

CLASSMATE PROFILES

Getting to know Classmates all over again!
So what have you been doing for the past 50 years?



Arnie Werling
Taft Student



Jane & Arnie
June 13, 1967



Amanda just home
from the hospital - 10/79



Retirement Party
June 30, 2003



Hiking in the Fjords of
Norway - July 2004



First Grandchildren
6 Weeks Apart - July 10, 2005

ARNIE WERLING

After graduation from Taft, I accepted a football scholarship to the University of Illinois in Champaign-Urbana. My plan was to major in engineering. I was possibly one of the worst freshmen in the history of the University. I disliked the place from the first week. I accept total responsibility for my miserable performance at the U. of Illinois. My freshman chemistry lecture had 609 students in the lecture hall. I had nothing but teacher's assistants for labs, English, and math. The dormitory was loud and crowded. Football practice was like a gang war with real hitting, cursing, and huge bodies hitting each other at high speeds. I retreated to the local watering holes and did not last long on that campus. I really hated the place.

North Park College in Chicago was much better for me. My average class size was 15 and I had full professors for most classes. After several major failures at dieting and after being rejected by the Army, Navy, and Marines because they had no uniforms that would fit me; and when most of my friends had to leave the friendly confines of our neighborhood and go off to the military I began to walk and jog around Circle Ave.

by myself early every morning. With the dieting assistance of our family doctor and my family, I went from 275 lbs. to 175 lbs. I was at 178 on our wedding day and have stayed within 10 lbs. of that, (well, a little more over holidays!) It took a long time for my self-image to change. Even until their deaths in 1982 and 1990, two of my very closest friends — Denny Cavan and John Byrd, continued to call me by my early 1960's nick-name - Roti Bulbi, which was short for Rotund Bulbous Swine of a man. When Rich Melbye and I walked into the Oncor Buffet Restaurant at Devon and Northwest Highway in the early 1960's, the owner would break into a heavy sweat. The restaurant eventually went out of business and I fear that we helped its demise.

One fine spring, after I lost the 100 lbs. and I was feeling very good again, I sat behind a very pretty blond girl in a history class. Linda Jane Harris grew up in a Norwegian-Welsh family in New Rochelle, N.Y., and came to North Park because of her church affiliation that North Park had with the Evangelical Church of America. I always made sure that I sat near her and eventually I asked her if she would like to have a cup of coffee with me. We fell deeply in love and graduated two years later. We have been happily married for over 40 years.

After several years of teaching at the junior high level, I obtained a Masters Degree in Guidance and Counseling from Northeastern Illinois University and ended up as the Dept. Chair of the Guidance Dept. at Woodstock High School in Woodstock, Illinois. Jane enjoyed her teaching years at the junior high level. After teaching, we also found that we could make some extra money by selling school supplies and specialty items to schools and high school students.

Our two children, Kristian Andrew Werling, and Amanda Louise Werling, are now 32 and 29 years old. Krist is married to a beautiful teacher named Laura who grew up in Chicago. They also met at North Park College and live in Sauganash, have a three year old boy (Jakob is one of the highlights of our lives — I never dreamed I would love all grand children so much) and are expecting their second son in June, 2008. Krist is an attorney with McGuire Woods in Chicago where he specializes in assisting hospitals and health clinics to make sure that they meet all of the federal and state regulations. Laura taught elementary school for three years and since has been manager of the house, and is looking forward their second son.

Our Amanda is also a teacher and also went to North Park College where she met a Swedish exchange student named Henrik Karl Kihlstrom. They met at an International Club party at the end of her freshman year. They both graduated from North Park and married in the summer of 2001.

They went to Sweden to live for "a year" so that Amanda could learn Swedish. They want their children to be bi-lingual in Swedish and English. That was seven years ago and they still live in Sweden where Amanda is totally bilingual and is a certified, tenured teacher in the Karlstad public school system where she teaches English. She is on maternity leave now at home in their comfortable house next to one of the largest lakes in Europe. They have a daughter, Ella Marie, who is nearing three years of age and is already very good in both Swedish and English, and they have a two month old son named Erik Theodore.

They have a good and comfortable life in Sweden. Henrik works for Price Waterhouse Coopers as an accounting and management consultant. We wish they lived closer, but when we see them we usually go over there for one to two months and they always come here for the month of July. We are very thankful for the low long distance phone rates to Europe and for this magical webcam built into this computer, on which we can talk with them in real time and in living color, as long as we want to, 365 days per year.

Jane and I had our first trip to Europe in 1971 to visit relatives in Norway where her mother grew up to the age of 18. We were teachers then and were able to spend the entire summers of 1971, 1973, and 1978 with Jane's parents (by then retired) on the family farm along a fjord on the southern coast of Norway. Jane's grandparents lived on that farm which was a small farm that was right by the North Sea. They never owned a car and took their boat everywhere — to church, shopping, fishing, etc. Norway was one of the poorest countries in Europe in 1900. Most of the men in that area of Mandal, Norway, had three skills. They knew how to run a small farm and raise or harvest much of their own food. They were accomplished commercial fishermen and had plenty of fish to eat and sell, and they were all very good carpenters and builders.

That has all changed now since the discovery of massive oil and gas fields in the Norwegian Sea, off of the west coast of Norway in 1969. Norway is now one of the richest countries in the world and one of the most expensive. Every 85th. Norwegian is a millionaire. You have no idea how lucky we are to live in the USA with our low prices and low taxes. We usually visit friends and relatives when we make our frequent trips over there. This past January, gas was \$7.80 per gallon in Norway (yes, an American gallon). Oslo is always ranked in the top three most expensive cities in the world. On Dec. 30th, we took four friends out for pizza and beer in down-town Oslo — six of us altogether and even though Scandinavian pizza is almost not worth eating — the bill was over \$200.00.

There is a lot of great food and fine recipes in Scandinavia and they make marvelous beers and ales, but they have no clue in Europe — from Italy to the northern edge of Finland — no clue at all on how to make a decent pizza! The prices of almost everything in Scandinavia, northern Europe, and Western Europe, are now extremely high. Their salaries are high and their taxes are high. The straight sales tax on everything you purchase in Sweden is 25% (called a "Value Added Tax "or Mums".) In Norway it is 31%. I do not know how they all manage, but these are now very technical and highly educated societies, with a very high standard of living. Norway, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Ireland, the U.K, Finland — the economies are booming and they tell us that the only people that complain about the high prices are the Americans. We have learned to just keep quiet and pay the bill.

Our recent trip to visit Amanda, Henrik, and Ella Marie in Sweden was from Dec. 8, 2007, to Jan. 10, 2008. Erik Theodore was born on Jan. 3rd. We have been there for each grand child's birth. Not only to greet the newborn, but to help around the house a little when mom and baby came home. This recent trip was our 13th. trip to Europe together. I have added up the weeks and we have now spent over one year of our married life in Europe. Each time we go over there, we stop in a different country on the way there or on the way home to see some different sights and different cultures.

We have also discovered that if you order a new Volvo here in the states, that Volvo of Sweden will fly two of you from O'Hare to Gothenburg to get the car, and that pay for the round-trip tickets via SAS. You can drive your new Volvo around Europe for up to six months and then return it to the factory. They will drive you back to the airport for the return flight to O'Hare. About one month later your used Volvo (only you used it) arrives at your local Volvo dealer. We are now on our 6th. Volvo and trust me, the round-trip air fare is included, the car arrives here in very good condition, and you save about \$2,000 to \$4,000 on the car because they can then bring it into the States as a used car (I think) And of course you save on not having to rent a car while you are there. So we have been very fortunate to have been able to drive all over Europe and have been from the North Cape of Norway to the southern tip of Sicily, and from the west coast of England as far east as Prague and Budapest. I sure never dreamed that a kid from Taft would end up seeing so much.

We retired at the end of June, 2003, and have been enjoying traveling, playing with our grand-children, and visiting friends. We bought a retirement condo by the water on a small island called Siesta Key at the southern tip of Sarasota, Florida. We like to be there from Nov. 1 to the beginning of May. We also bought a similar condo by the water along Lake Geneva in Williams Bay, Wisconsin, where we spend most of May through October. Because of our travels, we have stopped participating in most of the organizations we have belonged to over the years. I sang in our church choir for many years. Jane was President of our Church's Women's Club for six years.

Our son became an Eagle Scout so we both volunteered for Scout work from Cub Scouts through Boy Scouts and continued to help with merit badge work even after Krist was off to college. We also did volunteer work for the American Cancer Society and the American Heart Association. In between times, we have enjoyed fishing and boating on Lake Geneva. During our boating careers, we have had seven different used boats. They have all been a lot of fun and sometimes challenging. The highlight of our history with boats is when Denny Cavan, John Byrd (Class of 1957 from Taft who married Rae Marie Hillier from our class) and I bought a kit and built a 25 ft. sail boat in my parent's basement and backyard of my family home at 6235 N. Harlem. Thank goodness we had it insured because it sank in a storm on Lake Michigan on June 6, 1965. We quickly learned that 80 knot winds will get your attention real fast! No one was hurt and Washington Mutual Insurance Co. paid us for its full value. What a break that was. We now limit ourselves to putting around Lake Geneva as we check out all the fancy houses and gardens.

In addition to fishing, as a sometimes wild teenager, I never dreamed that we would get into gardening. We especially have enjoyed raising large numbers of Burpee Big Boy tomatoes and many other veggies. We also enjoy a variety of beautiful roses. One last thought — Fred and Toni Allegretti (Fred's older sister) clued me in to the fact that James Stamm, our talented choral director at Taft, has been retired in Sarasota, Florida, for the past 25 years. We discovered that he lives just two miles from us. I called him and we spent four hours at lunch during our first mini-reunion. He is now 83 and his mind is very sharp. We talked about all of the fine students that were in the Mixed Chorus with us and he remembers everyone! At one point I told him how much I enjoyed singing Hayden's Creation during the annual Choral Competition at Roosevelt High School. He quickly pointed out to me that we did not sing the original Creation but used a different version. When my close friend, Rich Melbye, grabbed me by the arm in 1957 and said to me, "I am taking you to meet Jim Stamm. You can sing first tenor and we need you." I never dreamed it would be so much fun to sing in a Mixed Choral group and sing everything from spiritual music to Broadway Shows. As I drive down the highways of life, sometimes alone in my car, I can remember some of those choral numbers we did and I can still sing some of the parts.

I hope this finds you all well and doing fine! Sincerely, Arnie Werling

