

The Laker

APRIL 2024



ULS UNIVERSITY
LAKE SCHOOL

In Memoriam: Ellen Langill, page 12 (Ellen Langill with Jenica Flores ULS 1990 and Ellen's beloved cat Pompey).

Table of Contents

EDITORS

Yulia Pavlova
Abby Schlater

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

John Ritter

PRINTER

Thomas Press (Waukesha, Wis.)

The Laker is published by University Lake School. It is mailed free of charge, twice a year, to alumni and friends of the school.

To update your address or share comments and ideas:

Email: alumni@universitylake.org

Call: 262-367-6011

Write: Advancement Office,
University Lake School,
P.O. Box 290, Hartland, WI 53029

3

FROM THE
HEAD OF SCHOOL

4

IN MEMORIAM
STEVE TOMASINI

6

HAWK HILL
HAPPENINGS

8

COLLIN GOLDBACH
MIT PROJECT

11

SENIOR SPOTLIGHT
LAWRENCE WU

12

IN MEMORIAM
DR. ELLEN LANGILL

16

FACULTY SPOTLIGHT
MACEY SMITH

17

PUBLISHED
AUTHORS

18

DE PEYSTER

19

LAKERS WE'VE LOST

From the Head of School

Dear Lakers,

Our 7th graders were building simple machines to solve complex problems, so I asked if they'd interview MIT PhD candidate and fellow Laker Collin Goldbach '16. They asked him what machines were relevant to build his motorcycle-tractor. Collin answered, with candor worthy of any 7th grader, "Everything ever built by humankind."



highest literacy rates in Europe, and, a century later, Albert Einstein. Pestalozzi schools favored spontaneous activity, manual dexterity, and acute visualization.

One of Pestalozzi's students, Friedrich Fröbel, created the first kindergarten in Germany; one of Fröbel's students, Margarethe Meyer-Schurz, started the first kindergarten in the United States right here in Watertown in 1856. If ULS seems uncannily aligned with educational curiosity, it might be thanks to history.

But does all this sound like too much fun to be "college prep"? Educator Jeff Biersach '86 says ULS teacher Ellen Langill taught him to think of students "as scholars capable of analyzing, writing, and producing valuable work of their own." Jenica Flores '90 puts it simply: "Ellen never made me feel like a child." The secret success of student-centered education- heart, head, and hands- might turn out to be the accountability that comes from realizing their own powers.

Some days later, when Middle Schoolers helped rake mulch in the new greenhouse, we witnessed it with new eyes - theirs. How does the width of tines affect the movement of wood chips? Why does pulling rather than pushing create fewer clumps? What's the best way to cover a known area with a known volume? And so on. Collin cited all kinds of practical farming observations from his boyhood in Lake Country that today give him a cerebral edge at MIT, to wit: "To reduce the weight of a tractor by half, cut it in half."

In the late 18th century, Johann Pestalozzi was tasked with helping Swiss youngsters learn math while mastering farming skills for a population decimated by Napoleon. In addition to farmers, his schools created deep thinkers and innovators, the

Watching the 7th graders engage with Collin - as intellectual peers - made me think: gosh, we may be the only School I know that is not manifestly ageist. And for good reason. What sorts of thoughts are relevant to my education? Everything ever thought by humankind - starting with you!

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "John Dewis".

John Dewis
15th Head of School
University Lake School

IN MEMORIAM—STEVE TOMASINI (MAY 19, 2023)

A wondrous teacher, a valuable mentor, a champion for the environment, and a huge fan of the ULS community.

Written by Greg Bisbee

Our friend and colleague, Steve Tomasini, passed away on May 19, 2023 at the age of 73. Steve was an integral part of the ULS community for eleven years until his retirement in 2015. Between his teaching, outdoor work on campus, and intersession and leadership trips, Steve has had an impact on ULS that is beyond measure.

“Yes, of course there’s a quiz.”



Choose the correct answer or answers for the following.

1. Steve Tomasini was
 - (a) a wondrous teacher.
 - (b) an incredibly nice guy and a valuable mentor.
 - (c) a champion for nature and the environment.
 - (d) known for his prickly, hedgehog exterior.
 - (e) a HUGE fan of the ULS community.

I have come to believe that a great teacher is a great artist and that there are as few as there are any other great artists. Teaching might even be the greatest of the arts since the medium is the human mind and spirit.

—John Steinbeck

If you chose “a”, you are correct...congratulations! I knew Steve as a fellow biology teacher and was amazed at the incredible things he accomplished at University Lake School. Steve was one of those rare, great artists. He loved working with Middle School and Upper School students and felt that’s where he could really make a difference. Former students all remarked on Mr. T’s high standards in the classroom and in the outdoors. He expected students to step up and chip in. Whether indoors or out, students should help out, be ready, and be prepared. Astonishingly, a student once showed up wearing flip-flops for the prairie burn. Like any great teacher, Steve saw the situation not as a problem but as a great educational opportunity—a discussion ensued on being prepared and ready to help out and how that was not possible with exposed feet. The student did not participate in the burn. I often witnessed Steve demonstrate incredible levels of patience with students struggling at particular outdoor tasks—putting up a tent, getting into a canoe, paddling a canoe, starting a fire. He let them struggle then offered just enough assistance to allow them to succeed in the task and feel a sense of accomplishment. It was inspirational to watch. It was because of his skill and caring that he received such a huge number of cards and letters from students and parents throughout his career. While he never mentioned them, he kept them all and they meant a great deal to him.

It is better to show ‘you care’ than say ‘I care’.

—Lailah Gifty Akita, “Pearls of Wisdom: Great mind”

If you chose “b”, you are also correct. Steve was one of the nicest and most generous—and genuine—people I have known. If you were going to be in the Madison area, Steve and his wife, Laurie, were always happy to get together. That might mean a picnic dinner at a concert on Capitol Square, heading out to a little corner place he knew for lunch, or going for a hike or out in a kayak. He exhibited a subtle, dry humor that was very much appreciated by those who were paying attention. He led, influenced, and accompanied so many students, fellow educators, parents, and friends through adventures and journeys in education, the outdoors, and life. You could not have asked for or found a better leader and partner.

To those devoid of imagination a blank place on the map is a useless waste; to others, the most valuable part.

—Aldo Leopold, “A Sand County Almanac”

You are also correct if you selected “c”. Everyone that knew Steve mentioned his passion for the outdoors and for outdoor education. He climbed mountains, surfed oceans, canoed rivers, and hiked wilderness. He loved introducing students and others to the environment and wanted people to go out and enjoy being outdoors. He felt it was such a powerful experience being



in nature—whether solo or as part of a community—and he valued that connection between community and nature. Steve was the embodiment of living life to the fullest. He believed and lived Leopold’s Land Ethic—the ideal that we are the stewards of our Earth and that our ethical system needs to encompass the natural world as well as our fellow humans. He understood that we have a responsibility to the land and to future generations to take care of what we have and to leave it better than we found it. He had a vision of what we could be—the better angels of our nature (as Lincoln phrased it). When Mrs. Vettleson sold her property for the formation of ULS, she charged us with taking care of her land. Steve appreciated what a heavy and serious responsibility that was and he took it seriously in thought and in action.

Honesty is the first chapter in the book of wisdom.

—Thomas Jefferson

And, yes, “d” is correct as well. Ron Smyczek described Steve as having a “heart of gold under a hedgehog exterior.” He loved playing the gruff, cranky curmudgeon because it allowed him to see if you were serious about talking—if you’d stick around. Steve was unapologetically honest and, for some, this was prickly. Dr. Mulrooney described Steve as a “voracious loner who worked—always—for the good of others.” He worked summers cutting down buckthorn so students could have success clearing it out in the fall. After storms he showed up early to clear the trails. If something needed to be done he went out and did it—no hesitation, no need to ask, no recognition required. It was about doing the right thing and getting the job done—he expected that from himself and from those around him.

There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

—Margaret J. Wheatley

And, finally, choice “e” is also correct. Laurie spoke again and again about how much Steve loved the ULS community. He loved the opportunities—the prairie burns, the heron rookery, the outdoor experiences—even the buckthorn eradication—but

he also loved the sports and the academics, the ULS staff, and the students and their families. Steve and Laurie frequently talked about how lucky Steve was to have landed at University Lake School. He treasured the intersessions and the work days and the travel. He enjoyed seeing students working together to make dinner after a day of hiking or helping them experience the thrill of canoeing down the Wisconsin River or hiking up Mount Whitney. It was all about the social aspects of being outdoors—the reliance on each other. Steve had a passion for the outdoors, lived that passion, and shared it with the students, families, and staff of ULS.

A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops.

—Henry Adams

Steve taught for eleven years—2004 through 2015—at University Lake School but his influence is far greater than would be suggested by that too brief period of time. Before ULS, he held many diverse roles in and out of education and, if the situation had allowed, he would have continued teaching for many more years.

If you knew Steve then you know that the correct answer for the quiz was, clearly, all of the above. As evidenced by the outpouring of notes, letters, testimonials, and more, multitudes of people from all over the country knew this. Steve was a genuinely caring person who touched so many lives across the country over the span of decades. He had this outsized impact on all of us as a teacher, a mentor, and as a friend. And, whether you were familiar with all of Steve’s qualities or only a few of them, you can’t help but feel the world a poorer place for his departure, and a vastly better place for his life.

I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived.

—Henry David Thoreau, “Walden”

Special thanks to Laurie Tomasini, Ron Smyczek, Pam Bisbee, and Patrick Mulrooney for sharing their stories and insights.





Hawk Hill Happenings

1 Laker Athletic Hall of Fame

We are excited to announce our inaugural class into our Athletic Hall of Fame! This year we welcomed three Olympians: Molly Seidel, ULS 2012, Ben Holbrook, ULS 1992, and Sally Barkow, ULS 1998, and long-time ULS staff member John Doherty. Their dedication, skill, and sportsmanship represent the best of what it means to be a Laker athlete.

2 Veterans Day Assembly

Our School's Veterans Day assembly was a patriotic affair that welcomed many Laker community veterans and active-duty service members. The ULS choir passionately rendered the songs of each branch of the military. It was a meaningful and memorable event that brought our school community together in honor of these brave men and women.

3 The Nest

The Nest is our new home base of JK3 Forest, an outdoor classroom in the woods. The environment is primed for the explorations of our young adventurers. Led by early childhood teachers with specialties in outdoor education, this class features robust inquiry-based learning alongside the trees, trails and rocks, utilizing the same strength of curriculum that is offered throughout our proud history.

4 Alumni Gatherings

Fall of 2023 was filled with many incredible Laker community gatherings in Madison, Seattle, Portland, and Boston! These meetups were filled with heartfelt conversations as Lakers reminisced about their time on Hawk Hill and the impact it had on them. Keep an eye out for communications about upcoming gatherings!



5 Intercession "Do You Want to SCUBA?"
The "Do You Want to SCUBA?" Intercession is making waves as our students dive headfirst into the world of underwater exploration. During Intercession days, the students have been busy working towards becoming certified divers through the PADI Open Water Diver course. The course will include classroom and online instruction on safety and the physics of dive theory, multiple practice dives in a community pool, and finally an open water dive in Nagawicka Lake.

6 Monarch Migration
This fall, our first graders took a fascinating journey into the world of monarch butterflies. From emerging from the chrysalis to being tagged and embarking on their journey to Mexico, our students learnt all about the remarkable monarch migration process.

7 Campus Goats
Our campus has enlisted a charming and eco-friendly team to tackle the invasive buckthorn on Hawk Hill—meet our delightful squad of campus goats! These four-legged landscapers have taken on the important task of munching their way through the pesky buckthorn, transforming our outdoor areas.

8 Ms. P's Art Blog
Our vibrant Lower School art department is buzzing with excitement as our amazing Art teacher Leslie Peterson embarks on a creative journey beyond the classroom. Combining her passion for technology and art, Ms. Peterson launched a captivating art blog creating a virtual gallery of all the lower school students' incredible work.

Alumni Spotlight – Collin Goldbach ULS 2016:

“ENGINEERING IS AN ACTUAL REAL-LIFE SUPERPOWER”

Interviewed by curious 7th graders Oliver Varani, Japhy Poehls, and Abby Barrett and ever curious Head of School John Dewis.



Collin Goldbach, ULS 2016, greeted us from his MIT engine lab. The space is equipped with an array of tools, including a mill, lathe, drill press, band saw, laser cutter, a couple of 3D printers, a huge exhaust fan and, in the center, Collin's main project – a motorcycle tractor.

When you work on your PhD, you have to do the original research. You have to look back at everything mankind has created and add something new to it – that's the rule. Everyone has a lab where they make it happen – for me, it's this welding room in Building # 31, on MIT's Campus. I have been living here for the past three years.

What project are you currently working on?

I've built a 2-wheeled all-wheel-drive tractor. It's designed for farmers in low- and middle-income countries. It's certainly the most complex thing I've ever built and I feel like I've applied a little bit of all my engineering training throughout fluids, failure mechanics, electronics, all of it.

Our main goal was to build a tractor as cheap as it could be. Most of the farms in the world are smaller than 2 acres, your average house lot here in Wisconsin. When we talk about farmland in the Midwest, we imagine those hundreds of acres of cornfields, but in most parts of the world it is not like this at all. The farmers on those farms own about 2 acres of land and make about \$1,500 a year. So they do not have money to buy a tractor that costs \$30K. It is a proven fact that you grow 10 times as much on your land when you use a tractor. The only boundary for these farmers to grow 10 times more food and make 10 times more money is not having a tractor.

How much does your tractor weigh?

I have not weighed it yet. I can lift it off the ground with the help of one other person. It is probably 300 lb. When you manufacture something, the less it weighs the less it costs. The easiest way to cut the weight of the tractor in half is to cut it in half right down the middle. This way we will have half the weight of everything: engine, wheels, frame. And

that's how the idea of the motorcycle tractor was born.

How much do you think it will cost?

The farmers in India still use cows and plows like you see in old movies. We hope that the price will be more affordable than the price of two cows in rural India, bought and cared for, amortized. The cows need to be replaced and sometimes you have to buy a new cow every year, but with the tractor – it's a one-time investment plus you have to pay for fuel.

I talk about India a lot because 60% of people in India work in food production and India has 1.8 billion people – a quarter of the Earth population lives in India. So 1 in every 10 humans is an Indian farmer. That's why we are planning to sell most of our tractors in India.

**Have you tested your tractor yet?
How fast can it go?**

The top speed on the ground is about 25 mph. This speed limit is set on purpose because in most countries you do not need a driver license to drive something that is below 25 mph. When you are farming, it goes much slower – 1 meter per second or about 1.5 mph – which is still faster than cows.

What is the balance of profit, nonprofit and philanthropy in your project?

We want to create an honest product at a reasonable price that would improve people's lives. We would love to give these tractors away for free but it is not possible. We have people who build parts of the engines and other parts, and these people need to be paid for their work. It's important to make sure that you do not charge too much because people desperately need our product.

Do you think you can mass produce this tractor?

Yes, we are hoping that eventually we can sell hundreds of thousands of our tractors, at least. I cannot mass produce it myself, but I designed a plan for the frame that I can send to a welder, and this welder and his company would make thousands of frames. Then we will ship the frames to someone who makes the engines, and so on.

Who helped you build this tractor?

As a graduate student, I have to hire MIT undergraduates to help me with my research, and I have had eight or nine undergrad students helping me.

How do you attach things to the tractor?

We use a pretty standard linkage on our tractor – three point hitch. You can connect all kinds of things to it, and some of those are very heavy: a crane, excavator, lawn mower, plow, weed pullers, tons of stuff. If our tractor did not have this hitch, it would make it worse than other tractors. It can hold a 300 lb plow on it consistently.

What do you anticipate breaking first on this tractor?

The oil bearing will probably wear off in 3 years.

In the US we are big on safety and making things last longer. In India, they want to make the most of the function before it fails. Which means lots of stuff in India is used above its capacity. Our tractor will have a load capacity of approximately 500 lb but it is very likely that it will get loaded 1000 lb and over in India, and an axle will snap. We try to consider those specifics and plan design somewhat according to it as well.

What was the toughest part about building this tractor or engineering in general?

Getting it on and off this table! It is 300 lb and I have pulleys with chains in the ceiling that I have to use. The hardest thing to implement was a complete hydraulic system. Some parts of it are big and I had to cut an engine transmission in half and move lots of stuff around to make sure everything fits on the frame.

How different is your current design from the original prototype?

Substantially different! The motorcycle-tractor concept was pioneered by a past grad student and I've spent the last two years helping to realize it by implementing key upgrades like

hydraulic power, PTO, the redesign of key mechanical systems like the plow control and 3 point hitch, and the design of new spraying systems for crop maintenance.

How much did you spend on designing this tractor?

Around \$62,000. That includes my trips to India and buying lots of parts in America (usually 10 times more expensive than in most places in the world).

When are you planning to complete this project?

At the end of the semester, I have a really important test. A part of it is presenting to the teachers that I really took my time and did this project well. If I don't pass it – I get expelled. I get one redo, but after that I get kicked out.

Tough but fair.. Why is it so demanding?

MIT has a reputation for being very selective. If you are getting a PhD from them, they need to be sure that you have certain qualities and really take your time to study hard and learn all of your stuff. It's cool to be in a place where knowledge is celebrated. Where you really have to understand stuff and not just memorize it for tests and forget the

TESTING: PLOW

Goal: Synthesize a high-compact plow actuator, drivable by hydraulic cylinder

Following fabrication, assembly and installation, the system was tested successfully at Clark Farm in Carlisle MA.



next day. It is exciting to be surrounded by like-minded people.

What advice can you give to ULS students that would help us with our future in engineering?

Spend as much time as you can creating ideas. It does not matter if some of them are crazy – they are all worth considering, and that's the only step of the process that is free. Generating more ideas provides additional options, enhancing the final product.

What is your favorite thing about learning engineering?

It's like an actual real life superpower. With math, physics, and science, you can predict disasters and prevent them. You can invent stuff that solves problems. You can see the future a little bit. As an engineer, you see the answers to your problems everywhere, you just have to surround yourself with them.

What did you learn at ULS that helped you in college?

People always found my presenting and public speaking skills very impressive in college (University of St. Thomas 2020). There were lots of kids in my college classes that did not know how to stand and talk in front of people. They wondered why I was so good at it. Well, I have been presenting Branches of the Pine at ULS

assemblies since I was in 5th grade. I thought it was silly when I was at school, but it actually prepared me to comfortably talk in front of hundreds of people.

Things at ULS that helped me a lot in engineering were our trips to Camp Edwards and other camps. When you take Physics in Upper School and do lots of problems – you can find answers through those tangible outdoor experiences.

I just took Fluid Mechanics in college – a very hard class. Some of the questions were about water mechanics that occur when you are canoeing. There were students in my class that had never been in a canoe and had no idea how it worked. And the first thing I did in my Freshman year – we all went canoeing. I observed my paddle stroke and movement of the water and it helped me understand how it worked mathematically.

What is your next project?


I will begin my PhD work in Wind Power if I pass the motorcycle tractor exam. I always wanted to find a solution to climate change and build a wind turbine myself. To begin this project, I have to do the market research, create a widget, and make sure it works. I think that there are lots of markets that can benefit from having small wind turbines, almost like people having small solar panels.

The difference is that one single wind turbine generates as much power as 3 to 5 football fields of solar panels. If you can build one that is cheap, small, and easy to install on a farm – people will buy them. For example, our Midwest silos take lots of energy to keep corn heated in winter. It costs lots of money. With a wind turbine, your electric bill will be low. Wind turbines save money, we save the environment, everyone wins!

Does your farming prototype have anything to do with you growing up in Lake Country surrounded by farms?

I grew up around my grandpa's farm, I grew up around tractors, understanding how they work and fixing them. Now it saves me time doing the research because I already know how it works. It is so valuable that the stuff I did growing up helped me understand complicated things.

Companies strive to build diverse teams of engineers nowadays: it means you want someone from Southern Arizona who knows stuff about water treatment plants, someone from Maine whose house was snowed on 6 months a year, someone from the Midwest who grew on a farm plowing dirt – these diverse experiences contribute to the creation of highly effective engineering solutions.



If you would like to host an alumni gathering, share alumni stories or need to update your address/email – please reach out to Abby Schlater: abby.schlater@universitylake.org

CHENGHENG (LAWRENCE) WU



**Q: When did you come to the US?
What part of China are you from?**

I'm from Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province. It was January 1, 2020 when I got off the plane in New York; just several months before COVID-19 shut down the world. We took another flight to Wisconsin several days later.

Q: What is it you love most about ULS?

Its small size and its vibe. I'm more comfortable working with a small group of people that I'm familiar with.

Q: What are you involved in at ULS?

I'm more actively involved on the "tech side" of things. I'm a member of the STEAM club, the mechanic of the Robotics Team, and the photographer for the Yearbook Class.

Q: Favorite subject at ULS?

AP Computer Science A taught by Ms. Mahuta. It's a familiar class for me, since I've got some basic knowledge in

computer science from my APCSP class sophomore year, yet also challenging due to the fact that the programming language we used in APCSA is Java instead of JavaScript used in APCSP.

Q: What do you enjoy doing in your free time?

Building stuff (and failing for most of the time), messing with computers (and failing more dramatically most of the time), playing video games (and winning).



Q: Plans after graduation?

Go to college beat (or get beaten) by Calculus, Computer Science, and computer Engineering. As of right now the top three colleges on my list are UW Madison, UIUC, and Purdue University.

Q: Words of wisdom for younger students?

Just do it, no one will care (or do it when nobody is looking at you).



Q: Favorite memory from ULS?

Junior year prom and Senior year Camp Manito-wish trip. We've done some pretty interesting team bonding activities with our entire grade at Manito-wish. Since I'm not really active in terms of socializing in everyday life, this is the first time I get to actually know the people who've been studying with me for at least three years. What happened during my junior year prom was surely interesting and memorable but might not be suitable to be written down... Some stories are better being told rather than being read.

IN MEMORIAM—DR. ELLEN LANGILL (AUGUST 22, 2022)

Beloved teacher, college guidance counselor, coach of field hockey, basketball, and tennis.

Written by Jenica Flores ULS 1990



Ellen Teaching at ULS.

Genius, glamorous, tough, kind, compassionate, teacher, historian, feminist, author, trailblazer, bad-ass coach, Scrabble and game fiend, skipper, prankster, friend, wife, sister, and mother.

These are just a few of the many words used to describe Dr. Ellen Langill, who taught at ULS from 1971 to 1990. To me, she was Ellen, the only adult I ever wanted to hang out with as a kid. She was more of a special fun auntie or second mom to me and my siblings. She lived and breathed ULS and passed that onto me (her brothers-in-law attended ULS in the 60s – Scott and Norm Langill)

Ellen and her husband Ross lived above my parents (Ness & Phylis Flores) in 1971. My dad worked for Ross' father, and at some point, my mom taught at ULS too. Soon becoming best friends, our lives intertwined, and Ellen was with me from the moments after I was born, alongside my family on this crazy train of life 'til the end. It isn't just words that sum up who she was to me; it's a tapestry of rich emotions and feelings.

Most notable are pride and awe as I listened to her and my mom talking late into the night at the kitchen table. It was the feminist roundtable and I felt so

grown up sitting with them. Ellen never made me feel like a child – there was always a seat at her table for me. I'm sure many of you felt the same, touched by her kindness, authentic curiosity, and the respect she offered, engaging with each of us as equals.

Ellen transcended the role of an esteemed academic in history and Latin (with degrees from Grinnell College, UW Milwaukee, and UW Madison). She taught at ULS, Carroll College, UW Milwaukee, and UW Waukesha, authored over thirty books and numerous papers. Her subjects ranged from Wisconsin organizations, such as The Women's Center of Waukesha, to universities (Transforming Women's Education for the University of Wisconsin), private companies (her award winning book on Foley & Lardner), and Wisconsin cities (including another award winning book, Milwaukee 150: The Greater Milwaukee Story). Her first book of poetry, delving into the true stories of her cherished black cat Pompey, remains a personal favorite (Pompey Poems – about a cat).

Her community service and professional memberships, activities, and awards read like a tome of Who's Who of Wisconsin history. She was passionate about working in and for the community, and her involvement had a big impact on countless lives.

Ellen's zeal extended to her students, with stories about all of you frequently gracing conversations with friends and family. As a child, I was awed by these tales of bright, fun, and entertaining students. Later, my brother Bart '86 and I joined the ranks of ULS students and it felt intimidating to finally walk that hallowed hallway (aside from junior alley, there was only one hallway at the time) – I didn't want to disappoint. Bart had the privilege of taking Ellen's Senior Sem, the AP History course unlike any other high school offering. To truly grasp Ellen's ULS

legacy and teaching brilliance, one must hear from students and colleagues ... in their own words.

I invited them to finish this sentence: **Dr. Langill taught me a lot, but the single most important lesson I took with me is _____.** These quotes are interwoven throughout the stories of why we cherished Ellen so deeply.



Ellen with two hockey players and Goalie Glove.

"To take myself and my academics seriously."

– Andrew Randall '84

Dr. Langill prepared me for college in three important ways: 1. She treated me, and all her students, like her college students and expected us to behave, study, and write like college students. 2. She advised me NOT to be a business major until I knew what I wanted to do in the business world. She recommended Economics so I could take all sorts of Liberal Arts classes instead of being bogged down by business school prerequisites. Her advice made for a great undergraduate college experience for me at Madison. 3. She took our Senior Seminar class to the University Library in Madison for research. Wow! That first taste of college was extremely motivating. Thank you, Dr. Langill! You were a wonderful, brilliant, and classy woman.

– Andrew Randall '84



Ellen and team.

“Education is nothing if not conjoined with compassion.”

– Paul Song ‘83

Ellen, you couldn’t miss her with that flowing blond bob, always barreling down the school hallway, books piled high in her arms. I swear, she was in a perpetual race against time; not once did I see her make it to class on time! I’ll never forget the day she rolled down the hall with a grocery cart—yeah, a grocery cart she took from the drama department—loaded with those weighty tomes of primary research she snagged from Carroll College.

Teaching, for Ellen, was like a mission. She was absolutely dedicated to teaching her students to first research primary sources. She wanted her students to wrestle with the original writings of theorists and politicians, even if the language was old and difficult. She believed in developing their own viewpoint first from the original source, and only then looking at secondary sources and becoming the secondary resource themselves when putting pen to paper.

– Nancy Bicha-Dale, teacher 1978–2013 (paraphrased from my discussion with her)

“How to connect with someone ‘where they are’ in order to foster their interests and creativity in a common goal.”

– Nate Frye ‘78

One of my best memories with Dr. Langill was when she took our “History of Wisconsin” class on an overnight camping trip to Prairie du Chien. It was our senior year and she had a nice way of helping us explore, learn and bond.

– Nate Frye ‘78

“History is freaking awesome!”

– Lili (Koch) Colby ‘79

She inspired me to major in history at Colorado College, which I then followed up with a Master’s degree in Commonwealth history from King’s College, University of London. Ellen was so smart and so glamorous. I totally fell in love with that image! And never came across any other academic like her at any institution here or in England. She was a true trailblazer for young women showing that you could work to have it all: career, family, beauty, brains, deep friendships with other women (Carlson!) and of course physical brawn on the hockey field!

– Lili (Koch) Colby ‘79



Ellen Teaching at ULS dressed as suffragette.

“Learning brings dignity.”

– Anne Gutenkunst ‘80

I remember her fondly not only for her coaching of our field hockey and basketball teams, but also for her wonderful teaching of history and her discussion of women’s rights in my formative years of the late seventies. She was a great influence in my life and I pursued studies in both of those topics sparked by her enthusiasm. I admired her greatly.

– Anne Gutenkunst ‘80

“Her enthusiasm and desire to encourage girls to “reach for the stars.”

– Sue (Sproule) Blott ‘75

In her American History class, Ellen had us read a book that contained diaries

from pioneer women. It was amazing to learn about the hardships these women faced with courage and fortitude.

– Sue (Sproule) Blott ‘75

“As a woman, it’s okay to be intelligent, assertive, and follow your own path.”

– Tina Burgos ‘90

Back then, faculty meetings were a different breed. Arguments were not over schedules or minutia; we argued about educational philosophy and theories, strategizing how to best engineer critical thinking. Ellen and Leroy Haley played a big role in those heady days for fostering deep thought. She pushed for intellectual curiosity and set high standards, and come grading time some students complained about that! We even had a teacher from Belgium, Herman Croux, who wanted to teach philosophy in Greek! Leroy Haley and I shot that down because, well, we didn’t speak Greek, but we did teach philosophy as an after-school course. Ellen would’ve done it if she could, but she was too busy coaching field hockey with Sue “Q” Carlson.

Ellen loved field hockey, not just for the strategy, but for what it did for young women. It wasn’t just about the game; it was about fostering independence, building self-confidence, and not taking a backseat to anyone!

– Nancy Bicha-Dale, teacher 1978–2013 (paraphrased from my discussion with her)

“Respect others, and they will respect you.”

– Michael Melkers ‘85

Even though I was on the boys’ teams, I would often watch my sister and the other girls play. I remember watching how hard she pushed them but even more committed to supporting them. It is a lesson that has remained with me.

– Michael Melkers ‘85

“Compassion and gentleness.”

– Suzanne (Bott) Sayer ‘74

She was a beautiful soul whom I will always respect, admire and remember.

– Suzanne (Bott) Sayer ‘74

“The way she taught us to look at American history from many perspectives, particularly the settlement of the American West. One book I remember her teaching to this day is *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964, Leo Marx).

– Kira Henschel ‘72

She was always encouraging and helped where she could. Always with a smile. Sometime long after graduation, Ellen and I had the opportunity to collaborate on one of the memorial books she had been tasked with writing (probably the book on MSOE’s 100 Years.) She had a great mind and wonderful sense of humor.

– Kira Henschel ‘72

“Do whatever it is you are doing in the best way that you can; don’t worry about burning out or overextending yourself. You will come out the other side better for your extraordinary efforts!”

– Bart Flores ‘86

*Ellen knew me from the time I was born, so most of my memories of her are from outside school. She and her husband, Ross, were the coolest people I knew. Their house was a cultural Mecca, full of art, books and music and made me want to get out into the world to see similar things for myself. Ellen awakened a spirit of exploring and wanderlust, and from this place, all things were possible. She had cool records too! I first heard Blondie’s *Parallel Lines* on the stereo at her place.*

The Senior Seminar class she headed up for us was on the literature of protest and spurred some lively conversation and debate; all of my older friends on the east side were impressed that we had read “In Dubious Battle” by Steinbeck.

A marvelous educator and a great family friend, she is missed!

– Bart Flores ‘86

“What it takes to be a fine teacher.”

– Joyce Besserer,
French Teacher 1980–’99

I first met Ellen when I came to visit ULS in 1980 and sat in on her AP American history class. The topic of discussion was

the Roosevelt era. Ellen was a scholar, and it showed. She had a lifelong passion for her subject and was a gifted teacher. To me, her most impressive talent was her ability to calmly elicit opinions and engage her high school students in a seminar setting. They admired Ellen’s erudition and felt free to express their opinions on the topic discussed. It was obvious that they respected and loved her.



Ellen and Field Hockey Team early years.

There was versatility in later years – all those published histories of local businesses, college teaching always, as well as community involvement. Ellen was a whirlwind of energy and commitment. She was my friend through many years. As she boldly dealt with health issues (which she downplayed), I loved to get her email reviews and recommendations for good reads, and of course her witty political poems.

Ellen made her mark in this world.

– Joyce Besserer,
French Teacher 1980–’99

“The unwavering support of women. Ellen never gave up on me.”

– Phylis Flores, Dance Teacher 1972–’73

Her teaching journey took her from Carroll College (now University) to UWM, where she left her mark. She loved her college students, sure, but she missed the close relationships she had with the ULS students. Coaching and teaching them allowed her to know them on a different level and she cherished that.

Ellen was an author of quite a few beautiful books, and the first book I read of hers was about her cat Pompey. But the most fun was her book of satirical poems about President Trump. If it didn’t make you laugh out loud– it was witty. She wrote those even when she was

dealing with health issues that would’ve made others throw in the towel.

– Nancy Bicha-Dale, teacher 1978–2013
(paraphrased from my discussion with her)

“History is another way of telling stories, everyone’s stories.”

– Kari Pietsch-Wangard ‘73

Ellen showed me that history can be a living captivation of the human experience. Before I took a history class with Ellen, I hated history because it was presented as a subject to memorize dry facts of what happened in the past. I excelled at science and math, and went on to become a volcanologist and, more recently, a financial market trader. Yet, over four and a half decades ago, I sat in a history class with Ellen expounding on the book, “Cry, the Beloved Country”. She brought social injustice and apartheid into focus. Years later, during the Financial Market meltdown of 2008, I was able to use her approach to bring the 1929 Crash and the Great Depression to life and appreciate what people went through during those unprecedented events. Thank you Ellen for sharing your love of history.

– Bob Symonds ‘77

“An enduring respect for American history and literature.”

– Jeff Biersach ‘86

Dr. Langill taught me a deep, enduring respect for the perspectives provided by American history and literature. She taught me to engage seriously with American history, and she showed me how to think of students as scholars capable of analyzing, writing, and producing valuable work of their own. Her impact on my academic career is considerable. I carried her approach to history into college and graduate school, and, in my teaching, I have tried to motivate my students as she inspired hers – with a serious, scholarly appreciation for American history and literature.

– Jeff Biersach ‘86

“A love of history and an excitement for understanding a course of events. She always encouraged us to challenge ourselves.”

– Darby Quirk ‘74

We thought she was so hip and reminded us of Joni Mitchell. Always a demanding and fair person with high expectations and a quick smile.
– Darby Quirk '74

“To work hard. Not only did she prove the benefits of a great work ethic by her example, but also expected it of those around her, especially as a teacher.”
– Carrie (Carlson) Hoos '87

I will always remember her smile and her laugh. One of my favorite memories was how I loved nothing more than to wear the numerous pairs of clogs she passed down to me.
– Carrie (Carlson) Hoos '87

“To be an independent thinker and life long learner. Play hard and have fun! She was a wonderful mentor in and out of the classroom.”
– Sue (Browning) Nash '75

Ellen was my favorite teacher at ULS, and she remained friends with my entire family throughout the years. I loved her as a field hockey & basketball coach, history and English teacher, mentor and friend. She was the kind of teacher you could be yourself around, and yet set very high standards for us. I remember hiding her clogs, immersing our class in Milwaukee history (which got a little spirited in a brewery tasting room), socializing at the house in Waukesha, singing on the team buses, and later consulting her as I became a new hockey coach and independent school teacher. In 1974 she joined my mom, me and another classmate on a road trip to look at eastern colleges before our senior year - we dropped her in New Haven to do research on her thesis or dissertation, and picked her up after a minor fender bender on our way home. Disingenuously, we made her climb through the window (as we had done for several days, but had gotten one door pried open just before we picked her up) – on a very crowded New Haven corner – I think we laughed all the way back to Wisconsin. (I had to include the story - one of my Mom's favorites).

More recently, she was able to advise me a bit on a family genealogy project that I was wrapping up, and through that,



Ellen coaching the hockey girls.

she came to recommend me for the Wis Historical Foundation board in the last months. I regret we did not have the chance to attend a meeting in person together. When I reached out to inquire how she was - her short reply was only to encourage me going forward. I certainly will do my best knowing she's keeping an eye on me. She was a very special person.
– Kathy Burke '75

“Women have the intelligence and skill to affect great change in our society and while we still have room for greater progress we should never take for granted what the women in history have done for us – we stand proudly on their ironlike shoulders.”
– Jenica Flores '90

And let's not forget the Christmas parties! Ellen insisted on them, and they were a riot. Gag gifts were a must, and it became a cutthroat competition. You'd see these intellectuals—our esteemed faculty—fighting over who got the best gift. Dar and I always brought something nice just to see everyone fight over it.
– Nancy Bicha-Dale, teacher 1978–2013 (paraphrased from my discussion with her)

“You don't have to like everyone, but you should be kind to everyone.”
–Kari Langill, daughter

Ellen treasured her daughters, Kjersten and Kari. Two completely different

personalities, she helped foster their individuality to become exactly who they wanted to be.
– Nancy Bicha-Dale, teacher 1978–2013 (paraphrased from my discussion with her)

“If you do good work, people will notice. Maybe not always the people YOU wish would notice, but people will notice.”
– Kjersten Langill, daughter

Ellen's influence reached further than she might have realized – far beyond the classroom. Her lasting impression on us students helped to shape our decisions toward college, what we studied, how we studied, and gave us life lessons that we carried into the world. She wasn't just a teacher; she was a force. She truly was in a class of her own and much more than her prestigious accomplishments. She was kind enough to humbly hang out with the rest of us!

She was most proud of her family, Ross, her husband of 54 years, and their two daughters Kjersten and Kari. Her legacy lies not only within them but also in her students and colleagues whom she cared for deeply.

Ellen, we lost you far too soon. Favorite teacher, favorite coach, kindest person, best wearer of clogs, best friend ... Thank you. Just, thank you.

Faculty Spotlight

MACEY SMITH

Written by Georgios Bofiles

Taking her first teaching job at ULS, Ms. Smith didn't know what to expect or how it was going to go; but today she feels so fortunate to be able to say that she loves her job! She is the Upper School Biology, Anatomy & Physiology, and AP Psychology Teacher. She's also the Middle School Girls' Basketball Coach, Assistant Athletic Director, and the CAL Club Advisor.



pedagogical approach resonated with me and is a practice I continue to implement and improve upon in the classroom. I find joy in supporting my students' curiosities about the world around them through exploration, critical thinking, and investigation practices. Having the ability to follow student-driven ideas, questions, and interests facilitates thoughtful and engaged participation from my students. I always encourage my students to ask questions and stay curious.

Q: What's influenced you and directed you towards teaching? What brought you to ULS?

Both of my parents were teachers for the past 35 years. Seeing my parents' passion for education and their continuous encouragement to find a job that I love going to every day had a big impact on my decision to become a teacher. I have always looked up to my teachers throughout school, especially my high school Biology teacher who inspired my love for life science. In college, I found myself readily helping others and forming study groups. I have a passion for working with kids and creating meaningful relationships with others.

My connection with ULS started with an email. As a student teacher, I was looking to get a job for the start of the year and came across an Upper School Biology position at ULS. I knew that I was going to teach three different classes, one being AP Biology, which was a little intimidating. But it turned out to be a great first year!

Q: What at ULS was different from being a student teacher in other schools?

I student-taught at Whitehall High School and the STEM Academy before I started at ULS. When I was driving up Hawk Hill for my interview, I was immediately blown away by the campus and the prospective opportunities ULS had to offer. I felt a sense of comfort and, as someone who grew up in Northern Wisconsin, had an at-home feeling.

Q: What is your favorite thing to do outside of work?

I will take every chance I can to go up North to Boulder Junction to spend time with my mom and dad, sisters, 2 nieces, and 1

Q: Can you share with us your educational background and how it has influenced your teaching philosophy?

I received a Bachelor of Science in Biology at Carroll University in Waukesha, WI. While at Carroll, I had the intention of entering their accelerated PT program; but came to realize that this was not the career path for me. I knew I loved sharing the knowledge I gained from my science courses with others and working with kids so I decided to pursue a teaching career. After completing my undergraduate degree I pursued my MS in Curriculum and Instruction at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I received my teaching license through the MACSTEP program at UW-Milwaukee which is an accelerated science teacher education program. Within MACSTEP, I learned the importance and value of an inquiry-based approach to teaching and learning, and this

nephew. I absolutely love being an aunt and spending as much time as I can with my family. My favorite time to be up North is during the summer when I can be on the lake, golf course, or biking trails, or relaxing by a campfire. I love being outdoors and spending time with family and friends.

Q: Do you coach any sports at ULS?

In my second year, I coached Middle School Girls' Basketball. In my third year, I became the Athletic Directing Assistant and Manager of the Middle School Basketball Program. I like getting kids involved and active in sports. My classroom's student-centered approach translates to my coaching philosophy together with focusing on teamwork.

Q: We understand you are actively involved in the CAL Club. Can you tell us more about the club's objectives and your role in promoting it?

I am the advisor for the Upper School Culture, Art, and Language (CAL) club. CAL club's mission is to create a space where students can explore different cultural traditions and curiosities and to ensure that ULS is a place where everyone feels their heritage is respected, celebrated, and welcome.

There are about 9 Upper School students who are actively involved in the Club and their leadership, cooperation, and enthusiasm to establish an inclusive cultural environment at school is unmatched. My favorite part about the CAL club is that I have learned so much about different cultural topics that have stemmed from student interest or relevance. Some cultural interests the Club has dove into this year are Diwali, Hanukkah, Native American land history and current traditions, and the Chinese New Year.



ULS PUBLISHED AUTHORS *Past & Present*

Written by Nancy Bicha-Dale

You and your families can contribute to the world and your community with your works. ULS wishes to honor who you are and what you created.

Since its creation, ULS has fostered intellectual curiosity, creativity, and critical reflection. (I will never forget the student groans when Dr. Ellen Langill demanded primary source research, and Leroy Haley tossed sub-standard papers into the air calling for re-writes.) High expectations for students' production resound in classrooms to this day, at all grade levels.

Many past and present students, faculty and parents are published authors. The types of books vary from graphic novels to medical studies to history treatises, and many more.

ULS requests that you or a friend / family member send a copy of your published book to University Lake School, Attention: Administrative Office. ULS will prominently display the book(s) for all to peruse.

**4024 Nagawicka Road
P.O.Box 290
Hartland, Wisconsin 53029**





Leave your mark on future Lakers.

Create a lasting legacy of meaning to you and maximize the benefit of available tax incentives by making a planned gift today.

The de Peyster Society was formed in honor of University Lake School's first Head, Joseph B. de Peyster, and recognizes the growing number of Lakers and Laker friends who have designated ULS as a beneficiary in their will or estate plan.

Interested in making a planned gift or have you already made plans to do so? Please let us know by contacting Abby Schlater, at abby.schlater@universitylake.org.



In Honor of Those We've Lost

WE EXTEND OUR DEEPEST SYMPATHY TO THOSE WHO LOST A LOVED ONE THIS PAST ACADEMIC YEAR, AND WE HONOR THEIR MEMORY.

CLAIRE P. GREENE

January 19, 2023

Past Parent, Volunteer

SCOTT W. JACOBS '67

October 21, 2023

Alumni

HARRY L. JOHNSON '66

March 22, 2023

Alumni

DESIREE A. SILVA '09

November 14, 2023

Alumni

SALLY S. MANEGOLD

December 3, 2023

Founding Family, Past Parent, Grandparent, Volunteer

The inspiring legacy of Sally and Bob Manegold will be featured in the next issue of The Laker.

CONNOR J. MASARICH '14

May 12, 2023

Alumni

ARTHUR A. ORUM '64

December 30, 2023

Alumni

STEVEN TOMASINI

May 20, 2023

Former Staff

DANE VERMILLION '85

January 1, 2024

Alumni

RICHARD C. BARKOW

July 29, 2023

Past Parent, Grandparent, Volunteer

PATRICK J. MORAN '73

January 29, 2024

Alumni

NOEL W. BRYANT-NANZ '14

September 14, 2023

Alumni

Have we missed someone? Please let us know by contacting Abby Schlater, Assistant Director of Alumni and Donor Relations, at abby.schlater@universitylake.org.





4024 Nagawicka Road
P.O. Box 290
Hartland, WI 53029-0290

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
MILWAUKEE, WI
PERMIT NO. 5654

If you would like to advertise your business in the future publications of The Laker, please reach out to Yulia Pavlova: yulia.pavlova@universitylake.org

Young alumni/parents: if you/your child graduated from University Lake School and no longer lives at home, please share their current address with us so we can add them to our Laker mailing list.

Visit universitylake.org/for-alumni and click "Update" under the Connect section. Thank you!