



# Westmar University Alumni and Friends Association

Volume 9, Issue 4

November, 2007

## Ten Years Since Closing of Westmar

By Mary Holub

As I'm writing this, it was exactly ten years ago today (November 21) that Westmar University closed its doors for the last time.

I'm not a Westmar graduate, so can't fully imagine the multitude of feelings that can be expressed by those graduates, instructors, and staff members, but over the past ten years I have heard a lot of closing day stories from a lot of people who experienced it firsthand.

One such story came from a man who stopped into the alumni office this past summer. He said that, being a graduate himself, he wanted to show his soon-to-be college student granddaughter *his* campus in hopes that she would choose to attend Westmar. To his astonishment, he chose to tour on the very day of the college's closing.

The *Le Mars Daily Sentinel* published a series of stories on the tenth anniversary of the closing. They can be read at the *Sentinel's* website ([www.lemarssentinel.com](http://www.lemarssentinel.com)).



Westmar campus postcard picture taken in 1990.

Can you spot the differences in the campus from 1990 to now?

## 2008 Reunions Being Planned

The fifty-year reunion for the class of 1958 is already being planned. They plan to invite everyone from 1956 through 1960 for the August 1-3, 2008 reunion in Le Mars.

Wendel Thompson, Royal Speidel, and Marge (Cleveland) Kehrberg are chairing the committee handling reunion details.

A letter will go out soon with preliminary details.

Also on the weekend of August 1-3, the Decades of the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s will be invited to Le Mars for a reunion. Details will be mailed out as soon as they are ready.

In the meantime, please take a look at the "Missing" list on the website (<http://www.WestmarCollege.org>). There are a lot of people who we have lost contact with over the years and they are listed by class

year on "Links" on our website. If you know the address for anyone listed there, please contact the Alumni Office as soon as possible so we don't leave anybody out when sending out reunion invitations. Your help is appreciated.

The Alumni Office is always willing to help if you want a reunion other than those already listed. Please be sure to let us know soon so adequate plans can be made.

**Please give us your email address so we can email reunion information and updates to you periodically. Do you want to know who has registered? We can email that information to you, but we need your email address.**

**If you would like to receive a link to the newsletter, rather than having it mailed, please send us your email address.**

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# Bricks and Mortar and More

## Wernli Hall

by Dr. Wayne Marty

Wernli Hall was constructed as a Women's residence Hall in 1922 and is appropriately described by the 1925 freshman, Alice Kruse, "Wernli Hall (with a lavatory in every room) was new. The unfinished rooms of second and third floors -south wing- provided excellent space for storing trunks and stringing clothes lines for drying laundry. The spacious living room served as student union for the campus." (1996 Plymouth County Heritage Book)

Wernli Hall was definitely a center of activity for the campus because students gathered three times a day for their meals in the basement of Wernli until Weidler Hall with a cafeteria was completed during the 1957-58 school year. Meals were served family style and students were assigned to designated tables. The table assignment charts in the dining room waiting hall served as a convenient method for determining the names of other students that might have "grabbed one's eye" during the beginning weeks of school. Trays of glasses for the milk and water were placed by the pillars in the dining hall and one tray of glasses was changed to fragments of glass when a creative serving crew in the 1950's decided to enter the dining hall doing the "Bunny Hop". The hips of one "swinging coed" swung a bit too far and sent the glass flying.

The same serving crew also performed numerous preparation and serving functions. They gathered "early" in the morning before breakfast to dig the eyes out of the "roughly peeled" potatoes. Unpasteurized milk was hauled in from the college farm and poured from the ten gallon cans into the tin pitchers that were lined up on the kitchen floor (one for each white jacketed waiter or waitress). After breakfast on Saturday mornings time was spent dusting the dining hall furniture, folding napkins, and filling salt shakers. Alice Kruse tells that in the 20's cloth napkins were used and because of the seating assignment, the same one could be used all week but on Wednesday (hump day) the napkins were turned over so that a clean side was used for the remainder of the week.

There were three floors of residence rooms with two open staircases from top to bottom. This made it possible to call to the



**Wernli Hall—West View**  
(taken from the 1924 Pilot yearbook)

top floor when there was a telephone call or a campus guy waiting to pick up his gal. In the 1940's and 50's there was only one telephone in the building and the number was 282. I still remember it because it was the only number needed to call any of the many Wernli girls. During this same era the door locking time was 10:00 pm. Mrs. Daeschner rattled her keys at that hour and the numerous couples assembled on the majestic West steps exchanged their final handshake or hug or kiss as others came out from the trees and other locations near the building. Many pictures are in the yearbooks and personal collections that show individuals and couples and larger groups sitting on the majestic west Wernli steps that led to the 1<sup>st</sup> floor social room. Entry to the Basement dining hall was through a doorway under the First floor landing at the top of the steps.

In the 1960's the basement was renovated for additional housing space. The deteriorating west steps were removed and the main entrance for Wernli became the fully glassed "fishbowl" on the back (east) side. The east side was where clothes lines were located prior to the availability of cloth dryers and it was also the back door entry for the male dining room helpers who walked from their dormitories across campus.

Necessary adjustments were always part of the Western Union and Westmar life. During the 1929's depression many faculty members, both married and single, ate in the Wernli Hall dining hall as part of the adjustment for their very low pay. During World War II in the 1940's, the women were forced to find housing elsewhere and

Wernli Hall became primarily a Naval Cadet residence for the many taking aviation training in the Western Union classrooms and at the Western Union College Airport.

There were periods of time in the 1970's and 80's when Wernli was at times a Coed Dorm and at times primarily a Men' Residence Hall. College escapades and pranks throughout the years could fill a book and many are known only to the perpetrators. It is known that girls at times "escaped" from the locked dorm and it seems certain that successful Wernli "panty raids" by male students required the cooperation of some females from the inside who could unlock fire escape doors. And would you believe that one coed from the 40's even confessed to being part of the group that varnished the toilet seats in some of the facilities at the end of the hall and claimed that if you watched the students move across campus, you could tell for a week which gals had sat on the sticky varnished seats. My, My, such creativity.

Wernli Hall was demolished on March 12, 2002, 4 ½ years after the college closed. It was an all day job and the last to go were the first floor southwest corner rooms. As I watched the demolition end just as the sun was setting, I remembered that I used to throw rocks at one of those windows to tell my girlfriend that I was at the front door waiting. Many former students hold many good memories (and maybe even some that are not so good) of those days in Wernli Hall. It served well.

The next newsletter will feature the "New" Gymnasium built in 1941. Send us your memories now so they can be included.



# Alumni News

## News

**1942-Emily (Duffield) Ehler** and husband Jerry celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary with a reception on June 24, 2007.

**1967-Lowell Ensey** retired from a career in education that spanned nearly 40 years. He resides in Aurora, Colo.

**1974-Marlese Alden** of Edina, Minn., has received a graduate teaching licensure in English as a Second Language from Hamline University in St. Paul, Minn. She works as a writer for companies that create

standardized state tests in the English and ESL areas. She most recently served on an advisory panel for the Minnesota State Department of Education and helped to create a new ESL test for the state.

**1997-James Bieschke** is the 9-12 principal at Benton Community High School after having been 7-12 principal at Iowa Valley in Marengo, Iowa for three years.

## Deaths

**1930-Vivienne (Mumey) Olson** died at the age of 100 at her home in Hastings, Nebraska on Sept. 9, 2007.

**1935-Beulah (Streyffeler) Hindman** of Deer Park, Wash., passed away on September 14, 2007.

**1940-Ruth (Hahn) Borsheim-Wise** died on September 11, 2006 in Omaha, Neb.

**1942-John Morton** died on Nov. 8, 2007 in Le Mars.

**1945-Kenneth Vance** of Le Mars died on Nov. 11, 2007

**1989-Dolona K. Thomae** of West Des Moines passed away on Oct. 13, 2007.

## Ruth Hamm Celebrated 50 Years With Band



**Ruth (Loechner) Hamm**  
(from the 1956 Westmar yearbook).

Fifty years playing French Horn with the Naperville Municipal Band is a tremendous accomplishment for Ruth (Loechner) Hamm, a 1956 graduate of Westmar College.

On June 28, 2007, Ruth was honored with "Ruth Hamm Night" in the town of Naperville, Illinois. The day began with a proclamation by George Pradel, mayor, naming the day "Ruth Hamm Day."

Ruth was raised in Colorado with her four sisters who were all present for the concert in Naperville's Central Park along with her two children and four grandchildren from all across the United States.

Ruth received a degree in Music Education from Westmar in 1956 and taught Physical Education for 35 years; 25 of those years in Naperville.

The tradition of the band allows for the honored member to pick his or her favorite pieces for the night's concert, and to help

plan the program. It took over a year to make all the arrangements with the help of band director Ron Keller.

Between musical pieces during the concert, several proclamations were read congratulating Ruth. Among these was a signed picture of President George W. Bush along with congratulatory statements from other government officials.

It was mentioned that Ruth rides a moped around Naperville. Band board president, David Fritz labeled Ruth as "full of energy."

Ruth's musical talents aren't limited to the Naperville Municipal Band. She is a member of many other bands and small groups. Some of which she started.

Being a member of Community United Methodist Church in Naperville for over 30 years, Ruth leads the Church's Horn Ensemble made up of French Horns.

## Koth House Gals Reunion

Koth House Gals of 1960-61 held their fifth reunion in Hot Springs Village, Arkansas, September 13-19, 2007. Their first four reunions were held in Colorado in 1980, 1993, 2000, and 2003.

Pictured at the right are:

Seated: Arlyss (Allison) Adelman, Wanda (Powell) Schneider, and Gay (Feind) Weber.

Standing: Donnakay (Pantzer) Lee, Betty (Durrett) Moellenberg, Barb (Hebrink) Wagner, House Mother, Virginia Bushong, and Donna Houser.





## Westmar Reunion in Colorado Held August 25, 2007



### 1954-1960 Graduates

**Front Row:** Virginia (Huppe) Mayo, Wanda (Powell) Schneider, Joyce (Anderson) Grauberger, and Ellie (Loechner) Williams. **Second Row:** Sharon Kay (Smith) McCormick, Marilyn Schindler) Grauberger, Joann (Eichhorn) Bowsher, Byron Bowsher, Beth (Cerka) Tubach, and Wayne Marty. **Back Row:** Dan Carey, Ed Baack, Larry Grauberger, Bruce Grauberger, and Lee Tubach.



### 1961-1962 Graduates

**Front Row:** Donnakay (Pantzer) Lee, Barb (Colson) Smith, Audrey (Wenzel) Carey, Nancy (Dowd) Bistline, and Gay (Feind) Weber. **Back Row:** Royal (Mattingly) Gunter, Donna Houser, Betty (Durrett) Moellenberg, and Genevieve Bayles.

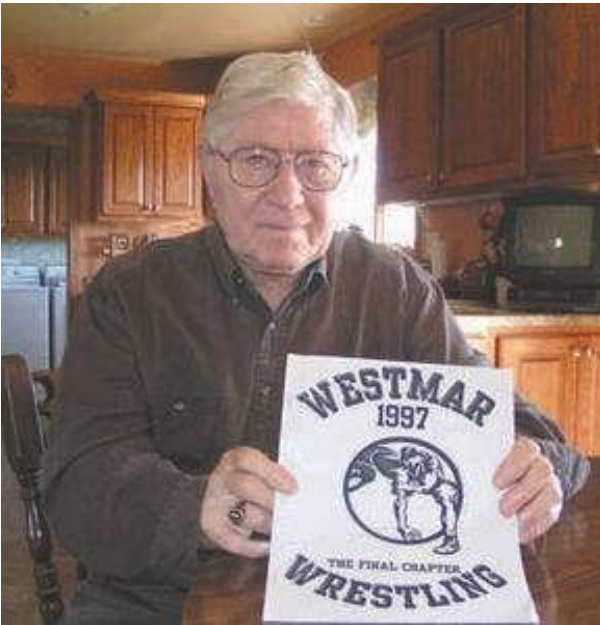


### 1962-1970 Graduates

**Front Row:** Sue (Houser) Weimer, Marigay (Cunningham) Allen, Elaine (Nicolet) Blinn, Nancy (Heitmann) Berry, Linda Brown, Lynn (Schelerman) Cressy, and Zoe (Lanam) Woelfle. **Back Row:** John Blinn, Abiu Suazo, Roger James, Margene (Merkle) Hamilton, Lowell Ensey, and Rich Woelfle.



# Martin Inducted into Hall of Fame



Milt Martin, Westmar's wrestling coach of 35 years received a great honor when he was inducted into the National Wrestling Hall of Fame, Iowa Chapter on October 27 at an award ceremony in Des Moines.

Martin started his career as wrestling coach in 1962 and was Westmar's only wrestling coach when the college closed in 1997. According to the *Le Mars Daily Sentinel*, Martin's team records are 462 victories, 138 losses, and 12 ties.

After graduating from Westmar in 1953 Milt taught at several high schools where he taught math, science, and physical education besides being the coach for football and track.

Dr. Harry Kalas, Westmar presi-

dent, contacted Milt for the Physical Ed Department and to coach football and track. When the college was about to drop the fledgling sport of wrestling, Milt stepped forward and the first wrestling match he ever saw happened to also be the first match he ever coached.

Over the years he watched many young men take his example and enter into the education and coaching fields.

On October 26, the *Le Mars Daily Sentinel* ran a story on Milt's career which includes remembrances from many former students. It can be found on the *Sentinel's* website <http://www.lemarssentinel.com/story/1286996.html>.

# Former Westmar Campus Vandalized

On October 2, it was discovered that approximately 20 fire extinguishers were discharged inside the closed Kime Science building. It may cost as much as \$1,800 to clean up the fire extinguisher dust and replace the discharged fire extinguishers.

That same night a burglary was discovered at the Le Mars Head Start Center, located in Weidler Hall. Office furniture and keys were stolen.

Police also found that Plains Area Mental Health, also in Weidler Hall, had been broken into with damage done to a door, but nothing appeared to be missing.

The office of Calvin Christian Reformed Church was broken into and a fire extinguisher was discharged their also.

On the night of October 1, the YMCA (former Life Sports Center) was broken into and some snack items, a gym bag, and a fire

extinguisher were stolen.

The Plymouth County Historical Museum, which houses the Westmar Memory Room, Westmar Archives, and Airplane Room was broken into on Sept. 25 and a fire extinguisher was discharged in the Museum's Archives Room.

Curves For Women, located in the Museum building was also broken into that night. This location seemed to be a favorite of the culprit or culprits since it was broken into several times.

Due to the recent break-ins, the Museum is raising money to purchase and install a security system and cameras. Anyone interested in helping to secure the Museum and the Westmar Room and Archives can send a donation marked "SOS" to the Plymouth County Historical Museum, 335 First Ave. S.W., Le Mars, IA 51031.

# Update on fate of Westmar Heating Plant

The following is an update to the August newsletter story on the Heating Plant taken from the *Le Mars Daily Sentinel*.

The current list of some nine properties being listed for sale by the city will, however, be down one from its current level, the result of action by the council during its session to demolish the old Westmar physical plant building.

Council members, responding to city administrator Scott Langel's request for direction on the future of the building with a current city asking price of \$70,000, agree that demolition of the

site with use of the vacated property for additional parking appears to be the best of three options.

It is hoped, council members said, that the demolition will be complete by next summer.

The additional two options cited were continued city ownership of the property for use by the city and future sale of the building.

The council, at the same time, gave Langel the go-ahead to reroute what he termed "the balance of the electrical and natural gas" facilities in the building citing the work as a "priority" measure prior to razing the structure.

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WESTMAR UNIVERSITY ALUMNI & FRIENDS ASSOCIATION  
335 FIRST AVENUE S.W.  
LE MARS, IOWA 51031



**Alumni Office Staff**

Janice (Dunbar) Kooiker: Executive Director  
Mary Holub: Communications Director and  
Newsletter Editor

**Show your Westmar spirit!**  
*Do you know classmates or other Westmar alums who are not yet WFA members? Ask them to send information and yearly dues to the office in Le Mars to be included in future mailings.*

**Contact us!**  
**westmar@lemarscomm.net**

**http://www.WestmarCollege.org/**

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Be sure to check out our new and improved, ever-changing website at: <http://www.WestmarCollege.org/>. We offer online shopping, membership, and reunion registration. Suggestions are always welcome.

**Current Members:** You will receive a postcard when it is time to renew your membership. Please pass the form below on to other Westmar Alum so they can be part of the momentum also.

**What's Happening with You? Tell Us!**

We are interested in knowing what has recently (or not so recently) happened in your life. Promotions? Marriage? Births or deaths? Honors or awards? Graduate degree? Semi- or full retirement? Pass on the information so we can print it and spread the good news!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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Class year \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse also an alum \_\_\_\_\_

Other relatives also alums \_\_\_\_\_

News (attach a separate sheet if needed ) \_\_\_\_\_

Return to: WFA  
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Or e-mail to: westmar@lemarscomm.net



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