she was just beautiful. The gal kept coming over and skating with me. We got pretty chummy. Most of the time we would skate in Waterloo. My wife is the one who taught me how to skate backwards. I guess you could say we fell in love. I had never been there before and neither had she, that’s how we knew we had a good thing. Now, my wife had four brothers. Her brothers gave me a hard time.

The night that we got married, I knew the boys were going to mess with our car. I had put a padlock on our car to prevent them from getting into it and doing something to it. As I walked into the church, I looked back and saw a man with a ring full of keys trying to unlock the padlock. I laughed. After pictures, we got out to the car and the boys had stuck pop cases under the car just enough so that the wheels weren't touching the ground and we couldn't drive away.
We got to the edge of town and the car was having trouble. Turns out the spark plugs were removed. I knew those boys would be trouble.

Willie Irving, Western Home Communities Senior
Rachel Turner, UNI Human Relations Senior

The Positive Side

Donna Iverson is a strong lady who went through a scary, life-threatening situation. Just with the few times I have met with her, she always seems to be in an uplifting mood and always looks on the positive side of things. During my meetings with her, she would always mention that she enjoys writing so I asked her if she would want to tell her story on how she got to Windhaven. Donna’s Story . . .

On January 15th, 2017, Cedar Rapids Iowa had a terrible ice storm. I left my building, to go about my morning routine, and I fell on the ice and dropped my convenience store mug. I had to go outside and get it because it was in the driveway to the parking lot. I went inside, put my boots on and went back to the parking lot. I walked toward my mug and I fell on my back, hitting the back of my head.

Later in the week, I got off the bus on the busiest street in town and walked toward the Jenny Craig center. There was a shadow on the sidewalk that was created by a building and the ice hadn't melted. I fell on the ice and hit my head again. I went to Urgent Care, because of a headache, and was diagnosed with a concussion.

I thought all I had was the concussion. A couple of days later, I was sick to my stomach. I saw my doctor and she sent me for a CT scan. It came out clear. A couple of weeks later though, my sister and I were taking my cat to the veterinarian and she noticed a tremor in my thumb. I thought I had had too much caffeine and ignored it. I was knocking things over and I had vertigo, especially in the shower.

Then, on the Monday after we noticed the tremor, I fell at work, while returning a wheeled stool back to its place, and couldn’t get up without the help of the nurse and a CNA. I got really scared, and went to a nearby convenience store, to calm myself down and to move up an appointment I had made with my doctor. Walking back to work, I fell again and couldn’t get up. Luckily, there were two men that came by, and they called an ambulance. I was taken to the hospital, and my sister showed up. She said, “If you’re in the hospital, CALL ME!” The ER doctor didn’t do another CT scan.

He sent me home with a walker, and no word as to what was going on. The next day, I was scheduled to get together with my caseworker, Jacki from Cedar Valley Community Support Services. By then, my left eye was fluttering closed. I was self-conscious about the walker, so I came downstairs without it. I wanted to go to Barnes and Noble, to get a DVD that was coming out that day. Jacki said, “we’re not going anywhere without the walker,” so I started up the
stairs to the condo. I nearly fell up the steps, so she got the condo manager to sit with me, while she got the car. Her boss, Sarabeth, got my appointment with my doctor moved up, to where I could go immediately.

I saw the Physician’s Assistant at my doctor’s office, and she performed some neurological tests. What scared me is she told me to lift both arms over my head, at the same time, and I couldn’t do it. She kept saying, “At the same time!” She sent us back to the hospital. This ER doctor did a test for a bladder infection. It came back negative, and she was going to send me home again, when Jacki apparently told them that if they sent me home again, she was going to take me to Mercy Hospital, down the street. The doctor FINALLY did a second CT, and my sister arrived, for a second time.

About that time, they realized I had a very large brain bleed, a subdural hematoma. They told me I needed surgery, and would be going by ambulance to University of Iowa Hospitals and Clinics. I was packed into an Ambulance, and we made it to Iowa City in about ten minutes. I was under anesthesia and in surgery, before my sister made it down in the car. When I woke up, my sister said that she wanted me to move to Cedar Falls. When I got home, I was really wobbly, when I stood for a while. It was especially bad when I looked down. So, long story short, my sister did some research, and found Western Home. About two months later, I visited Windhaven and liked it. A week and a half later, a room was available and I moved in. That’s the story of how I ended up at Windhaven.

Donna Iverson, Western Home Communities Senior
Paige Van Dyk, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Friendship from a Bus Ride

For most people, riding the bus to school is a mundane event in their lives. Get on, get off, twice a day, every day. But for Ruth Ann, the bus ride to school and back home every day during her school years is a memory that still brings a smile to her face. “Riding the bus was something the town kids definitely missed out on,” she tells me, a glisten in her eye. I can tell she is silently replaying moments on the bus as a child in her mind, and she goes on to tell me about some of her favorites.

“We used to make the younger kids sit at the front of the bus so we could talk at the back of the bus,” she says. At the back of the bus, Ruth Ann and the other older kids helped each other with homework, talked about their days, and ultimately forged the kind of friendships with her peers that can only come from spending so much time together, day in and day out, on a bus.

As we chat about these bus rides, Ruth Ann digs around her end table and pulls out a newspaper clipping. She hands it to me, and I see that it’s an obituary for an older man. “He used to ride the bus with me,” she tells me. “He was a classmate and a good friend.” Though it had
been many years since Ruth Ann and this man had ridden the bus together, their friendship was still something she cherished and remembered.

Ruth Ann has some pretty distinct memories of her years riding the bus, and I have one distinct memory of my time riding the bus, too. I share my story of getting on the wrong bus on my first day of first grade, and riding it until I was many miles out of town and many miles away from my bus stop. We laugh at my misfortune, and it strikes me how fascinating it is that these simple stories about riding a bus can connect Ruth Ann and me. I would have never thought that my confusion in the first grade bus parking lot would lead me, many years later, to be connecting with a woman on a Monday afternoon.

Apart from the bus stories, Ruth Ann and I spend much of our time sharing stories back and forth about many experiences in our life. My resident shares a story with me about her neighbors, and the relationship she shared with them as she was growing up, which prompts me to share about my neighbors, and the relationship I shared with them as I grew up. My resident shares a story with me about taking piano lessons as a child, and reminds me of my piano teacher and my years in piano lessons. Sharing stories with Ruth Ann has shown me how the experiences, even small experiences, in our lives shape us as people, and can end up connecting us to people later on in life.

Hearing her stories has encouraged me to look at my life: what are the experiences in my life that have shaped me in this way? Big or small, each experience in life changes us and adds to who we are as people. Because of these weekly visits with Ruth Ann, I have been able to identify more of these shaping moments in life, moments that have happened already and moments that are occurring in my daily life now.

I would have never expected that meeting with Ruth Ann every week would help me learn more about myself. I am thankful for this experience in my life, an experience which is definitely one of those I have recognized as one that will shape me as a person. Ruth Ann and I now share a special friendship, having shared many of the important stories in our lives with each other.

Ruth Ann Gooden, Western Home Communities Senior
Kendall Van Woerkom, UNI Human Relations Senior
People Are People

Jean Bilyeu first and foremost has a contagious laugh. Although, she wouldn’t say it herself. Bare in mind that every encounter with this great lady is met with smiles and giggles passed back and forth, so every story is hard to get through without breaks of laughter. They are a mere slices of the joy she has found recalling the adventures of her lifetime, and her life has surely been quite the adventure. Having traveled all over the globe, Jean has viewed life as an opportunity to see new places and meet new people. She would tell you she enjoyed every adventure and she enjoyed every person she met abroad.

It all began with her father’s family. He, along with his parents and three of his siblings, emigrated from Scotland. During visits with her and her family in New York, talks of “the old country” in Scotland wedged their way in her head. As soon as she graduated high school, she took the opportunity to begin life anew outside of the place where she had grown up. College in Michigan brought her a husband and future travel companion. Their honeymoon took them to the Bahamas, and just that small glimpse of traveling the world sparked the intrigue of a taste of culture and a change of scenery. Following college, Jean began teaching, but perhaps the discussions from her father’s Scottish relatives still echoed through her ears...

Jean and her husband took opportunities to take more classes abroad, and with a summer in Oxford, and a season in Africa, the travel bug bit her. The adventures began, and Jean was able to visit places all over the world during those studies and whenever opportunity presented itself. She crossed many place off of her bucket list from Scotland to Australia and from India to France. Rather than staying with the classes or travel groups, she would go out and explore the towns and countries she was visiting. She would talk to people and take advantage of the time she spent in faraway place. When asked where her favorite place is located, she simply says “all of them.”

Still curious as to which place was her true favorite, I asked again and again in the weeks following. Surely everyone has a favorite, right? Wrong.

Without a pause or hesitation, Jean always says, “every trip was my favorite because every trip was different.” She doesn’t say this as a means to be polite or to be fair- she truly means what she says. Fascinated by people and their cultures, she had fun on every trip she took because each of them were unique. Still wondering if one trip stood out in any way, I asked her about the people she met while traveling. Was it hard to speak with them because of the language barrier? Did people find it interesting that you are American? Was there a favorite culture you visited? I wanted to get her to admit she has a favorite.

“People are people,” she simply replied. Each culture is different, and that is what makes them and travel so special. Jean firmly believes that all people are simply people. “Just go up and
talk to them,” she would add, “they will talk to you.” She questions why people are nervous to speak to people while traveling in their countries. “People are people” and they will be just as excited to talk to you as you will be to talk to them. This is part of why she has no favorite place. Jean enjoyed each place and she enjoyed each culture.

Why she has ended up in little ol’ Iowa for retirement? She doesn’t fathom why either. Maybe she will make it to South America to cross that last continent off of her bucket list (you read that right- she has been nearly everywhere). One thing is for sure, the memories of traveling the world has given her the biggest smile on her face, and I can only hope to be able to experience the same.

Jean Bilyeu, Western Home Communities Senior
Melanie Vickers, UNI Human Relations Senior

Kind and Thoughtful

I AM . . . Helen Lund

I am kind and thoughtful

I wonder how to help others

I hear affirming news from my grandchildren

I see them making good choices

I want them to remain faithful

I am kind and thoughtful

I pretend to be bold

I touch the hearts of those around me

I worry about the world around us

I am kind and thoughtful

I understand God is in control

I say God keeps His promises
I dream of heaven
I try to live in His image
I hope for God’s peace
I am kind and thoughtful

Helen Lund, Western Home Communities Senior
Kirsten Waline, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Inspiring Others

Mary McCalley is the definition of inspiring. Her life has gone through struggle and strength. She has seen the world, had a large loving family, and has made a great impact on so many lives including my own. She is the kind of person that goes out of her way to make you feel welcome in new situations, listens to you to understand first, and helps by sharing her stories to provide experience and advice to help you grow your own life.

The day I met Mary she had just gotten back from her son Mark’s party, he was celebrating 20 years of working at Walmart as well as celebrating his retirement. She shared that this was a huge accomplishment for him and that he had Down syndrome. As I talked more with Mary you could tell that she was so proud of her son and all that he had accomplished. She talked to me about their struggles and how it was not always so easy for her.

Mark was her second child and Mary was so excited for another child to be in their family, but nothing could prepare her for what she would soon find out. The day Mary found out about having a special needs child she says that her day continued in a fog. In this time having Down syndrome was a situation where you sent your child to an institution or you kept them at home and never left the house. She wasn’t sure how she was going to handle this new challenge or what it was going to do to her life. Mary decided that she didn’t want a life for her or her family that was in constant hiding and she made it very clear that those institutions were not a place that her child would be going.

At this time there was little resources out there about children with Down syndrome and at this time it wasn’t even called Down syndrome, it had many far worse names to describe what the disability was. She said she had one book that a friend had recommended to her and the rest was just trial and error (she would want me to emphasize the error on that one).

Mary remembers all the trouble that Mark caused and often wondered if he was truly disabled from all of the mess that he seemed to get himself into. From using a broom to unlock the door to go outside and play, to getting into the AJAX floor cleaner and playing in it like snow Mark seemed like any normal child that just wanted to explore and learn.
When the River Hills School for disabilities opened in the Fall of 1967 Mary made herself very active in the school so that she could learn more about Mark and to make sure he was getting the best education and life possible.

Mary volunteered to give tours of the school and was in and out of the classrooms all day, she learned about multiple disabilities and made herself more knowledgeable on all of the children. She dedicated herself to making other students in Marks life feel welcome in her home, even today she still has contact with many people with disabilities and has done all that she can to help them. Mary spent most of her life giving presentations and speaking to people about having children with all disabilities. She wanted to give everyone an equal opportunity the most knowledge to prepare others for the life that they were going to go through. Mary said without the teachers that Mark had, the programs through her church, and the help from God she would have never made it through.

Mary is such an inspiring woman and the impact that she has had on the community is amazing. From the stack of papers that feature Mark that she has sitting on her counter to the many phone calls she gets from others seeking her advice and help Mary is a woman that has made an impact that I aspire to have on people someday in my own life.

Mary McCalley, Western Home Communities Senior
Kia Widen, UNI Human Relations Senior

My resident, Jean Swiggum, is one of the most inspiring and influential people I have ever met. Going to visit her on Friday’s is something I look forward to every week. Not only is she inspiring and influential but she is very smart and has proven this to me by not only showing me all of her school report cards but with the wisdom she has to share. Listening to her speak has completely altered my way of thinking about things in the most positive way. One of my most recent visits with Jean was a discussion regarding friendship. Although many would describe friendship very similarly, Jean had her own way of decoding it. It all started with Justine…

Justine was a top-notch friend. She always made light of any situation and was amazing at storytelling through poetry. Anyone could listen to her and feel as if they were living in the same moment. Jean and Justine met when they were only six years old. As Jean stated, “they were bosom friends. Friends from the way beginning”. Both of their parents were pastors so they were able to adventure off to Bible camp together.

Just like any childhood, it flashes by in the blink of an eye and they separated for a while. Not long after, they met up at college and picked up on their friendship exactly where they left off. Jean always stated that the best friendship was one where you can come back together
and never feel like you’ve spent time apart. They went on to graduate in 1948 and once again went their own ways. It was years later that they had both found themselves living in Northwest Iowa. After getting married and separating...again, they came together one last time in Decorah, Iowa after both retiring. From this, I’ve learned that true friendship grows, even over the longest distance. Justine passed away on March 13, 2018, the Tuesday before Jean told this story. She stated “although it’s sad to know she’s gone, she is in a better place and will always remain in my heart”.

Hearing this story hit home for me as it not only teaches me the true meaning of friendship but that life will take us on an incredible adventure. It is so important to hold on and to trust that we go through every life situation for a reason. There will always be a pot of gold at the end of the tunnel.

Jean Swiggum, Western Home Communities Senior
Justine Meendering, UNI Human Relations Senior

Two Cultures Apart

Culture can be defined in many ways. Most commonly, culture is characterized by a shared set of beliefs, attitudes, values, social practices, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group. For most individuals, their culture can be easily defined. They’ve grown up in a definite way of life. This story is a reminder that this isn’t always the case. What happens when the culture you biologically or physiologically belong to, doesn’t define you? You’re not included or you don’t fit in? What happens when you don’t agree with the core values or beliefs that your culture so strongly depends on? Well, that’s exactly what Bev and I were able to reflect on during our time together.

Bev Fish was born with a severe-to-profound hearing loss. For most of her life, Bev’s primary means of communication were dependent upon lip reading. Although she had obtained hearing aids at the age of 3, they offered mere support. In addition, Bev was never presented with the opportunity to learn American-Sign Language to aid her communicative abilities. Growing up, Bev had to triple the effort of her peers to be successful in school and maintain social interactions. In 1990, at the age of 40, Bev made the life-changing decision to undergo the surgical procedure to get a cochlear implant. The quality of her communicative abilities and social interactions increased immensely.

For those of you unaware, there’s a difference between deaf and Deaf. Deaf (with a capital “D”) refers to those accepted in Deaf culture. Those within Deaf culture are born with, or acquire, a severe-to-profound hearing loss. Yep, just like Bev. They face the same struggles and share many of the same experiences. However, Bev will never be accepted into Deaf culture. Her
cochlear implant and lack American Sign Language usage will forever be the reason for that. Although those within Deaf culture are individuals that Bev could relate to due to the challenges and lifestyle she was forced to endure, she is considered an outcast among them. In fact, Bev has stated that she had never before felt more uncomfortable around others until she was surrounded by a culture she physiologically belonged in.

Then there’s me, Nistanokwe. I biologically belong to a Native American culture. I am a descendant of the Sac & Fox tribe of the Mississippi in Iowa. I have Meskwaki blood running through my veins. I’ve grown up dancing in powwows, attending feasts, and learning the language of my ancestors. However, I have always struggled to be accepted into my culture. I am guilty of breaking many norms and others have looked down upon me for it, including immediate family members. Although I am proud of who I am; I am proud to come from the one and only federally recognized Indian tribe in Iowa, I no longer agree with some of the core values and beliefs of my culture; I can no longer relate. I want to live an ambitious life outside of the Meskwaki Indian settlement. Do I have to lose my cultural identity because of that?

Before meeting Bev, I had never really opened up about my concerns and sense of abnegation. Bev allowed me to self-reflect and become proud of who I have become, despite the opinions of others. Bev and I are beating the odds. As a deaf woman, Bev was likely to come a victim of domestic abuse, not earn a degree or be successful within the workforce. Wrong. Bev has lived a successful life. She earned a degree, has held several successful positions within hospital laboratories in numerous states, and is flourishingly continuing her passion to travel the world. As a Native American female, I was likely to live in poverty with no education and be a victim of violence and abuse while battling addiction. Again, wrong.

Although Bev and I may not necessarily have a place among those we identify with, we are okay with that. I was able to relate to her more than someone who shares my own descendancy and grew up in the same environment. Bev truly served as an outlet. She knows the fears I hold for my younger siblings, as they are growing up in an environment that I worry will set them up for failure. I know Bev’s concerns regarding the lack of support for those with hearing impairments. Will our cultures’ expectations change and become more accepting over time? We can only hope, as Bev and I each want Deaf culture and Native American culture to prosper, flourish and thrive.

Bev Fish, Western Home Communities Senior
Maranda Bear, UNI Human Relations Senior
Joyce’s Passion

Joyce Hufferd has a passion for traveling and being spontaneous. She has traveled all over the United States and several other countries. Joyce says that the best trips are the ones that aren’t planned out or have a set schedule. She believes that you miss too many opportunities to see other neat things if you do.

One thing she learned through traveling was that we are all different, but yet all the same. We may live in different parts of the world, but we are all connected or have something in common. She told me about a story in China where she met this woman who was also a grandma. Both of them couldn’t speak each other’s language, but through hand gestures they were able to have a conversation about being grandmas. I thought that was just fascinating.

Another story she shared with me was when her and her husband were going to another country and they had to fly separately. This was her first time flying out of the country by herself, but they had a little game plan. His flight was to land first and she was to meet him at the McDonald’s in the airport. Her airplane ended up landing first and soon she realized that there were more than one McDonalds in the airport. She decided she would just sit and wait at the baggage claim for his plane to arrive. Before she knew it, she saw his bag and a few minutes later he came walking in.

Joyce is a kind, passionate, adventurous person and I’m so happy I got the pleasure of getting to know her this semester. Through her stories, I got to hear some of her experiences and she made me realize that there is so much more out there in the world that I haven’t gotten to experience. When I think about her, I’ll remember our time together and the stories she shared.

Joyce Hufferd, Western Home Communities Senior
Sammie Benisch, UNI Human Relations Senior

All the Places Life Can Take You

I am intelligent and content
I wonder why people can’t show more kindness
I hear my little nephew, Westley, singing
I see Westley loving his baby sister
I want my good health to continue
I am intelligent and content
I pretend to be optimistic or hopeful about the world
   I touch people with my hugs
I worry about the state of the nation
   I cry when I watch something sad on t.v.
   I am intelligent and content

I understand that you sometimes need to take risks
   I say what I think
I continue dreaming about future trips
   I try to be helpful and kind
I hope for a kinder world for our children
   I am intelligent and content

As a life-long learner and traveler, Marlys has been a great source of empowerment and inspiration to me. Having lived in Norway for forty years and traveling to numerous countries, Marlys’ adventures did not stop once she returned to Iowa. In less than ten years since her return she has been to every state in the United States, all the while being an active member of Western Home Communities. Her adventurous spirit is only matched by the kindness she displays towards others.

Each week Marlys welcomed me into her home with a kind smile and more to talk about than could be contained in the hour we spent together--a reason we often went over our scheduled time. I will forever treasure the meaningful conversations had and relaxing afternoons spent playing board games with Marlys.

Marlys Simpson, Western Home Communities Senior

Allison Bogaard, UNI Human Relations Senior
A Fairytale Marriage

Guided by her strong faith, Marty Halupnik is a woman of many wonderful qualities. From having met with Marty over the past couple months, I got the privilege to know her very well. I admire her passion for life, big heart, and love for her husband.

Marty Halupnik exemplifies a strong marriage by putting her faith first. Marty’s fairytale began when she married Dale, the man of her dreams. Marty and Dale brought out the best in each other, as they pushed each other to grow in their faith. Dale had many questions at first about why Marty believed, and she necessarily didn’t know those answers. Instead of shying away from their faith, they read the whole bible together during the first year of their marriage.

As their hearts grew fonder together, so did their journey to spreading the word of the gospel. Marty and Dale would attend conferences together in the act of displaying evangelism. They are both very selfless by reaching out to others in order to walk those people in their faith. For example, they picked up a hitchhiker back in the days and brought faith into his life. They continued these acts by opening up their house to continental singers. As they housed these singers, Marty and Dale’s kids were able hear the fun stories the singers had to share.

Marty and Dale’s love for each other is so inspiring. Today in a world full of divorces and the meaning of love constantly being questioned, their story embodies an ideal marriage of being faithful to one another. She allowed me to hear a true love story and I hope my marriage can be just as amazing as theirs. When I asked Marty about what she loved to do with Dale, she simply said running errands with him. She liked to do anything with him because she just enjoyed his presence. On their anniversary date, June 8th, they would always do something special. Even if it was just to go on a walk on that day due to their busy schedules, they just wanted to make sure they allowed quality time spent together. As Dale passed away three years ago, Marty’s grandchildren would have activities to do with her on June 8th because they knew how much that day meant to her. As she stated, “it’s the history together and the importance that is important!”

Marty’s faith, unconditional love, and hope will always be unforgettable. She taught me the true meaning of life, which is how faith always comes first. I am going to miss meeting with her on Monday’s as we made a strong connection and were able to share our stories together. I cherished the time we spent together as her big heart and smile is very contagious.

Marty Halupnik, Western Home Communities Senior
Sarah Brandt, UNI Human Relations Senior
A Master’s Education

The first time I met with Don, I was astonished at the mobile and mentally sharp man who seemed to be only 75 but in reality was 91. As I got to know more and more about him, I realized that Don was no ordinary 91 year-old. In our conversations about our stories and who we are at our first meeting, I was surprised to find that if I struggled to find a specific word I was looking for, he could. I also discovered that most of his day is spent reading and researching various subjects and projects, including a self-written family ancestry inquiry report that numbered over 200 pages! He indeed was no ordinary 91 year-old. After meeting with him for over 2 months, I believe that I now know his secret; a master’s education.

Born the son of a railroad worker in 1927, Don Walton knew what working hard entailed. The 4th generation descendant of poor, uneducated immigrants from Ireland, he utilized the circumstances he found himself in and knew what sacrifices had to be made to create the best life he could for him and his eventual family. A predominantly Catholic town, Clinton gave Don the opportunity to attend a parochial school for all of his younger years. His experiences there allowed him to further enhance his learning at St. Ambrose University in Davenport after serving time in the Navy. Immediately after graduating with a degree in Sociology, he became a traveling salesman to provide for the needs of his new spouse and baby on-the-way. While it wasn’t glamorous or glorious, this job helped provide the needs for his family. Quickly, he realized that going back to school to complete a master’s degree best fit his circumstance, so he enrolled in the Iowa State Teachers College to be certified to teach and taught in a middle school for several years after. Later, he completed his master’s degree in 1962 in Education Administration, a feat that took him 10 years. Eventually, he would work at the university as a personnel manager serving as a human resource liaison for employees from the mid-1960s until his retirement in 1993.

Don’s commitment and continual effort to finish his degree even further exemplified his willingness to challenge himself and learn. Coupling family, work, and education is no easy feat. As graduate work is a more emotionally and intellectually demanding educational experience, I firmly believe that the thirst for knowledge and skills Don instilled in his work ethic has helped him become the sharp 91 year-old man he is today. While a master’s education may not be the true secret, I believe it’s pretty darn close.

Don Walton, Western Home Communities Senior
Bryan Hawkins, UNI Human Relations Senior
Passion’s Purpose

She allowed passion to become her purpose which allowed her passion to become her profession. This woman is Teddi Finegan. Teddi is an individual with many talents. She started out her career with a B.S. in dietetics from Ohio State University. After all her children were old enough to attend grade school, she realized that dietetics was not what she wanted to do. She knew her true passion was art so she was determined to go to UNI to get her BA and MA in Art. Teddi had been participating in invitational, traveling, and competitive art shows with fiber pieces. Teddi was originally a fiber artist but her real passion was in weaving. Teddi studied weaving with Roy Ginstrom and Malin Selander from Sweden. This study was her only training she ever had in weaving, otherwise she self-taught herself which is very impressive. When she got home from that study, she had started many weaving pieces.

In her house, she had a studio that was full of multiple weaving looms and had a closet full of yarn. Most the time, you could find Teddi in the studio as well. She worked on multiple pieces at once and was always busy. She had a lot of weaving art pieces and commission work but her favorite was the commission work she did for the Standard Distributing Company located in Waterloo. This piece was a tapestry and called the earth, sky, sun-center.

One impressive thing you will learn about Teddi is that she made paraments for two churches in Cedar falls and one church in Chicago. The Nazareth Lutheran Church, St.Timothy’s Methodist Church, and the Bethlehem Lutheran Church have paraments that were hand-made by the one and only, Teddi Fineagan. Once in a while, Teddi will attend services at these churches.

May you know, she has won many awards and is represented in numerous public and private collections. Currently, she still has pieces of artwork in UNI’s “Alumni Invitational” at the UNI Gallery of Art. Teddi’s passion for her work is not only unique but it is successful as well.

Over the times Teddi and I met, we made many connections. We both enjoy the outdoors and share an interest in a handful of sports. She told me many stories about her sons love for animals and hunting and I could easily relate as her eldest son sounds a lot like my significant other. She was very passionate about her career. I am also very passionate about coaching volleyball. Her great granddaughter plays on a volleyball team in Janesville. The first weekend in March, I mentioned to her that I was going to Des Moines to the Iowa Deer Classic. She preceded to tell me that her son was in charge of organizing this event. Teddi mentioned how he
does the same thing for many different events. This was a very strong connection for me because I thought that would be a fun job to have because I love to organize. Teddi was always welcoming and happy to see me. During one of the later meetings, she was kind enough to share pictures of her art work with me. She also gave me a rough draft of her biography she had made. I enjoyed all my visits with Teddi, we always found something to talk about that we related to.

Teddie Finegan, Western Home Communities Senior
Lauren Cavin, UNI Human Relations Senior

Friendship Matters

Karl has had a life full of ups and downs. However, he enjoys focusing on all the positive he has in his life. He also enjoys learning from others through different experiences. Karl stays connected to the community by going to the shop Koch Construction and visiting with the workers. Karl was a founding member and learned to grow as the business grew.

During the time with Karl he has shared so much advice and wisdom with me about friendship and relationships. Friendship is something Karl enjoys, and he admires that his wife can make friends anywhere she goes. Karl told me that to make new friends you must be open to trying new things. If you do not try new things who knows, who you could have met. Always be willing to learn something or try something new to make new connection and relationships in your life.

Meeting Karl has helped open my eyes to better prepare me as I get ready to teach full time. Remembering that everyone has a different home life, good or bad, that you can always find common ground if you are willing to get to know the person.

Karl Koch, Western Home Communities Senior
Hannah Cunningham, UNI Human Relations Senior

First Time for Everything

Our life is filled with many first-time events that are the beginning of the many stories that compose our life. Pat Taylor has experienced many events in her life that have developed her into the caring, funny, and intelligent woman she is today. Pat Taylor and I met once a week to share our stories with each other. One story Pat shared was about a joyful, first-time experience she encountered when she was younger.
Pat met her sixth-grade teacher, Irene Hynes, and the other students in her class at the train depot one evening. When the train arrived the class boarded and rode into the heart of Chicago. The sun began sinking low behind the city buildings as they came closer to the city. Irene Hyne’s class arrived at a fancy restaurant where they ate dinner. Pat and her classmates made sure they behaved their best and used their manners. Pat felt like an adult eating at the nice restaurant with her classmates.

After dinner, the sixth-grade class went to the theatre to watch a musical. When she entered the theatre, she gave the worker her ticket to view the performance. Pat had been to many movies before, but she had never viewed a musical with live performers on a stage. She felt like an important person watching the actors and actresses act, sing, and dance in the high-class theatre. Pat felt pride in herself as her classmates and she were like the grown-ups attending a musical at the theatre.

To this day Pat remembers her first-time attending a musical at the theatre. Every week when I visited Pat at her home, we would share our first-time events that brought us together for this experience. I was able to realize that first-time experiences create the beginning of each individual story that composes our life. Pat has taught me to live in the moment of my first-time experiences I encounter in my life and enjoy the moment that will someday be a part of my story.

Pat Taylor, Western Home Communities Senior
Hannah Davidson, UNI Human Relations Senior

Considerate and Warmhearted

I AM . . . Juanita Rekers

I am considerate and warmhearted

I wonder how I became this fortunate in my life

I hear comfort in silence after years of various sounds

I see many more happy years with the ones I love

I want to see my loved ones reach their goals in life

I am considerate and warmhearted

I touch the lives of others by sharing my life story
I hope my family members live life to the fullest, enjoying whatever they choose

I worry about the future of this country not letting God guide and direct their path of life

I cry when full of sorrow or joy

I am considerate and warmhearted

I understand there are people who are hurting

I say I believe Jesus Christ is my savior and died for my sins

I dream my children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren know Jesus as their personal savior

I try to have a positive outlook on any situation

I am considerate and warmhearted

When starting this experience in the Western home I did not know what to expect. I walked in the first day to Juanita Rekers’ smiling face. She was bright and kind from the beginning. Throughout multiple conversations I really got to know Juanita and her loving heart for her family and friends. She also told me about her strong connection to her faith. Juanita has taught me many things throughout our short amount of time that will stick with me as I continue my journey into teaching. One thing in particular is the value of a good education and what I can bring to the lives of my future students. She wishes she had continued her education, but at the time, that wasn’t a common thing to do. I hope to bring the many stories of her life and values that she has into my life and also the lives of my students.

Juanita Rekers, Western Home Communities Senior
Jessica Dusek, UNI Human Relations Senior

The Unexpected Trip

Before you start this story, you must understand that Shirley Harris was quite the social butterfly in high school, and even to this day. She has a love for people and relationships, and one can see the joy this brings her by simply being around her for a day. In high school, Shirley was a part of two different clubs, one being a group of four girls that called themselves the “four musketeers”. The other group was made up of these “four musketeers”, and a group of four
guys. This group decided to be called the “crazy eight club”. Now that you know this, we can get on with the real story. Shirley’s prom night didn’t go like any typical prom night. It all started by Shirley going to get her hair done for the very first time at a beauty shop. Once her hair was done, Shirley put on her brand new red, sleeveless dress, and she was ready for a great night!

The “crazy eight club” started their prom night by going to a dinner in Waterloo. They thought they would get all fancy by going to the Russell Lampson Hotel to eat! They ate so, so much that Shirley couldn’t even think about eating another bite for the rest of her life! After dinner, the “crazy eight club” club decided to make a spur of the moment decision to head right on out of town. They did this because they were angry at the school for not allowing them to have a dance!

The “crazy eight club” wanted to have some freedom, so they decided to rebel! Shirley, along with her seven other friends, piled in a van and drove to Des Moines. Along the ride, all they did was laugh, talk, and drink lots and lots of soda! This simple event shows a glimpse of Shirley’s joy she has for life. She makes the most out of every moment she is given. The “crazy eight club” drove all through the night, and the parents had absolutely no idea where any of them were.

As the night came to a close, the “crazy eight club” rolled right back into Dike, Iowa around 4:30 a.m. Shirley was absolutely terrified of what her parents might say. As the car rolled down the driveway to Shirley’s farm, she saw her parents come out to do the morning chores. When she saw them, Shirley felt like her stomach dropped all the way down to her feet. As Shirley got out of the car, Shirley’s dad said, “Why are you coming home so late? Where were you?” Shirley answered, “We drove out of town, laughed a lot, and drank lots and lots of soda! I promise we didn’t do anything bad!” Surprisingly enough, Shirley’s mom and dad believed Shirley, and she didn’t get any punishment for the night out on the town. This night was definitely a night to remember.

Throughout this story, one can get a glimpse of Shirley’s love for life and people. I love how anytime I talk to Shirley I can see the pure joy she has to be alive! Getting to spend time with Shirley Harris this semester has impacted me in so many ways. Shirley takes the time to enjoy the little things in life, like spending time with her husband, family, and friends. Hearing about the hard times Shirley has went through has encouraged me to not take a second of life for granted. She has taught me to keep a positive attitude through all the things life may throw at me, and to trust God through everything. I am so grateful that I was given the opportunity to meet Shirley Harris. She is truly one of a kind, and someone I will remember and cherish for the rest of my life.

Shirley Harris, Western Home Communities Senior
Makenah Eckland, UNI Human Relations Senior
Selflessly Serving

I have had the opportunity to meet EthelAnn Koch, a resident out at the Windermere Assisted Living. I have met with her over the course of the past semester and I have enjoyed hearing all her stories. She is one extraordinary person with so much passion for serving others and learning about the world around her and she has done this by giving her time for 4 mission trips.

While EthelAnn was in nursing school she traveled twice to Jamaica, not as a vacation but rather to be a medical nurse for the week, stationed up in the hills. They didn’t have running water so they would have to set buckets of water in the sun all day to be able to have warm water by nightfall. EthelAnn said that the people of the island would walk miles to the hills where the medical nurses were stationed to get the basic medical check-ups that they were offering. Due to the free check-ups it was known that you would wait hours to get in because everyone wanted to have a checkup and make sure they were healthy. Reflecting back on her mission trips to Jamaica, EthelAnn sees how fortunate she is to have what she did at the time and how much things are taken for granted. In her words, “we really are a throwaway society.”

Not only did EthelAnn do missions in Jamaica as a medical nurse, she also traveled, not once but twice, to the Rosebud Indian Reservation in South Dakota to help on the 2nd poorest reservation for the week. While there she did say they got to stay in facilities with running water but it was dormitory style living, meaning you cooked and cleaned yourself. While working for the week it was common for the Indians to leave the reservation until you were finished working for the day. EthelAnn said she did things such as painting, doing carpentry work and really anything they needed help cleaning up or doing. Come night time she said they often would take on the culture, meaning they would join others in the sweat lodges, doing the ceremonial rituals and understanding the importance of the animals.

EthelAnn has lived one very fulfilling and rewarding life putting others before herself. This past semester with EthelAnn has taught me a lot, to start I learned the importance of serving others and the amount of gratitude you will find in knowing that you made a difference in someone else. The other thing that I learned from EthelAnn is to find the joy in the little things or the darkest time. Not every day, minute or second will be your time but there is always something little that you can take away from your moments in life because time slips away from you, even if you’re not ready for it. I have enjoyed every single meeting with EthelAnn and all the knowledge she has shared with me and stories we have conversed over and these are moments to a story of my own I can’t wait to tell.

EthelAnn Koch, Western Home Communities Senior
Alyssa Fangmann, UNI Human Relations Senior
Kind People, Beautiful Powwows

Red Lake Reservation, Northern Minnesota, home to the Chippewa tribe. This is where Jean Thompson taught in an elementary school for twelve years. The school was located right on the Lower Red River Lake. She taught fifty children math and reading.

One thing Jean remembers vividly about spending time on the reservation was the powwows. They were always having powwows and everyone in the tribe came. This was their main way of celebration. People of all ages gathered to eat, dance, and celebrate. The kids would run around and play.

She also remembers the enchanting music and dancing. Even children sitting in their diapers had drumsticks in their hands and beating on drums. The dances wear beautiful with dancers wearing dresses made of natural deerskin and beautiful beadwork. The men dance a magnificent dance of the wild turkey.

Food was of abundance at these powwows. The Walleye Fillet was always a treat. Jean remembers their tacos were especially delicious. They were not like the tacos we are accustomed to. These tacos were made with green wild rice and traditional fry bread. She misses those tacos and wishes she could have some again. Jean has very fond memories of living on the Red Lake Reservation and very fond memories of the people who lived there.

It has been such a joy visiting Jean every week. There was never a lack of conversation between the two of us. We spoke of travel, family, teaching, and so much more. She has given me an abundance of encouragement and love.

Jean Thompson, Western Home Senior
Kara Ganzer, UNI Human Relations Senior

Caring for Others

Marlys Cook has shared a lot of great stories with me during our weekly visits, but the part in her life when she worked at the Winneshiek County Home really stands out to me. The Home was originally called the Poor Farm but they eventually changed to the more appealing name of the Winneshiek County Home. The 16 years that Marlys worked at the Home was a large part of her life. She spent a lot of time with her residence and many referred to her as mom and looked to Marlys for love and support. Marlys and her husband Cecil ran the Winneshiek County Home together and treated their 91 residence very well. They did not lock the doors, so no one felt like a prisoner and they were free to come and go as they pleased. Marlys was always planning activities for the residence so they always had something to do and could have fun with the others in the Home. Since Cecil had a farm attached to the Home they provided the food for the residence, meaning they were very well fed and taken care of. There was also a store in
the home where the residence could spend their allowance of $25 per month. Eventually the Home went private, meaning they got Title 19 funds and were able to get more money for the residence to help pay for things such as their medications.

Marlys was close with many of her residence but one that stuck out to her was a girl we are going to call Sarah. Sarah was with Marlys for 16 years that she ran the County Home. She was diagnosed as mentally ill when she was in 3rd grade but came to stay with Marlys in her 20’s. Sarah was convinced that an Indian on a white horse was going to come and take her away and would tell people about it every chance she got. One day Marlys got a phone call from the Sheriff saying that one of her residence was walking along the highway completely naked trying to get a ride to the Indian Reservation. When Marlys finally got to Sarah she found her chained to a wheelchair looking sad and upset. Sarah looked at Marlys and asked “Why am I like this? Why do I do this?” This made Marlys very upset because Sarah had no control over her actions and she wished there was something more she could do to help her. Eventually Sarah was put in jail and during this time she dug her right eye out. Soon after this happened Sarah was sent to Mitchellville Women's Prison instead, where she proceeded to dig her left eye out. You would think something like this would make a person upset but instead Sarah said that she was finally happy now.

After their 16 years running the poor farm Marlys and Cecil left, but it is clear she is still wondering about her residence and how they are doing every day. It is very cool to hear Marlys talk about her time at the Winneshiek County Home because I am able to see how much she cared about her residence, especially Sarah, and all the time she spent making sure they were well taken care of. That care she had for her residence is still seen today when she talks about her friends and loved ones. All her residence are still special to her and they were very lucky to have lived in the County Home that Marlys ran.

Marlys Cook, Western Home Communities Senior
Meredith Gorman, UNI Human Relations Senior

Learning to Help Others

Ability at pool is the best evidence of a misspent youth, so says my sharp witted friend, Mike Dargan. Mike and I usually talk and connect over a few games of pool every week, and I can’t seem to beat him. From what I hear understand about him, failure is bad, but needn’t result in defeat. Sure, flunking out of college twice isn’t much to brag about, but he made a failure a starting rather than an ending point. Despite the rather dismal beginning, he recently ended his career as a successful professional with three graduate degrees.

Prior to his third start in college, Mike was committed and made some promises to himself. First, he determined to always sit in the front row of every class with his right side against the wall. Physicians at the UIHC advised him that with his extremely poor vision and hearing, especially on the right side, he would need to accommodate his disabilities. Next, he
was advised that an excellent way to learn was to teach the subject to others. So, he made it a point to share his work or insights with fellow students—and even professors. And finally, he decided to not fail himself; he would do his best and let the chips fall.

This approach, helping others, paid off well: He reaped what he had sown multiplied many times. At his graduation party a couple of English professors late in the evening asked if he’d be interested in an assistantship with tuition waiver. He agreed—despite not having majored in English—got the degree and subsequently taught as an adjunct for several years. While doing so he continued his habit of helping others. The early 1990s academic world, just prior to the advent of the WWW, had a great need for people who could facilitate the transition to the online world. Dargan saw this as an opportunity and tried to not miss a chance to help out.

As he pursued the support of WWW technology his health issues resulted in his further loss of vision, reaching the point where he could no longer drive and teaching became problematic. Despite these problems he continued to seek out and exploit helping opportunities. He became the volunteer coordinator of the CedarNet users group, teaching scores of community leaders the magic of HTML. Many of those people remembered Mike’s efforts and reciprocated in unexpected ways.

Leaders in the College of Education and College of Humanities & Fine Arts created an adjunct position for Mike that didn’t require him to teach. Instead, they gave him an office with a phone and told him to “do interesting things.” Doing so led to the Center for the Enhancement of Teaching to give him a 50% gig helping faculty to use technology in their teaching and research. The final day of his contract—when the money ran out—his last session was with a Professor Fred Kolkhorst. Fred asked Mike if he could come back Monday and when told that it was over as the Provost had only funded the position through that day, the professor nodded his head, wished him luck, and said, “Maybe I’ll see you around anyway.” Monday morning Mike’s boss called him and said, would you like work full time through the end of summer? The provost funded your position! Turns out, the provost, Nancy Marlin, was married to Fred Kolkhorst. Being helpful to the end doesn’t always work out, but sometimes it rings the bell.

Meanwhile, Dargan’s eyesight continued to fail. People were actually driving out to his farm to bring him to campus or elsewhere to do jobs—paid or not. He began a graduate program in Education Technology in hope that he would be able to use computers to communicate as he became completely impaired.

Local physicians were reluctant to treat his failing eyesight as they feared making things worse. However, a Professor of Renaissance Literature, helped by Mike with his health issues, persuaded him to connect with a world class eye surgeon at the UIHC. The surgeon took a chance. Did surgery on December 21, 1995, and the next day Dargan went from a 20/150 corrected vision to 20/25 in one eye. Apparently, being able to see is a good thing.
Meanwhile, a professor of Industrial Technology whose textbook chapter on Internet functions Mike had helped to edit, heard that he could see again and was driving around. His library director wife complained that she needed someone to look after the libraries’ technology needs. Her husband said, “Talk to Dargan. He can see again and needs something to do!” And so it goes.

Mike is a man who spends his time learning and becoming the best at helping people. He spends his time now giving speeches over social media to help improve other library systems and lives with his amazing wife Cherie. These are all life lessons that some have never figured out but I hope I use in my life and teaching career. I don’t just want to become a best teacher and get my summers off, I want to become the best teacher and help my students in every way possible. People shouldn’t become content with who they are and settle down, they should strive to always better themselves and help others in the process. These are things that I have learned with my short time with Mike and wish I could have spent more time with him. I will cherish these days and will never forget them.

Mike Dargan, Western Home Communities Senior
Jason Hall, UNI Human Relations Senior

1 Peter 4:10

In the Bible, 1 Peter 4:10 says, “God has given each of you a gift from his great variety of spiritual gifts. Use them well to serve one another.” As humans, we are often taught that it is important to use our gifts and talents to better the lives of the people around us. This is much easier said than done, however, as we often struggle to balance our own lives and still manage to make time for others. Nevertheless, through hard work and sacrifice, it is possible to do exactly this, just ask Dick.

Dick Douglas has spent over ninety years living a life predicated on service and volunteerism. Born during the Great Depression and raised in the middle to upper-class town of Westfield, New Jersey, Dick grew up in a very faith-filled home alongside his brother, parents, and grandmother. Growing up, Dick was not the most athletic or competitive person. Due to a shortage of students during the polio crisis, Dick began school a year before many of the other children his in his class, and so he was much younger than many of his classmates growing up. Nonetheless, Dick found other ways to express himself and began to find his niche in music and ministry, thanks largely in part to his grandmother and pastor. Music was one of Dick’s first loves, as it made him feel recognized and appreciated. Dick would eventually go on to use music as a means of reaching other people as well, by singing with the Duke choir, playing the piano and organ at his church, and serving as choir director as well.
However, Dick’s service was not solely limited to music, but a vast array of other areas, too. Being born into a family who was more financially stable than others at the time, young Dick could often be seen helping his mother serve and prepare meals for neighbors (and even strangers) who found themselves out of work. As he grew older, Dick also worked on a dairy during the summer to earn money which he was originally going to put towards obtaining a Pre-Med degree at Duke University in North Carolina. Nonetheless, after a rather eye-opening anatomy class, Dick decided that he would be better off pursuing a law degree instead. While at Duke, Dick met his wife Frances, and together the two had three girls.

Dick has served others through the many professions and volunteer opportunities he has participated in over the course of his lifetime. Since leaving the army, he has served as the Dean and Vice President of Administration at the New Jersey Institute of Technology, and the Director of Personnel and Business Services at the University of Northern Iowa where he spent much of his time negotiating contracts and working to strengthen labor relations. Additionally, Dick has served as a chaplain at Allen Hospital for over 25 years and has also volunteered large portions of his time at Sartori Memorial Hospital.

These days, Dick can still be found volunteering as a chaplain at Allen and Sartori Memorial in Cedar Falls, a service which he has now been performing for over 25 years. When he is not volunteering, Dick likes to attend performances held at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center and the Regent Theatre.

Despite our being two completely different people, Dick has taught me so much throughout this whole experience about what it means to live a life of service. In listening to his many stories about growing up in the city and hearing all the different events and people he has met along the way, I have learned how important it is to do everything within your power to work with and support those people who you might originally see as being different from you, or those people whose views might not necessarily align with your own, as you will eventually interact with them in one way or another.

I have also learned that even when it can be hard to find interpersonal similarities, they do exist, it’s just a matter of being patient and persistent enough to find them. Most importantly, however, through this entire experience, I have learned about how I might use my own gifts/talents to serve others, just as Dick has done - and continues to do - on a daily basis.

Dick Douglas, Western Home Communities Senior
Grant Kilburg, UNI Human Relations Senior
There is an old saying that says what goes around comes around, and for Dick Douglas, this might just be true. Now ninety years old, Dick has long lived a life predicated on service and volunteerism. Whether it be helping his mother feed neighbors and strangers in New Jersey during the Great Depression, working on a dairy during the summer months to pay for school, or volunteering at his local church, Dick has long known the idea of what it means to use one’s gifts to give back.

Over the course of his lifetime, service and volunteerism have served Dick well. Because of his deep love for helping others, Dick often dreamed of becoming a doctor as a young child. With that dream in mind, Dick decided to attend Duke University in North Carolina to study Pre-Med. However, after completing a rather eye-opening anatomy class, Dick decided that his love of service might be better suited for other work, and so he switched his major to Law, although he really had no intentions of practicing it after college. Nonetheless, the decision turned out to be the right one after all, for it was while studying Law at Duke that Dick would go on to meet his wife, Frances.

A secretary at the time working in the Registrar’s Office at Duke Law School, Frances typed the stencils for “The Bar Rag”, the Law School newspaper which Dick was the editor of. Frances was older than Dick, but that didn’t stop him and his roommate from trying to court her. Reading this now, it may seem as though the two were stuck in quite the predicament. However, with Dick being the negotiator that he was, he decided on a fool-proof solution for determining who would be the one to ask her out - they’d flip a coin. Dick doesn’t recall what the coin ended up landing on heads or tails, but he does remember winning, and so, that night, Dick asked Frances if she would like to go dancing with him. Of course, she said yes, and the rest - as they say - is history.

When I asked Dick whether or not he had ever told Frances the story of how he had won the opportunity to ask her out, he merely chuckled and said, “Not until we had been married for a number of years!” Needless to say, however, their marriage worked out. Together the two went on to have three girls. Today, Dick lives with his cat, Gus, at the Windridge Western Home. And, although Frances has since passed away, her memory lives on through Dick and the many memories he holds with him in his heart.

Dick Douglas, Western Home Communities Senior
Grant Kilburg, UNI Human Relations Senior
It Took a Village

Expecting your first child is one of the most exciting and frightening times, and many second guess whether or not they can do it. Most people who are planning to have kids also know that they have their spouse to help them out. When Virginia was raising her kids, her husband was in the army so, she relied on help from others. Her parents often helped her with the kids and had Virginia and the two kids move in with them. Her dad thought it was funny when she had to do things like wash the bedding after her daughter dumped her bottle all over her crib, and laughed at her when she had to clean up after her kids.

She lived in North Carolina in army housing. Her husband wasn’t around and her neighbor often came over to help out. This neighbor would come sit with her while she rocked the kids to bed, and even taught her how to make fried okra. Virginia never mastered the art of frying okra, but she appreciated all the help and moral support that she got from her neighbor. She said it calmed her down a lot, knowing that she had help right next door.

One of the biggest pieces of parenting advice that Virginia gave me was, “don’t let the kids rule the roost.” There are so many parents today that let their kids run the show, but Virginia says that allowing that to happen is the easiest way to lose control of your kids. This piece of advice applies to teaching as well, my students should not be in control of the classroom. That’s my job!

During my time with Virginia, I have learned many things that I can apply to teaching and parenting. One thing I learned was that asking for help is necessary, you can’t do it all on your own. I also learned that parenting and teaching might be out of my comfort zone but doing things that are out of my comfort zone will teach me more about life than staying in my comfort zone. I may surprise myself on how well I handle the challenge.

Virginia Emmert, Western Home Communities Senior
Shania Koerber, UNI Human Relations Senior

Life Lessons

Throughout my college career at UNI I have been given countless projects, opportunities, and resources that have helped me develop connections that I will reflect back on for the rest of my life. Human Relations class with Professor Kathy Oakland has granted me with a couple that just might be the best one yet. The Congdons, Richard and Rita. I have only met them a handful of times, but with the guidance of some mindful questions developed by Professor Oakland, I have gotten to know them very well, and they have already made a huge impact on my way of
thinking. Their experience and knowledge has developed them into some of the wisest, but yet energetic people I know.

When bringing up the topic of writing this story, they both agreed that this should be written about the most important lesson they have, and that is to always give more than you receive. Whether that be at home, at work, or in the community. From what I have gathered this couple is the epitome of hard work, but yet have somehow been able to still have a sense of graciousness and humility to them.

Both Richard and Rita have lived in Cedar Falls their whole lives. They have seen it all, from what this city used to be, to what it has grown into today. In a way they have helped build this community. From my knowledge they both grew up in humble lifestyles. This led them to know how to work and how to build a life for themselves. Having this attitude and mindset they started working and doing what they could in their elementary years. This work ethic grew as they got older and really was exemplified when Richard was a small business owner at the age of 23 and Rita a successful school teacher, right out of the gate. The Congdons continued in these careers and built a life right here in the heart of Cedar Falls on the corner of 18th Street, until they finally decided to retire and move into the Western Home Communities. Their roots run deep in this town and are still growing to this very day.

Richard and Rita are retired but still have their hands in many activities and projects throughout this town. This is a way that they give back to a city that has given them so much already. Richard is the secretary of the Lions Club, shares his talents of being a master gardener at Hy-Vee Gardens, conferences, etc., has helped with several printing projects, and is probably most notable for portraying Santa Claus during the holiday season. Rita volunteers at her past school of Lincoln Elementary, does various activities with education centers, and also portrays Mrs. Claus during the winter months.

Richard and Rita Congdon have given everything they have to their lifetime home of Cedar Falls, and their selflessness motivates others to do more. They are a leading example of how to be a contributing member to society. Their lesson of giving more than you take is synonymous with their name, and that reputation will follow them wherever they go in whatever they do.

Rich Congdon Western Home Communities Senior
Ben Krieg, UNI Human Relations Senior
Always Give More Than You Take

Rita Congdon and her husband are very involved in the community. They enjoy volunteering, being involved in different organizations, and working with children. Some things they do in the community are being Mr. and Mrs. Clause, volunteering in the schools, and lions club. Before she retired, Rita was an elementary school teacher. She experienced many ups and downs as a teacher but overall enjoyed it very much. The thing she enjoyed and misses most about teaching was simply interacting with the children, which is why she enjoys volunteering with them now.

Rita currently volunteers in a third grade classroom at Lincoln Elementary here in Cedar Falls. She goes and visits with the children and they read to her. This allows the children to interact with a member of their community and practice their reading skills. Rita says the best part about doing this is how welcoming the teacher and the students are to her. They enjoy that she is a part of their class and they get very excited when they get to read to her. Although she is there mainly for them to practice their reading skills, they usually talk about other things as well. The children have really enjoyed talking to Rita about the Olympics, what they did on spring break, and many other things.

By visiting with Rita I have learned many different things, the first being to always give more than you take. This will make your community, relationships, and career better. Secondly, I have learned to always get to know your students, talk to them and learn about their lives. This will make your job as a teacher easier and will benefit your students as well. Lastly, I have learned to try and step out of my comfort zone more and teach my students to do the same. By doing this you will learn and grow as a person.

Rita Congdon, Western Home Communities Senior
Hannah Meyer, UNI Human Relations Senior
Too Kind for This World

I AM...Lura Treloar

I am humble and brave

I wonder if there will be world peace

I hear my great grandchildren’s laughter fill the room

I see my great grandchildren growing into strong leaders

I want everyone to see how great they truly are

I am humble and brave

I pretend to know all the answers

I touch the hearts of the people around me

I worry the world will always be a negative place

I cry when thinking about those who I have lost

I am humble and brave

I understand there are struggles all over the world

I say to kill them with kindness

I dream about my past traveling adventures

I try to do right by my beliefs

I hope in the future there is no one in need

I have really enjoyed getting to know Lura over the course of this class. She has impacted my life in a way that I will be forever grateful for. One thing that I am forever grateful for is the sharing of our travel stories. Lura and I soon found out that we have a love for traveling and have been to some of the same places. We went for different reasons but could connect on a deeper level about the people and the atmosphere. Lura has helped me grow as a person and to be more
grateful for what life has to offer. Her devotion for a better future has made me seek for just that. Knowing Lura Treloar has changed my life and made me a better person.

Lura Treloar, Western Home Communities Senior
Halle Moshier, UNI Human Relations Senior

The Beliefs of One

I AM . . . Jo Grover

I am friendly and positive

I wonder what the world will be like for my grandchildren

I hear the echoes of nature

I see universal healthcare in the future

I want better gun control

I am friendly and positive

I pretend to be more tech savvy than I actually am

I touch the people I help

I worry if future generations will have the fixed income that they need

I cry when I lose old, longtime friends

I am friendly and positive

I understand that nothing lasts forever

I say “Treat everyone equally”

I dream that my happiness will continue

I try to be nice to people even when I don’t always want to be

I hope our country finds its ways back to being a democracy

I am friendly and positive
Jo Grover speaks her mind. She has strong opinions about issues that matter in our world today, and she isn’t afraid to make them known. There are some people who might be put off by this quality, but I can assure you I am not one of them. Through her many stories, Jo has shown me that she has no trouble standing up for what she believes in and being an active citizen. I have always been the type of person who likes to stay neutral, but that has changed after meeting Jo.

When important topics come up, I don’t usually say much because I’m afraid of the possibility of irritating or provoking someone. Jo has taught me this is no way to live your life. I now see how important it is to stand firmly in your beliefs, because they are just as important as the beliefs of everyone else in this world. The beliefs of just one person have the power to incite so much change. This notion is incredibly pertinent because of the society we live in today. I am exceedingly grateful that Jo has taught me this, and I have truly enjoyed my time with her. We had the pleasure of writing the above poem together to capture the essence of who she is.

Jo Grover, Western Home Communities Senior
Morgan Peasley, UNI Human Relations Senior

Strength Through It All

Colleen is unique woman of strength. She sees obstacles as a chance to learn something new. She could have said, “It’s not fair! I quit,” but those words are simply not in her vocabulary. Her strength is natural, and her gift to the world is to give it to those in need.

From a young age Colleen worked the farm. She and her sister had to milk all the cows every day, twice a day. Even when she started school, her responsibilities did not decrease. All the way through college, Colleen did not waver from what was necessary to help her family. This experience set up her demeanor on how she would face any obstacle that came her way in her adult life. She would step up on all occasions to do what was necessary for the benefit of others. Her passion for helping others and her willingness to learn new skills were driving forces for her to achieve a full and happy life.

One of her most challenging times in her life was when her children all had contagious hepatitis. At the time, her family could not afford to put them in the hospital, despite the doctor’s strong recommendation as the disease was fatal. However, putting her children in the hospital was simply out of the question. Colleen did what she had to care for her family. For six weeks she was secluded from the outside world, as she carefully attended to her family and nurtured them back to health. She recalled, “It was the hardest time of my life, but I didn’t have a choice. I learned from that experience the value of connections and true friendship from inside my home.” Even in the loneliest times, she continued to give and sought out lessons from the trial.
As I have had the privilege to get to know Colleen, I can only hope and strive to be as willing to learn to serve those around her. There are many examples of how Colleen has graciously given her time and talent to better herself, her family, and her community. In many ways, I see myself on a similar path as Colleen: innovate, caring, and compassionate. Her stories have touched my life and will not be quick to leave my memory. She is an inspiration to the type of person I want to be. I am forever grateful for the friendship I have with Colleen.

Colleen Liming, Western Home Communities Senior
Angel Peterson, UNI Human Relations Senior

From the Heart

I AM . . . Louise Odle

I am creative and warmhearted
I wonder where life is taking me
I hear music in the universe
I see a life alone
I want to travel again
I am creative and warmhearted

I pretend to be light hearted even when I’m not
I touch the hearts of other people
I worry that I’m not doing enough for others
I cry sometimes when I think of my soulmate
I am creative and warmhearted

I understand that we are all connected to each other in ways that we don’t know about
I say all people are precious and deserving of love
I dream of making my life meaningful now that I am alone
I try to see the light in every person I meet
I hope that my life will have made things better for others

I am creative and warmhearted

Louise has touched my life through her own personal stories of when she and her husband traveled to all the states in America. Hearing her stories and seeing pictures of the places that they have been were incredible. Which has inspired me to travel more, to be adventurous, and to see the wonders of the world. I have always wanted to travel more and see more of the world and she has given me inspiration to go and do it.

Louise Odle, Western Home Communities Senior
Elizabeth Schieffer, UNI Human Relations Senior

Life Lessons

I had the opportunity to share many stories with Larry and his wife Barb. Throughout our time together, I learned so much about life, and how to live it to the fullest. Larry finds the good in every person he meets, is very open to building relationships and keeps himself very busy from day to day.

I’m not sure that Larry has ever met a stranger. He is very friendly and is willing to listen and offer his words of wisdom. Larry keeps busy by being an usher at Gallagher Bluedorn, or playing the board game Settlers of Catan with a few of his friends. Larry maintained a passion for art throughout his entire life and still enjoys using his creative talents today.

What I learned most from Larry over the past 10 weeks, is to slow down and open up space in your life for things that mean the most to you. We live in a world where we are constantly on the go, and we need to make the time to focus on what truly matters in our lives. Enjoyment comes through the little things. It was so humbling to talk with Larry each week and be reminded that even in when life gets overwhelming there are positives if you just slow down and look for them. I have truly enjoyed my time getting to know Larry and Barb.

Larry, Western Home Communities Senior
Cailey Schlenker, UNI Human Relations Senior
Insights into the Life Journey

I am Mary Cooley

I am curious and not always serious

I wonder about the things I don’t understand

I hear the laughter of my grandchildren

I see constant family love

I want good health for myself and family

I am curious and not always serious

I pretend to ignore the unpleasant

I touch the lives of people and animals

I worry about the health of family members

I cry about losing family members

I am curious and not always serious

I understand the reason for being here

I say slogans to keep my brain working

I dream about all the men I could have danced with

I try to treat everyone fairly

I hope all races and religions never have to sit in the back of the bus again

Mary Cooley truly has a sensational heart. Not only does she care deeply about her family, but she also cares about everyone and anyone around her. She has taught me how to explore any and all curiosity, to laugh at the funny moments that life gives you, and to always remember to be yourself no matter what.

The stories that Mary tells you aren’t just plain old stories; they are insights through her life journey which are full of important lessons. When you talk with her, it feels as though she is letting you in on the biggest secret of all time. Mary has graciously let me into her life, has allowed me to process, reflect, and discuss the matters of our lives, and has taught me to be grateful for what God has given us.
She truly is an inspiration, not only to me, but to those that have the pleasure of being around her. She has impacted my life in ways that I never could have dreamed of. I will always be thankful for the moments we spent together, and for the many stories that we have shared, which has ultimately shaped us into who we are today.

Mary Cooley, Western Home Communities Senior
Samantha Smith, UNI Human Relations Senior

In Service to Others

Wife, mother, sister, daughter, and friend are just a few of the many titles that Dorothy Guldner has the pleasure of holding. Among all of these titles, it is clear that she enjoys serving others in any way that she can. It is in helping others that she has become who she is today.

When Dorothy got married and started to have children, she put everything in her life on hold to take care of and raise her boys to the best of her ability. After all, raising 3 boys, is no light task. But it is not only the raising of her boys and taking care of her husband that Dorothy found herself doing, she has also tried to help anyone she can along the way.

Over the years, Dorothy has worked or volunteered in many positions that put others’ needs before her own. She worked for a Christian ministry that, volunteered at Allen Hospital whenever possible, and now a task that Dorothy has found comfort in doing as she has gotten older, and her boys have started families of their own, is her pillow cases. Making and donating pillow cases from scrap material to children who are sick and in the hospital is something her, and a few other women in the Windemere building, have done for years.

Over the past few months, Dorothy has shown me hospitality, generosity, and kindness. Qualities that are deeply rooted within her. She has taught me what it means to be selfless, caring, loving, and forgiving. Dorothy Guldner holds many titles in her life, but it is in serving others that she finds great joy.

Dorothy Guldner, Western Home Communities Senior
Jessica Soukup, UNI Human Relations Senior
Sue DeBower is a down to earth woman who is full of laughter. She is a mother of two and a friend to many. I have had the pleasure to meet with her over the course of this spring semester of 2018. I have thoroughly enjoyed hearing her stories and laughing together. Each conversation has brought me so much joy. I am grateful Sue has opened her home to me in order to learn from her.

Sue has always found joy in each new day. During nursing school at Allen College she completed a clinical in Chicago, Illinois which was six months too long to be away from her family. Despite her homesickness, Sue managed to persevere with a smile, as always. She appreciates the adventure now as she reflects on the friendships that formed during her time in nursing school. To this day, she is still connected with some of these wonderful friends as they chat about their families, travels, and shared memories over lunch. With a smile, Sue describes a good friend as “someone who is up to date and down to earth”.

A group of six of her friends from Allen have explored the nation on thirteen different trips together. They have ventured to Door County, Las Vegas, Seattle, Atlanta, a Caribbean cruise beginning in Florida, and the Canadian Rockies, to name a few. Although each trip has had its own unique special memories, Sue is particularly fond of their time in the Canadian Rockies in 2006 because of the beautiful scenery. Sue loves traveling with her friends because of the camaraderie of being in the same boat and the excitement in planning their adventures together. Their time in the Canadian Rockies included train rides, Lake Louise, the highest tides in the world, fabulous 5-star hotels, and breathtaking views of the mountains. Sue would go back if she could. I was able to experience a small glimpse of her wonderful trip as she shared her scrapbook of photographs and memorabilia with me one Tuesday afternoon. I was in awe over the incredible view she was able to witness.

As she reflected on her travels with me, Sue mentioned how she does not miss traveling because each trip provided new experiences and memories to fill a lifetime. Each of her friendships grew tremendously as they traveled together over the years. I will treasure my time with Sue as she has taught me to be present and focused where I am in each moment, to view each day as a gift, and travel often. Additionally, as Sue said, I will remember to “push out the bad memories in order to make room for more good memories”.

*Sue DeBower, Western Home Communities Senior
Mercedes Steffensen, UNI Human Relations Senior*
With a crack of the bat, around the bases he goes. The stadium erupts in a roar. Peanuts flying. Cheering in the stands is Jo Santos, with a lasting love for sports and family at the center of her world. I have had the chance to meet with Jo throughout the spring semester of 2018. I am grateful for our time together as I have learned about her passions and shared many stories. Jo is currently living at Western Home and visits frequently with her daughter in town.

Jo grew up in Sacramento, California where she would say the weather always beats the crappy Iowa snow. Growing up in California she had a love for sports, often attending Oakland baseball games with her father, Jim. She states how it isn’t the spectator sport itself that she loves, but the environment and company of those that she cherishes that makes her love sports. This passion for sports grew throughout her childhood slowly transitioning into a new hobby. In 8th grade, Jo started barrel racing. The same thrill of the baseball game was still there. Riding on the back of a horse barreling down the arena, having full control of every move the horse made. She competed in competition after competition, knocking out her fellow riders making it to the top. Jo says she usually always walked away with a high standing.

The environment of barrel racing was always Jo’s favorite. Spending the weekends driving to different clubs and competing was something she always looked forward to. Many of her close friends were also avid riders. While the parents spent the weekend in the hotel, Jo and her friends would clean out the horse trailer and camp out. When the sun rose, it was competition time. Jo would put on her fancy, two hundred dollar hat and go win that thrilling race.

As Jo transitioned into high school, her days of barrel racing dwindled. However, that lasting passion for sports didn’t. Today she is an avid sports fan that spends her days watching whatever game is on next, bringing her back to her childhood. She may even dip into some wagering and sports brackets when she is feeling lucky.

Jo Santos has had a lasting impression on my life. When I think of our time together, it reinforces the importance of cherishing every moment in life. We all have a passion that grounds us and connects us to each other; we should never stop following those interests. I am forever grateful for the time I had reminiscing about the past with Jo Santos.

Jo Santos, Western Home Communities Senior
Alesha Weir, UNI Human Relations Senior
When you’re greeted with a hug and a smile, it’s hard not to feel comfortable and welcome. That very first day I knew Marilyn’s love and passion for her family, especially Michael and Lisa, was undeniable. Needless to say, picking the story to share about Marilyn was effortless. So, let me take you back to the beginning of their love story, and the start of building their family.

It was time for Marilyn to get a car. After going through High School, attending AIB (college in Des Moines), and carpooling with her friend to and from, she was back in Waterloo ready to get her own car. Of course, she didn’t want the car her dad offered her because it wasn’t “cool” enough, so she shopped around herself until she found the PERFECT car. With a little help from her father, she purchased that perfect car… a Bug-Eyed Sprite or also known as an Austin Healy Sprite.

The day Marilyn drove that Bug-Eyed Sprite home, was the day she caught a man eyeing her car on the street. She watched for a bit until she went out and asked if everything was alright. He just shrugged and said he was looking at her car! A short while later, that same man, Michael Roseberry approached her and said he had found a garage close by that she could park her car in. Michael at the time was rebuilding his Jaguar while working on the railroad. In his free time he enjoyed taking Marilyn to sports car events and hanging with the guys. Working on his car in his garage became a tradition for Marilyn to attend, and this turned into lunches and dinners at the Colony Club, and Hulmes at the end of the month for sandwiches.

After this went on for 9 short months, this man, Michael, asked Marilyn to be his wife. She agreed to marriage then soon after were blessed with their beautiful daughter, Lisa. She became Michael and Marilyn’s pride and joy. After living in a trailer for the first years of their life while Marilyn stayed home with Lisa, and Michael still working on the railroad, they decided it was time to move. The Roseberry’s then found their new home on Parrish Street where Lisa was raised and Marilyn and Michael spent many, many happy years! Through the years Michael and Marilyn still enjoyed traveling around the Midwest going to car shows and driving the many cars Michael owned. To this day, Marilyn speaks of Michael as “The Car Guru” and has passed that down to her as she now is driving the car she had always wanted, her Audi A4 with a sunroof!

There is nothing I enjoy more than listening to Marilyn tell stories and speak of Michael as she as so many fond memories of him. I can see it in her eyes, the love she had for him. When she told me her and Michael’s love story, I knew this was one I would remember. It wasn’t about
If I could describe Ken Morlan’s life theme in one word it would be: joy. Ken is the definition of a great Iowa man. He values family, friends, music, education, and so many other things. Ken is truly one of the most generous and caring people on this Earth.

Some of Ken’s most fond memories are from growing up on a farm in a small town near Fort Dodge, IA. Ken always says that he owes growing up on a farm for his strong work ethic; a great work ethic that he continued to have in the Army, college, and when becoming a teacher and principal. And although he has retired from the education world, he still uses his great work ethic when performing for people in nursing and retirement homes. A few years back, Ken was gifted with a Karaoke Machine from a friend and instantly enjoyed sing along with it. He soon decided to take his act on the road and perform for people in nursing homes around the area. He goes to all different assistant living places for the first two weeks of every month and gives special shows with music he picks out before hand. He will even add in some special songs if it is around a holiday, and he always takes request at the end of his sets. Ken is extremely humble, and when you ask him about his Karaoke performances or his musical background, he responded with, “I am no musician, I am just a man with a hobby.”

One of my favorite things about Ken is his love for his wife, Carol. When he talks about Carol his face just lights up and you can tell in his tone that he thinks the world of her. When he tells the story of how they met, you can tell how he remembers almost every detail and how it means so much to him. When Ken was in late middle school, he and his friends went to the outdoor ice rink that was in his town. When they got there, there were some girls there, all of them he knew except one, Carol. Her family had just moved to town because her dad was going to be the new principal at the school, and some of her neighbors invited her to skate. Ken says he liked her instantly. They didn’t start dating, however, until later in high school. Then, the day came when Ken went into the Army and he had to leave the US, and he and Carol eventually lost connection. After a few years Ken returned home and Carol had become a kindergarten teacher. They rekindled their relationship after a going on few dates and catching up on all the time they had lost, and before they knew it, they were engaged. Now they have been married for almost 50 years and have two children and 5 beautiful grandchildren.
I didn’t know what to expect when I first met Ken Morlan. I didn’t know if he was going to like me. I didn’t know what kind of stories he would have. But most importantly I didn’t know how much I would grow to love him and his wife Carol. They are truly some of the nicest, most caring people I have ever met and I am so glad that I have gotten to know them and their story. If I could describe Ken Morlan’s life theme in one word it would be joy. He has the ability to spread joy into others’ lives, especially mine.

Ken Morlan, Western Home Communities Senior
Aja Baskerville, UNI Human Relations Senior

God’s Wink

I AM...Mary Franken
I am strong and passionate
I wonder who I will meet next
I hear the love in relationships
I see the good in all
I want everyone to have someone important in their lives
I am strong and passionate

I pretend that my fourth grade teacher was like a mother to me
I touch the people that surround me
I worry about not exceeding my expectations
I cry for the loved ones I have lost
I am strong and passionate

I understand my faith has been reflected through my God
I say relationships matter
I dream about my wedding cake toppers
I try to stay connected to my UNI students
I hope my story will help guide others

I am strong and passionate

What does Mary mean to me? How has she become a part of my story?

When I look at Mary, I see myself in her. A woman who has passion for the things she does and has the strength towards the passion. We have connected over the past few weeks through our own stories. We have connected on a level that many can dream about. While I was reading the poem to her, I glanced over to see tears building up into her eyes. Actions truly do speak louder than words because those tears had the most special words I have ever heard. She has given an outlook on life and I only wish I can accomplish my goals as much as she has.

In our time together, we have discussed so much on relationships and the importance they have on an individual’s life. The relationship we have built is one that I will never forget and the life lessons she has shared with me, I will carry with me for the rest of my life. She truly is one who has inspiration and courage for the things she has worked for and the ones she loves. Our time has been precious and every moment has made an impact on what my future entails. Mary has truly been a God’s wink to my story.

Mary Franken, Western Home Communities Senior
Marissa Berger, UNI Human Relations Senior

A Principal’s Message

Nervous. This is the word I would use if I were to describe how I felt as I waited to meet my friend, Jim Doud, for the first time. As I sat there in the conference room, I had no idea who or what was to come. Little did I know, I would soon be meeting someone who would become not just a friend, but a mentor for me in the weeks to come. Throughout our time together, meeting with Jim would be the highlight of my week. As a past principal, Jim has taught me more about what it means to be a teacher and part of the education system than any other college course could. This is not the only thing that Jim has taught me though. He has also inspired me in a way that I would learn about what it takes to be a good person and a good educator. Jim has spoken to me many times about how his whole life has been influenced by his past career as a principal, and these experiences have shaped him into the person he is today.

He is a “leader of leaders.” He says that as a principal, he was a “leader of leaders.” He led teachers, who then led their students, who in turn led their other classmates.
He wonders why teachers are so reluctant to accept the fact that they are leaders of their classroom AND their schools. Is it because the principal is not as willing to give the teachers opportunity to be leaders? Or because teachers do not see themselves as leaders?

He hears feedback from others. Jim says that he is motivated by compliments, and makes decisions based on other people’s feedback. Jim is a good listener, which makes for a good leader and a great friend.

He sees potential in others. Jim explains that it is important to see what people’s strengths, and to help other people see their own valuable leadership qualities as well. He also sees the importance in helping others use their strengths to reach their full potential.

He wants everyone to succeed. Students and teachers alike, Jim constantly expresses his passion for the education system and his love for children. He wants school to be a place where teachers and students want to be, where they can succeed, and where they can thrive.

He touches people by building meaningful relationships. He has empathy toward others, listens to other people, and believes that “we is better than me.”

He worries about children who come from homes where they are not treated well. He worries for children who are abused, and worries that some teachers might not see what is going on at home when signals are or are not given.

He understands that being caring does not mean you cannot hold other people accountable. Jim believes that being caring does not mean that other people are always right, or they never make mistakes. Being honest, and holding people accountable is a big part of caring.

Jim believes in kids. When kids get the opportunity to be leaders and are given the opportunity to show their abilities, they are almost always going to be successful.

He dreams of schools full of teachers that are developing as leaders. These teachers then in turn create leaders in students who are willing to accept responsibilities and given opportunities to show their abilities and what they can do.

He tries to listen and to be a good friend to everyone around him. When he listens better, he learns better. He listens because learning happens around you all of the time. When principals, teachers, and students are learners, it makes the school an exciting and fun place to be.

He hopes that schools can be a place of learning, leading, and fun for students, teachers and principals. Schools are a place where students can learn more than just to become good at educational content. Schools can be places where students learn to be leaders, and to become the best people they can be. They develop the skills they need to become great people throughout the rest of their lives.

Jim has impacted me in unimaginable ways. He showed me what passion looks like for the public education system, and has taught me about what it means to be a leader in a school as
a teacher. I will be taking Jim’s wise words and advice with me into my future career and into my future schools and classrooms. If I’m lucky, maybe someday I will have a principal that was as great as Jim.

Jim Doud, Western Home Communities Senior
Megan Brown, UNI Human Relations Senior

Old, New, and Recycled

At the beginning of this semester, Janet Doud was only a name on a page to me. Essentially, she was simply a required hour that I needed to take out of my long and busy week. I felt a mix of emotions about this experience. Confusion, excitement, and most of all - I was nervous beyond all measure. What if she didn’t like me? What if our time together was awkward? What if we didn’t have anything to talk about? However, all of these worries and fears vanished the moment I walked in and saw Janet smile her big, sweet smile. Over the course of these ten weeks, Janet taught me more than I could have anticipated. We discussed life and how it has changed since she was young, what a marriage of 57 years should look like, and most of all, she taught me about friendship and how each relationship can teach us something important.

When Janet was young, she had a friend named Rosie. A friend and an enemy, that is. Janet and Rosie always had something to compete in against one another. Whether that be in sports or becoming the majorette or first chair clarinet in band, these friends always had each other to push them to work harder in attempt to be the best. Kindergarten to senior year, this is how life went for these two. Even though this sounds like an odd relationship, Janet said it was nice to have someone to compete with, or else she would not have tried as hard as she did. Rosie taught Janet that while you cannot always be the best at everything, you can always strive to be the best you.

Janice and Janet met because Janice’s grandmother lived across the street from Janet’s family as children. The two girls would only see one another when she would come and visit. They become one another’s bridesmaids at each other’s weddings and could always pick up where they left off since the last time they met. However, after marriage and careers, life seemed to get in the way. The two girls moved on with their lives and would see each other only a handful of times after that. 10 – some times 20 - years between each meeting time. However, Janice keeps coming back, like a loop. Janet says that “the best thing about being older is that friends recycle back through your life” Even though Janice was an old friend and one that Janet sees rarely, she taught her that friends always come back around.

Chun Lee is described by Janet as her “Chinese daughter”. Chun Lee lived with Janet and Jim very soon after their last son grew up and moved out to Arizona. Janet expressed this
loneliness of not having anyone else in the home to Jonathan- a geography teacher whom she knew from church. John instantly said, “You need somebody? I’ve got somebody!” Chun Lee, a Chinese woman being sponsored to attend school and live in the United States moved in soon after. She lived with them for about a year and a half learning how to listen, understand, and speak English all the while having dreams of getting her PHD in school. Years later, she now lives in San Francisco and, according to Janet, is the most successful of all of her children! She’s a realtor in San Jose and is happily married and loves her job. Janet still hears from Chun about two to three times each month. She sends cards for each and every holiday you can think of and still calls them “mom and dad”. Chun taught Janet about the dedication and ambition that each of us have and the power we have over our own futures. Chun came to America with a huge obstacle before her and although it was scary, she never gave up, worked extremely hard, and is now more successful than ever.

The people who live at Western Homes with Janet, she says, are precious. Even though the building creates a beautiful space, it’s the people who make living here exceptional. Everyone is so happy and thankful to be here, making the most of each and every day. Janet says that because she never had the opportunity to live in a dorm room, this experience makes up for that loss. Janet said she would give living at Western homes a “Double A+” …except for the food, that is. The people who surround her at this home teach her what true happiness really looks like. It isn’t about having the most, but making the most out of everything.

Jim has a special part to Janet’s story. He’s not only a friend but a husband and a kind soul. In my opinion, Janet and Jim’s love story is one that you would find in a fairytale book. They have always known one another and have been dating since Janet was only fourteen years old, Jim being fifteen. Described in only three words, Jim is an easygoing, hardworking, and a very clean-cut guy. “Everything a lucky girl could hope for”, Janet says. While marriage is not always easy or wonderful in this life we live in, these two were lucky in love. Janet says that Jim has always been easy to live with. 57, almost 58, years of marriage between the two and they continue to grow alongside one another. Jim has taught Janet a lot in the years they’ve known each other but the most important is the fact that he is there for her and will always be someone she can rely on. They work together for the good of their family.

I am sure that I was Janet’s last idea of what a friend would look like to her, just as she wasn't really what I imagined as a friend for myself. I’m not sure what I have taught Janet in these ten weeks of getting to know each other but I definitely know what she has taught me. She has taught me the importance of friendship and love, what impact kindness can bring on anyone we come in contact with and how we must embrace everything that comes our way because life is a gift that goes by far too quickly. I will forever cherish the moments spent laughing and talking with Janet as well as the lessons that I gained through my time with her.

Janet Doud, Western Home Communities Senior
Jenna Carey, UNI Human Relations Senior
Blessed Little Old Lady

I AM . . . Eunice Easton

I am a very blessed little old lady

I wonder when the Lord will call me home

I hear joyful sounds

I want to see my loved ones at the gates of Heaven

I am a very blessed little old lady

I pretend that I will play the Heavenly organ

I empathize with the feelings of others

I pray that my family will feel God’s touch

I cry for the choices made by others

I am a very blessed little old lady

I understand that my soul is saved

I believe in Jesus Christ

I dream about seeing my husband, Joe, in Heaven

I try to be an inspiration

I hope to bring encouragement to the weary

I am a very blessed little old lady

When I first started the S.T.O.R.I.E. Time experience, I was filled with nerves. Little did I know, Monday nights with Eunice would become the best part of my week, and the stories that she shared would make an impact on the way that I see life. Eunice Easton is a strong, kind, wise, and joyful woman, who has lived a life full of love and faith. She has never let the challenges in life hold her back, and her faith in God has been the focal point in her story. Throughout our time, I realized that Eunice and I are more alike than different, and I will forever
be grateful for the friendship that we built. I will take the stories that she has shared, as well as her words of wisdom with me, as I continue to write my story.

Eunice Easton, Western Home Communities Senior
Jenna Carroll, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Creative and Curious

I AM Mike Seavey
I am creative and curious
I wonder if we can heal the world
I hear good local music
I see potential in children
I want to learn more
I am creative and curious
I pretend to behave
I touch funny bones
I worry there is not enough time
I cry when the innocent suffer
I am creative and curious
I understand all knowledge is tentative
I say we can do better
I dream that dreams can be made real
I try to learn and share and grow
I hope we can all get along
I am creative and curious
Prior to this experience, I had misconceptions. I believed in the stereotypes of my elders being inept with technology, slowed down in daily activities, and cynical and regretful about life. Upon meeting Mike, he blew all of those poorly conceived notions out of the water.

Mike is a man of creativity. Mike’s creativity transcends across music, literature, art, and technology to name a few. He has shared with me his knowledge about technological tricks to make your device run faster, smoother, and more efficient. Unfortunately, I made need a few more lessons to fully understand the complexity of the concepts. His determination surpasses that of a normal human being.

He has biked miles upon miles, traveled and seen the world we live in, met strangers, and continues to join in the boldness of trying new things, like cross country skiing. He is a constant learner. Every story that flows from Mike’s mouth concludes with the statement that there is still more to learn. I have been privileged to learn from his determination, creativity, and continued learner mentality. Mike has impacted my life and written a chapter in my story.

Mike Seavey, Western Home Communities Senior
Sydney Etherington, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Caring and Kind

I AM . . . Anne Paxton
I am caring and kind
I wonder what comes next
I hear my dog barking
I see my grandchildren being successful
I want to see my family healthy
I am caring and kind
I pretend my dog is a real dog
I touch my whole family in one way or another
I worry about my family and if they have any problems
I cry when I think about my husband
I am caring and kind
I understand that I cannot solve every problem

I believe in kindness in people

I dream about the future of my family

I try to stay independent

I hope for good health for myself and for all of my family

I am caring and kind

My S.T.O.R.I.E. Time experience started off with a lot of nerves, but that quickly changed. My Monday afternoon meetings with Anne had easily become my favorite part of the week. Anne is a strong, kind, and independent woman.

She is filled with a lifetime of stories and has welcomed me into her home week after week with a smile on her face. She has given me guidance and shared so much of her wisdom, both of which I will cherish forever. Anne will also hold a special place in my heart and I wish her the best.

Anne Paxton, Western Home Communities Senior
Katie Fassbinder, UNI Human Relations Senior

Life Changing Experiences?

From a school nurse, hospice nurse and now a hospice volunteer, Jan has experienced the best, worst and most memorable days even after retirement. When talking with her I can see the passion spill from her heart as she tells me the many encounters that she has come across that has changed her life. From being an in home hospice nurse Jan’s life changed daily as she prepared her day on the car rides with coworkers or on her own to care for those who needed her.

From stubborn truck drivers, older individuals who are in denial about being sick or those who just needed help with self-care Jan wasn’t only a nurse, she was a listener. She sat with her patients and listen to their stories that they wanted to continue to be told. Just like Jan has told me hers and it will continue to live on.

Jan is not only a caregiver she is a wife, mom and grandmother and her family means everything to her. Jan spends her time traveling to see her kids and grandkids. Jan is a traveler. She is moved by the motion of the car or plane that sends her on an adventure to see the world that she lives in and can be touched by the love of her family. Family is everything to Jan.
Jan is also a lover. Jan and her husband have been retired for quite some time together and they have spent their time exploring the world and volunteering their time to those who have given them so much. They both have spent their time spending an hour with a UNI college student, sharing their stories and changing the lives of us younger adults who still have so much to learn.

Jan has taught me the importance of listening to others and listening to their stories that individuals want to continue to be told. I have appreciated my Friday mornings with Jan. An hour truly isn’t long enough to finish a story but it sure is enough time to touch and change a heart perspective and that is exactly what Jan has taught me.

Jan Krause, Western Home Communities Senior
Whitnie Hutchinson, UNI Human Relations Senior

Behind the Door of Memories

Before entering the semester, I did not expect to step out of my comfort zone. I have had the privilege to meet with a woman who has had an impact on me in many ways. Barb Ubben is a very kind, loving, and courageous woman. No matter the stress I was feeling with school and work, meeting with Barb somehow had me forgetting about all of that. I truly looked forward to my weekly meetings because it was a time to get to know one another and talk. She has truly become part of my life story as we have each shared many stories that have shaped who we are.

Each day we are writing a page or two in our “life” book. We do not know what the future of the book will hold, but we know we have some control over how the story is written/remembered. Barb’s story is very family oriented and a lot of the memories are centered on the place she raised her family. It’s time to travel back to a few of her major chapters.

Chapter 1: Barb grew up in Hudson, Iowa on a farm and moved away after meeting her husband. They had two children together and spent most of their time living out of Iowa. She felt moving back to Iowa and being close to family would be great when she began to raise her own family. Later she divorced, but this turned out to be blessing and pushed her to stabilize her family unit in Iowa. As a single mother it was her mission to provide for her children. She wanted to have a place to raise her children and the place she found was perfect. With much determination, she was able to purchase a house. This house would come to be a house constantly filled with chatter.

Chapter 2: The house soon became flooded with memories. Her boys always had their friends over to hangout and conveniently enough most of the friends were the neighbors. Barb particularly enjoyed having her house filled with her sons and their friends. While her sons and
their friends made many memories in that house, she was forming many of her own too. She too became very close with her surrounding neighbors.

Chapter 3: Barb married her second husband Gordy and they continued their new life together in that same house. They proceeded to live there for 25 years together. As her story was continuing to be written, the memories only continued to grow. The children grew old and moved out. She and Gordy became the oldest on the block, but the house still remained a popular spot. As people moved, younger people moved in with children. The family dog, Annie, became the neighborhood dog. Kids would come over to play with the dog because their parents would not allow for their own. They were always welcoming people past that front door, which continued to impact their lives. This one house opened many relationships for them.

Chapter 4: One chapter of their life seemed to be slowly ending when it became time to talk about moving. Barb was hesitant to move because she came to love that house that everyone gathered at. The amount of memories made there were endless and the kids who grew up playing in that house did not want to see them go either. That house helped Barb grow as an individual and allowed many opportunities for her family. It became apparent though that the “stuff” she had could be donated or sold. What was more important as they moved into a new place was the fact that the 45 years of memories will always follow them. Those memories will continue to play in their minds wherever they go and that house will be one never forgotten.

Barb Ubben, Western Home Communities Senior
Erica Miller, UNI Human Relations Senior

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The Man, The Coach, The Legend

When I found out 10 weeks ago that I was going to be paired with Don Erusha, the legend, I wasn’t even sure what to think. That first day I was walking into a place I’ve never been to, to see and talk to a man I’ve never met. Little did I know about the connection we would have through the stories that he told. The majority of those stories related to his job as a football coach at all levels of competition.

Don had played football himself throughout his years in school, but went on to the Marine Core, not sure on what he wanted to do. After leaving the Marine Core, he stumbled upon college with an offer to play football at Coe College. He had never thought about being a teacher until he realized that if he wanted to coach, he should go into the education field. He went to school at Coe for four years, marrying his wife and having his daughter all before graduating.

His first football job offer was at West Branch, where he coached for two years until he went to West Union for one year. Then he went to Graduate School at Iowa with the thought of
getting out of coaching. He got introduced to an athletic trainer at Iowa and got a job to work with freshman football as a trainer. His plan was to stay at Iowa and get his PhD but got interviewed for a football position at Mt. Clemens in Michigan, where he coached for just one year. Don decided he would move back to Cedar Rapids and coach at Washington High School for four years, winning two conference championships. His journey then took him to Coe College as a Lineman coach.

He made it to UNI in 1963. Don coached at UNI a total of 17 years, impacting many coaches, students, and players. The majority of his coaching career was at UNI but he was not just a coach. He also taught tennis, golf, and football theory, and was in athletic administration before leaving UNI. Don thought he was done coaching football, but his success and coaching abilities was wanted by other schools.

Later down the road, Don got talked into coaching football at Cedar Falls High School and following his Cedar Falls High School position, he coached at Wartburg. His passion for the sport and his players is what landed him in the Hall of Fame. Don was inducted into the UNI Hall of Fame, the Coe College Hall of Fame, as well as the High School Hall of Fame, all for what he accomplished through the sport of football. Not many people can say they have been inducted into the Hall of Fame, let alone three different times.

Although I was nervous on that first day of meeting Don, those nerves quickly went away when I realized the connection we made on coaching. I had always thought about coaching because I played a few sports in high school, but after listening to his journey, I think I have made up my mind. Not only were we able to connect from the coaching aspect, but also the teaching side of it. As a coach, he was a teacher and taught many different subject areas. I am going into the teaching profession as well so we have been able to talk about teaching and how it has changed over the years. Each week we have found lots to talk about and this experience has been one that I will never forget.

Don Erusha, Western Home Communities Senior  
Erin Moser, UNI Human Relations Senior

Crafty & Creative

I AM…. Donna Pohl

I am crafty and creative.

I wonder why the cat sheds so much.

I hear the cat at 5 AM wanting food.
I see a new bedroom and new flooring.
I want a teal Tahoe.
I am crafty and creative.

I pretend that I like my support hose
I touch those at the Martian’s Center and bring them joy.
I worry about by bum knee.
I cry when I remember my sister, Ellen.
I am crafty and creative.

I understand how important family is.
I say that God is my Lord and Savior.
I dream to live into my 90’s.
I try to keep my house clean and organized.
I hope for world peace and a new president (☞)
I am crafty and creative.

Donna is a 7-year resident of the Western Homes. She moved into her villa with her sister, Ellen. When Donna isn’t helping out at her church, she likes to spend her free time practicing some of her hobbies. Donna enjoys baking, knitting, crocheting, sewing, flower arranging, gardening, and her newest hobby, wood carving. Donna taught people how to become dental hygienist for over 25 years. If you need any dental advice, Donna is the place to go!

During my time with Donna, I had the chance to learn about her close-knit family. Donna is surrounded by a strong group of family members who are always there when she needs them. I also had the chance to learn about her gal pal trips that she takes with her old classmates from dental hygienist school. I was able to hear about a friendship that has lasted through many years and many miles apart. The friendship you can only hope to have one day.

I have also learned how one’s life can be chalked full of memories and stories. Donna has added to my story by allowing me to meet with her once a week and talk about school, friends, and my family. She was a person who didn’t know anything about me, but she opened her home
up and welcomed me in. I will remember my time with Donna as an assignment that turned into one of the highlights of my week.

Donna Pohl, Western Home Communities Senior
Alexa Peterson, UNI Human Relations Senior

The Big, Green School Bus

Upon learning I was going to meet with a senior for the next ten weeks, nervous was an understatement to describe my feelings. When I learned it was actually going to be a couple, my nerves went through the roof. Little did I know, our one-hour weekly meetings flew by and quickly became the highlight of my final, chaotic semester, I have the privilege of talking with Rex and Barb Pershing every Thursday afternoon. They have opened up their home to share their story with me. Both retired UNI professors, I have loved getting a glimpse into how their life unfolded. One of my favorite stories came from the meeting we talked about risks, as I believe this word truly encompasses this optimistic couple.

The biggest risk is not taking one at all. When Rex was granted the opportunity to obtain his master’s degree in Greeley, Colorado, he took it. Despite having a summer contracting job and a family of seven, he took it. He decided to pick up everything and move to a completely different state in order to seize an amazing opportunity to further his education. He had always dreamed of transforming a school bus into his own camper and he could not think of a better time to make this dream a reality. He found a bus and asked Barb how she would feel about making it their home for the summer.

Equipped with paint rollers, they painted the bus John Deere green and white while Rex used his carpentry skills to strip and convert the inside. They started the remodeling journey in February, and spent the next four months adding a sink, shower, three burner gas stove, and beds to create the perfect living quarters. This once yellow, old school bus was now turned into the big, green camper. The big green camper that would become the home of Rex and Barb and their five children for the summer.

They made the journey to Colorado in June and parked the bus in a trailer park. Completely out of their element, the couple made the best of their Colorado summer. Rex rode his bike to school during the week, as driving would take their entire home, and they always made a point to travel and explore the beautiful scenery during the weekends. Their five kids now have their own kids, and some of these have children of their own. The big green bus always makes it ways into family conversations not only about Colorado, but also about all the memories made throughout its life.
How they made it work will always be a question. They somehow always found a way to find the needed resources and motivation to make it through. This bus allowed Rex to make dreams come true both in his personal and professional life. This bus was a key component in a risk that opened so many doors for this family. This bus acted as a catalyst for an unforgettable summer filled with memories that will last multiple lifetimes.

Rex and Barb Pershing, Western Home Communities Senior  
Madie Pike, UNI Human Relations Senior

How We’ve Grown

Born and raised in the small town with a community that made up of mostly farming families. Jerry and Mary Lea reflect on the ways in which their childhood has influenced their work ethic, perspective, and values. Over the course of our time together Jerry and Mary have shared their life with me and through stories taught me about how they have grown over the course of their 78 (Mary Lea) and 80 (Jerry) years of life. Through their stories I have learned about the power that education and experiences can have on who we all become.

The small town they grew up in has provided cherished friendships and memories. Amidst the joy that has come from the memories of their childhood home they have also identified the biases that developed due to the demographics in which they lived. Friendship as grand as the one the two of them share as high school sweet hearts, gives them one of many reasons to smile when they think of their hometown. Cherished memories also include those from school and work. Both loved school. Jerry shared about his work experience, ever since he was nine years old he worked starting with as a newspaper deliverer. With admirable self-awareness, Jerry and Mary Lea grievingly shared that growing up in a town with students all the same color as the them affected their perspective towards individuals of color.

As life progressed past high school, both went to college with a goal to work in the education system. They acquired transformative knowledge not only during their time in college, but also during their time in the education system. Jerry shared about a class that exposed him to research on the differences between those of various races. From that he discovered that the difference comes down to simply – pigment. For both being in the schools, exposed them to a diverse group of individuals which was a joyful experience. Mary Lea and Jerry shared that the more they got to know those of color, the easier it was for them to combat internal biases. Jerry stated, relationships are powerful.

Jerry and Mary Lea are bold, humble, kind people, whom I have learned from and been inspired by. Their willingness to humbly learn about the subconscious biases they hold and work to combat those biases with truth discovered through education and experience, is a lesson I will hold onto. They are
difference makers in their generation. Mahatma Gandhi’s quote, “Be the change, you want to see in the world.” is one that well reflects the way these two individuals live. They counter the culture of their time. They are true leaders and inspirations.

Jerry and Mary Lea Purcell, Western Home Communities Senior
Michelle Powers, UNI Human Relations Senior

A Helping Hand

I am helpful and caring.
I wonder about where our world is going
I hear a lot of bad news in the media.
I see good things happening in Cedar Falls.
I want to help as many people as I can.
I am helpful and caring.

I pretend to sort out answers to questions.
I touch the hearts of those in need.
I worry about the world.
I cry about the gun violence.
I am helpful and caring.

I understand my limitations.
I say we should all believe in God.
I dream that my grandchildren will have a good place in the world.
I try to make people smile.
I hope my grandchildren become productive citizens.
I am helpful and caring.
Lois Wishmeyer is one busy bee. When she is not keeping up with her family who lives all over the place, she is going to classes with friends or ushering at the Gallagher Bluedorn Performing Arts Center. Lois gets enjoyment from meeting new people and hearing about other peoples’ stories. When asked about what her passions are in life, helping people in need was #1.

Over the past semester, I have gotten the pleasure of visiting with and learning about the life of Lois Wishmeyer. I have gotten to learn about all of the wonderful qualities that she possesses and how she views the world. My weekly meetings with Lois have turned into the highlight of my week and she has developed into an important person in my story.

Before starting to go to the Western Homes, I was nervous about talking with someone new. However, I could not have been paired with a more compassionate, humble human being. Through her ability to communicate with anybody, she helped me be able to step outside my comfort zone and connect with her. I am grateful that she opened her home up to me and took a chance.

Lois Wishmeyer, Western Home Communities Senior
Rachael Rice, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Seeing Myself

I am Karen Sund

I am a good listener and I do better one-on-one
I wonder where I would be today without a special needs son
I hear a giggle and I think of my special needs son
I see my grandchildren happy with their lives
I want a full time cook
I am a good listener and I do better one-on-one
I pretend whatever life gives me, I can handle it
I touch the life of someone who may not have many friends because of her disabilities
I worry that a task will not get done on time, thus I get things done early
I cry at sad movies
I am a good listener and I do better one-on-one
I understand that I have to help other people move forward
I say I care about other’s feelings and listening to what they say
I dream I will be a good care giver to my husband
I try hard to make people happy. “Use a little bit of honey”
I hope for a bed of roses, no thorns.
I am a good listener and I do better one-on-one

As Karen would say, our meeting was a “Divine intervention”. We were paired not knowing anything about each other or anyone knowing much about us. Upon our first meeting, I found out that Karen wanted to be a Special Education teacher when she was in school. This was just an amazing thing to know because Special Education is my passion as it was hers. Her passion for special education went on when she herself had a beautiful son with special needs. This opened up her world to so many new and amazing opportunities and life-long friends.

As her life went on, Karen started working as a secretary at Exceptional Persons Inc. and worked her way up to being an office manager. This was so amazing to hear simply because I had just started as a Direct Support Professional at Exceptional Persons Inc. Hearing all of her stories of how she loved her job and all of the people who worked there and the clients, was truly amazing because I as well love the job and have made so many new friends in the process. Being able to share a wonderful job experience between each other is another wonder of how perfect our pairing was.

Karen Sund is an incredibly amazing, smart loving woman who has a wonderful life. So many amazing friends and family members that mean so much to her. As Karen would say, this experience has been a true blessing and a true divine intervention.

Karen Sund, Western Home Communities Senior
Elyssa Rung, UNI Human Relations Senior

Life Lessons

I AM. . . Anita Dowell
I am friendly and energetic
I wonder about God
I hear birds singing through my windows
I see spring in the near future
I want to be healthy
I am friendly and energetic

I pretend to catch a fish
    I touch my dog
I worry about sad people in this world
    I cry not often
I am friendly and energetic
I understand not much about life
    I say too much
I dream, I don’t dream or remember my dreams
I try to lose weight to be healthy
I hope my grandchildren are happy
I am friendly and energetic

Anita has had a remarkable impact on the last semester of my college career. Going into this experience I was very skeptical of what it was going to be like. The second I walked through the doors at Wind Cove, Anita was standing there waiting for me and smiling.

Anita is very passionate about life, friendly and was always very generous with her time she gave to spend with me. As a future teacher, Anita was able to give me amazing knowledge and life lessons from her time as a teacher, a mother and a grandmother. Her stories and life experiences will be beneficial as I enter the real world, in just a few short months.

This experience has opened up my eyes to endless possibilities you can take in life. Take the time to go out of your comfort zone because you never know the amazing people you might meet.

Anita Dowell, Western Home Communities Senior

Kylie Sheets, UNI Human Relations Senior
Inspiring Love and Kindness

When I first got paired with a senior for my human relations class, I really didn’t know what to expect. The only thing I knew about David Zwanziger was that he went to my professor’s church and he liked to garden. However, when I met David, it became apparent that there was much more to his story than that.

From our first meeting, it was clear that David is very down to earth and that he cares about others. David Zwanziger is an inspiration to me because his biggest aspiration in life is to make others happy, be empathetic to others, and to love others well. To David, nothing is more important than getting people to laugh or smile, showing empathy, and, in all things, acting with love. Whether through smiling and chatting with people he meets in the neighborhood, through his beautiful and colorful garden that he loves to share with others, or by giving people a smile they can be confident in as an orthodontist, David brings joy to people’s hearts.

Through talking to David and listening to his story, I learned that he was shy and not very confident as a young man. However, he worked hard and remained humble, while gaining confidence in himself and his abilities. After gaining this confidence, he started to realize how much he could brighten someone’s day by reaching out to them with a warm greeting or compliment. Even perfect strangers were impacted by David’s natural tendency toward kindness as he said hello to them when walking by.

Many friends of David’s have told him over the years that he is too nice to people and that it makes him gullible, but he would rather make mistakes in being too kind and generous to people than any other kind. His ability to show empathy to others helps him to understand people and form bonds with them. David never thinks he is better than anyone, so this allows him to treat everyone with kindness and respect, which can lead to happiness and friendship with pretty much anyone. Love is what drives David to talk with everyone he meets and encourage them.

Another way that David strives to bring joy to people’s lives was through his orthodontic practice that he ran for many years. After working with many patients and learning from colleagues and professors early in his career, David started out under the impression that the goal in orthodontics was simply to fix people’s teeth. Eventually, however, rather than focusing solely on function of the teeth, he started to focus on the smile as well.

David loved working with children because through his work, he could bring smiles and confidence to people. Children are David’s first priority of people he wants to help and to love, and next is mothers who will pass that love on to their children, and he likes to help any disadvantaged groups of people. He told me that making people smile and laugh is one of the most rewarding feelings to him, which shows how much he loves and cares about others.
Smiles and joy also come from the beauty that David displays in his garden. Because we just met this winter, I have yet to see the garden in its full glory, but knowing David, I trust that all the hard work he puts into it pays off when the weather gets nice. Gardening is more than just a hobby for him; it’s a way to bring wonder and delight to all the people who may see it. He wants to share the beauty of it with others, so that they can appreciate it, too. His passion of gardening has led to a display of God’s creation that can make people take a moment of their busy lives to appreciate the beauty in the world.

“If you’re a kind person, you will free others. That’s what Jesus taught,” David explains why he is so quick to love people. He lives his life by Matthew 22:37-39: Jesus replied: “‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” (NIV).

David has no trouble loving his neighbor because his natural disposition is to reach out and love and show kindness to others. In his selfless acts, David truly does make people happier. He genuinely cares about people and wants to make their lives better. From our first meeting, I could tell that David was a kind, loving, and thoughtful man. Looking at all the work he puts into his garden, it is clear that he both appreciates beauty and creates it. He shows his love for others by giving them something to smile about.

David Zwanziger, Western Home Communities Senior  
Taylor Kruger, UNI Human Relations Senior

**Grandfather’s Inspiring Love**

Steve McCrea was born on May 31, 1947. He married his wife, Kathy, in May of 1972. They both live together in the Windridge District with their two Siamese cats, Mau-Mau and Bigly. Something else in his home is a wooden table containing a beautiful arrangement of rocks within. This table holds a good assortment of polished rocks, including jasper, tiger eye, snowflake obsidian, and a large, 10 in. by 8 in. piece of Lake Superior agate. Steve polishes the table often, to keep it in the best condition possible, for the person who made this table was Steve’s grandfather.

Steve always looked up to his grandfather, Ralph Spooner. To him, he was what a man should be: Loving, caring, patient, level-headed, wise; the list goes on. His grandfather was the father figure he never had growing up. Around 1958/1959, Ralph began working with rocks in a lapidary way: he cut, polished, and put engravings into rocks. In 1960, Ralph had a massive heart attack, and was placed in the Storm Lake hospital for 45 days. For the first 40 days, no one but
the doctors and nurses were allowed to see him. For Steve, those 40 days were some of the hardest in his life.

After Ralph was released, all of the equipment he used for his lapidary work was moved out of the basement and into the mudroom on his farm. This included a tumbler, which would keep rocks moving for weeks at a time; a diamond saw, which at times might lead to two hours of constant rock cutting; and a dobstick, which he used to polish stones for what may have ended up being an entire day. For everyone, it was a very comforting experience to simply sit and watch him polish a rock for hours at a time.

Everyone enjoyed traveling to Lake Superior annually, and Steve and his twin sisters loved helping Grandpa find the next rock for him to work on. Oftentimes, Steve’s sisters would go out and look for the best rocks they could find. They would return with big grins on their faces, and present Grandpa with a rock or two that they liked. He would graciously accept them, and tell them both of how good the rocks were. His greatest find was of a 20 lb. piece of Lake Superior agate, which led to one of the final, polished pieces becoming the centerpiece of Steve’s table. In his eyes, and in the eyes of those who knew him, this table represents Grandpa. This table IS Grandpa.

Now, it may seem odd for a paper on Steve McCrea to focus more on his grandfather than on him, but these is something I (the writer) would like to talk about. I was very hesitant when I learned that I would be meeting with an old person throughout the semester (no offense). I was not a very social person, and meeting with someone much older than myself was definitely outside of my comfort zone. Let alone, I am a physics education major. There would be little to no chance that there would be someone that was a former physics teacher in the Western Home Communities.

But as time went on, I started to like Steve, and this story is one that touched my heart. It showed me that I am a lot more like Steve than when I originally thought. Because I, too, adored my Grandpa growing up. He was my role model, the person I wanted to be. He passed away when I was very young, but I have been able to keep some of his items. One of which is an old, small pillow that I keep on my bedside. It’s not fit for use as a sleeping pillow, or even one to support your back. But much like how Steve’s table represents his Grandpa, this pillow represents my Grandpa. I am forever grateful for having met Steve, and will always try to keep in contact with him.

Steve McCrea, Western Home Communities Senior
Joe Sorensen, UNI Human Relations Senior
Some people get lost in life, while others discover life. But Cherie, she read through life. Every person she met was a story, and every conversation was a page. Until it all came together in her own little library.

Some of her friends lived in the History section that towered high and mighty and smelled of laughter. Her daughter lived in Fantasy, wielding swords against slumbering giants. Her husband lived in Humor where his pages were filled with wise-cracking jokes that made even the worst of days seem ok.

Other sections continued to fill out as she met more and more people. The academic section was where her students all gathered to look over the latest reading she’d assigned. The newly updated computer lab was where her fellow author hunters marked down the latest gossip and theories they’d overheard and discussed. Of course there was also the section of regular books that she loved to visit when people got to be too much or she’d just rather be alone. Those sections were in their own little nook and cranny and even serviced those who came to her library to visit. Although no one knew the ins and outs of her library like the better husband. He knew his way around her library almost as well as she did.

The sections of books were always kept in order and always kept clean. Although one might imagine little fingerprints imprinted on the shelves from the wandering fingers of Cherie’s grandchildren as they got to know her better through the years. That’s what she loved the most about her library. Visitors, like me, could come in and get to know as much or as little about her as they liked. After all, the most important part of any library was learning something from sharing stories.

Cherie Dargan, Western Home Communities Senior
Brenna Splinter, UNI Human Relations Senior

Big White Cloud

One day when I was 8 years old and my brother, Wendell was 3, we ran free in the cow pasture. We were racing each other, I had a bigger advantage though because I was older with longer legs. It was a beautiful afternoon to be outside, until just like that it was ruined.

My brother ran into my dad’s sickle tool. He fell down crying, I anxiously called out for my mom and dad. They rushed over to see what was the matter. I told them that we were racing
and all of a sudden he fell down crying. Within minutes we were pulling out of the driveway headed to the doctor’s office. I was sad to see my little brother hurting the way he was.

The doctor’s told us that Wendell had lock jaw. I was only 8 years old so I had no idea what that was. I just knew the doctors were taking good care of him. The rule at the doctor’s office was that if you were under 12 years old, you couldn’t enter the intensive care unit. A few days went past and I still hadn’t been able to see my brother.

After about a week, the nurse that had been taking care of my brother let me in the intensive care unit to see him. My brother’s bed was raised off the ground, so the nurse gave me a little stool to stand on so I could see him. My brother had been restrained to the bed for such a long time, I was wondering when they were going to let him come home.

That same night, I stayed at my grandma and grandpa’s house. In the middle of the night I woke up to loud thunder and lightning. My grandma told me that I could come sleep in her room on a cot to make me feel more comfortable. I asked her if I could look out the window for a little bit to see the rain, she said that I could, but then I needed to get back to bed. As I was sitting there looking out my grandma’s window, I saw a big white cloud. I decided I wanted to say a prayer for my brother. I prayed a simple prayer to God that he would make my little brother well again. Then I went back to bed.

The next morning when I woke up, my grandma had good news to tell me. She told me that my mom called and said Wendell is doing a lot better today, and should be out of the hospital soon. In that very moment, I knew that God had answered my prayer.

Wanda Chase, Western Home Communities Senior
Courtney Stuart, UNI Human Relations Senior

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A Preschool Point of View

Meeting Lorna at the Western Home for the first time was oddly similar to that of the first day of school. There were so many thoughts and feelings running through my mind and body that I had no idea what to expect when I walked through the doors. Like the first day of school, all of those thoughts and feelings were put at ease when walked through the door was greeted by Lorna with a smile and a warm welcome and was assured that I was in the right place. I knew from then on, this was going to be a great semester.

Lorna’s stories are like a preschool classroom; there’s a library, dramatic play center, sensory center, and one of my favorites, an arts and crafts center. Her classroom is filled with everything needed to help people she cares about succeed. There’s a library filled to the brim with anything anyone would ever want to learn about. There is a neat and orderly section for every subject in her library, with the largest being information on the topic of teaching. From
there I am able to find the do’s and the don’ts of teaching, or anything that a preservice teacher would need to know before having her own classroom. Among some of the other subjects I have found while spending time in her library are baking and crafting.

One of the most valuable parts of her classroom is the dramatic play area. This space is where I came to get to know more about Lorna and her stories. From spending a lot of time in this area, I have found that she loves her family dearly and would do anything for them. Among the many stories that are shared, her children and grandchildren are always center stage.

During my time in the sensory center, I have become in touch with Lorna’s feelings and emotions. I have learned the most about her in this particular center. I have even stumbled upon her life motto that she lives by; Jesus first, others second, and herself last. This motto shines through in her everyday life and her willingness to help others in need, whether it be unpacking or just having someone to sit with at the dinner table.

Lastly, the center that we have a lot in common in, is the arts and crafts center. Lorna has a hobby for crafting. From sewing to making brooches, Lorna does it all. During the time that I have spent in this center, I have learned how to make many different arts and crafts. Learning how to make all of these crafts will come in handy for future use in my classroom.

The semester is coming to an end and so is my time with Lorna. Not only have I learned a lot about her, but from the time that I’ve spent with her, I’ve learned a lot about myself as well. I am lucky to have had the opportunity to spend time with Lorna every week. And think everyone needs to have someone like Lorna in their life.

Lorna Ericson, Western Home Communities Senior
Ashley Thompson, UNI Human Relations Senior

Top 10 Memories

1. Trips to Lost Island Lake with my buddy, Dale Lee.
2. Taking the camper to all different amusement parks with my kids. They still visit those places today, only because they actually know their way around.
3. Having all the grandkids around during the holidays.
4. Racing my supped up 56’ Chevy Convertible at Needa Race Track in Janesville.
5. All the times I went hunting and fishing with my dad, whom was a gunsmith. It really inspired my love for hunting and fishing as I grew older.
6. My mom’s home-cooked meals. I really wish she were here today to cook for me because she was one hell of a cook.
7. Sharing stories with Carol because she always allowed me to be myself and encouraged me to follow my dreams. I will continue to make memories with her while playing bingo.

8. Spending countless hours watching my favorite actor, John Wayne, in all of his movies and TV shows.

9. Working at John Deere for 28 years and the countless memories and friends that came along with it.

10. Going to try new restaurants with my sister, Dee. We have been to almost every restaurant in Waterloo and Cedar Falls.

   Spending time with Lloyd has really opened my eyes to how different his world is compared to mine. Although we agree on many topics, there are things that are different in my world that never existed in his and vice versa. It is so refreshing to be able to relax and just talk to somebody about whatever comes to mind. Through a stressful semester, this was one thing that helped me get through it as I looked forward to meeting with him each week. This opportunity has really changed my outlook on the way we look at others and has encouraged me to listen to other’s stories and tell my own.

Lloyd Gruis, Western Home Communities Senior
Jawny Thompson, UNI Human Relations Senior

88 Persevere

I am reserved but interpersonal
I wonder why my brother chose to leave us
I hear the hum of thousand musical notes
I see hardship for future generations
I want to hear affirming things about my former students and acquaintances

I am JB Bartling
I pretend that I haven’t made a difference
I touch the sinking memory of my roommate
I worry about my own memory
I cry for my loved ones I have lost

I am JB Bartling
I understand many people care about me
I say you control your own life
I dream about my old restaurants
I try to make every opportunity count
I hope our country holds true

I am JB Bartling

JB Bartling is a kind soul and you can see it in his eyes. He cares about the people around him and his community. While my time with JB was short, I learned a valuable lesson from him, “you control your own life.” I have had many obstacles this semester which might have broken my spirit. It was JB’s message which helped me persevere. I kept reminding myself that while I cannot control my circumstance, I can control how I feel about it and work through it. JB helped me realize that hardship is only as hard as you make it.

John “JB” Bartling, Western Home Communities Senior
Megan Vargason, UNI Human Relations Senior

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Decisions

When I first heard that I had to spend ten hours meeting with a resident of Western Homes, I’m not going to lie, I was not excited. All I could think about was all of the other things that I had to do this semester, and meeting an hour a week with Jo outside of the classroom was not one of those things. However, after our first meeting, I had a sense that those hours would be worthwhile, a chance for me to hear Jo’s stories and make connections to my own life. Jo has been meeting with UNI students for the last few semesters, so she’s a pro at this. After taking the time Jo came to the conclusion of what story she wanted to share this time around, so here it is, Jo’s story.

For a majority of their 62-year marriage, Don and Jo Ackman made decisions to together as a unit, husband and wife. They would sit down together and have a discussion about the pros and cons of a situation that has been presented, where a decision must be made. Jo and Don could rely on each other to come together and made a decision that would be the most beneficial for them and their family. But what happens when something changes and they can no longer make a decision together as a unit, as partners. That’s what happened when Jo’s husband Don was diagnosed with Alzheimer’s and eventually passed a few years ago, leaving Jo alone bearing the weight of making decisions.

One afternoon while touring the UNI museum at Rod Library, Jo observed a World War 1 and World War 2 display and thought came to her mind about a decision that she had to make. Jo talked to museum curator Nathan Arndt, and asked if she could donate an artifact to the museum. What Jo donated to the UNI museum was her husband’s Dress Blue Marine Uniform
from the Korean War. When Jo saw that uniform sitting in the back of her closet after her husband’s passing, Jo was left with a decision to make, does she keep the uniform, pass it down to one of her sons, or donate it to the museum. After talking with her sons and offering the uniform to them first, Jo came to the decision that the best place for her husband’s uniform was at Rod Library on display for others to see.

An important piece of information to know about Jo and her husband Don is that they both committed their lives to educating others. Jo a teacher, and Don, a principal at Southdale Elementary here in Cedar Falls. After donating her husband’s uniform to UNI, Jo’s son made an observation that cemented that Jo made the right decision. One of Jo’s sons made the comment of, what a better place for dad’s uniform, he spent his life educating others and had a passion for it, so what better place for one of his belongings than in an institution dedicating to helping and educating others. With that thought in mind, Jo knew she had made the right decision. Today you can go to UNI’s Rod Library and tour the exhibit that holds Don’s Marine Uniform from the Korean War. Along with the uniform is a scrapbook that Jo’s daughter-in-law created of Don’s life and his time spent during the war.

Like I had said before, I was not too eager or excited to have this experience, but after our first meeting, Jo said some things that will stick with me. Jo is a person who just exudes positivity and compassion, especially when talking about her husband who had Alzheimer’s and the challenges that came along with that. For the last few years, I have been struggling in dealing with my grandmother being diagnosed with Dementia and watching the women who I’ve looked up to my whole life slipping away every time I see her.

So, like Jo I have decision to make. Do I live in sadness and negativity, or just appreciate every day I get to spend with my grandma, knowing that those days are becoming limited. But listening to Jo talk about her husband and the love she had for him through those rough times, agreeing with him if he said the sky was purple, and the optimism that she held for the situation that was dealt to her, shows me how far a little positivity and support can go. Jo’s perspective on life and its challenges is something that I will carry with me through my life, hoping that I can someday provide that hope for someone when they need, even if I don’t know that they. And lastly, I hope that I can provide a reason for someone to smile when they say have a nice day, which I will respond with, I’ll make it that way, for this is what she always says.

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