



# Onaway Area Schools Alumni Association

April 2011  
Volume 16

## Alum of the Year

The OAASA Board is pleased to announce its 2011 honoree for Alum of the Year. The Board chose Dr. Napoleon Chagnon, Professor Emeritus of Anthropology at the University of Santa Barbara. Now retired (sort of) and living in Traverse City, "Nap"

as he is known to family and friends, will be honored at the Alumni Tent on the Fourth of July, somewhere near wherever the parade route ends up being this year. Stop by to catch up or meet Onaway's most famous anthropologist.

## More Help For Our School From OAASA

This year, the board decided to help the school directly with grants to individual classrooms. Teachers and students were invited to submit proposals for a class project that would enhance education but could probably not be funded from other sources. Here are the two projects that were chosen:

The OHS band, under the direction of Jennifer Smercina, applied for funds to update the percussion section. Years of use had resulted in broken and missing bits, and the band wants to shine for parades and concerts in 2011. With the

funds OASAA provided, they should look sharp in their Fourth of July outing this year.

The OHS Environmental Studies class had ideas to make the school more eco-friendly. This class oversees many areas of "greening" the school, like recycling, but they wanted to add some things that might sound odd but are effective, like bat houses and worms for composting. This project is taking off, and with the funds OASAA provided, the group was able to get a matching grant from the state, doubling their efforts.

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"The school is the last expenditure upon which America should be willing to economize."  
Franklin D. Roosevelt

**Did you notice?**  
Your address label has a year on it that tells when your dues are paid.

## Tree Planted To Honor Fred Elowsky

Members of the Onaway Class of 1989 planted a tree on the school grounds to honor Fred Elowsky, long-time coach and Onaway alumnus. Here's what alum Candy (Curtis) Faith told us about the project.

"When Fred passed away unexpectedly, it shocked the whole town. He was such a great friend to so many people. He did so much for this community as far as supporting school functions, even after his daughters, Jackie and Jennifer, graduated.

I wanted to do something for the family as a remembrance for his honor and dedication. I called some fellow classmates from 1989, and they donated money. We purchased a maple tree and planted it by the football stadium entrance. It is there for all to see and remember what a great guy Fred Elowsky was. The plaque that sits beneath the tree reads:

In loving memory of Fred Elowsky (01-28-42-09-27-09): May your roots run deep and your branches wide, for always being there. We will always cherish you and your guidance for all of our lives. Never to be forgotten-Class of 1989."

## Onaway Memories

We want to thank Virginia Kapalla Minor of Grand Marais for this memory of her school days, and we welcome others who want to share their memories as well. Virginia writes:

"My mother and dad were Joe and Elizabeth Kapalla, and I lived on North Second Street. My uncle, Frank Kapalla, lived a few doors down from us, and both he and my dad worked for the D&M Railroad.

How many days I would hear the school bell ringing and dash from my house, down the alley by Douglas Porter's house, and down another alley. I would come out by the A&P Store, cross the main street and down to the corner where Margaret Johnson Greenwood lived, make a right, turn left at the next block, and run up to the beautiful brick school. That has to be almost a mile of running!

Maple tree planted to honor Fred Elowsky



Varsity Girls' Basketball Team, 1992 with coach Fred Elowsky: Becky Rogers, Renee Schell, Kristy Szymoniak, Tricia Whitsitt, Rena Rygwelski, Tracy Pardike, Nicole DeHart, Shannon Miller, Jennifer Elowsky, Lisa Elowsky, Cara Porter and Kim Szymoniak

I don't remember any teacher mentioning me being late. When I was in elementary grades, we played on the swings, teeter-totters, slides, etc. at recess on the west side of the school. I remember in kindergarten or first grade, Margaret Johnson taking us over to her house for a pony ride one time.

I'm glad we had the advantage of going to school in a small town. Being able to roller skate on main street sidewalks, such as the smooth cement squares by Dr. Carpenter's house and office; playing baseball in the field on N. First St., where the creamery was built later; and playing on the high snow banks by Ray Young's gas station were good memories.

I graduated in 1950 with about forty others, and the ceremony was on the front lawn, an unusual happening nowadays, most being inside."

Virginia Kapalla Minor

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## Feedback From Our Spotlight Teacher From December

Letter #1-There is one teacher in each person's life that made a very important contribution. Don Baker was the one in mine. He provided an opportunity to reach out and grow that students from a little town like Onaway needed very much. Without Don Baker, our science club would not have had the opportunities that it did. Thank you, Don!

Dick Chowen

Letter #2-As I think back to 1961 and before, Onaway High School had outstanding teachers, and Don Baker was a gem. He was smart, witty, dedicated, and challenging. He saw, understood, and smiled as his plants grew and the flowers blossomed. The unusual course he taught in geology is useful to me a half century later. And who else would gamely sponsor a wild bunch known as the Onaway High School Science Club, as we built unheard of stuff like a RamJet engine, Tesla coil, hydroponic garden, topology math brain teasers, magnetically propelled rockets, and other marvels of the time that blitzed the regional competition in Traverse City?

The headline in Stutesman's *Onaway News* told the story. The RamJet engine, fired by raw gas and a

spark plug in a stovepipe hooked to a fan, was so imposing that judges at the state JETS (Junior Engineering Technical Society) Exposition awarded us a prize to not demonstrate how it worked, to the relief of the East Lansing Fire Department. Apparently, it was known that the Onaway Fire Department had been previously called out during a trial burn. As an MSU graduate, Don Baker was devilishly amused; his students had broken the barrier and were outside the box, en route to the outer space.

Don Baker wanted us to think, be creative, and achieve success in life. He did a wonderful job in that regard, letting a thousand flowers bloom. He takes delight in keeping up with who is doing what to whom and where. Talking to him, even after a year or two has slipped by, is like continuing a conversation from yesterday. He never forgets and just picks up where he left off previously.

Soon Kwang-Ja does the same thing, and she is a special person in the community as well. Onaway is fortunate to have both of them in its midst, and we owe them immense gratitude for making a difference and keeping hope alive. Thank you, Don Baker and Soon Kwang-Ja: You are Great!!

John David

## Board Members Added—More Needed

Late in 2010, OASAA added Patrick Kondratko as a trustee. We welcome him to the board and want to use this opportunity to invite others interested in joining to let us know. OASAA is a great entity, and we keep hearing that from former graduates, but new ideas and new faces are welcome.

If you are interested in finding out what we do, please attend a meeting (our next one will be May 16, 2011 in the school's media center) and consider working "to celebrate and support our school."

## Your Dues In Action Scholarship

In March, the OASAA board interviewed three very well-qualified candidates who will graduate in 2011. The board's decision will be announced at award

ceremonies on May 18 at the school. Each recipient receives \$500 to help with expenses for the first year of study beyond high school.

## Spotlight Class: 1983

### OASAA Information

#### Board Members:

President Peg Herring  
V.P. Laura Reid  
Secretary Sara LaLonde  
Treasurer Susan Nelson  
Membership Chair Sandi Everingham  
Trustees Tom Moran  
Patrick Kondratko  
Carl Anderson  
Debbie Nash

Liaison Member Marty Mix

We're on the  
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[www.oasaa.org](http://www.oasaa.org)

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**"Working together to  
celebrate and support our  
schools."**

The Class of '83 was full of lively individuals with a variety of talents and interests. If you wanted something done well and right away, you went to Penny Marek or Mike Hall. If you were looking for a laugh, you might try Kristi Hyde or Pete Breed, and if you wanted to see athletic excellence, you'd hunt up Jim Winter or Teresa Schaar.

Musical talent showed in a band of about seventy-five students, almost thirty of them seniors. Exchange students Caroline Anderson and Christof Roessler added interest to the year, offering comparisons of life in the U.S. with their home countries, Sweden and Germany respectively. OHS was strong in sports in those days, with both football teams holding a 7-2 record as well as competitive teams in most other sports as well.

The '83 yearbook reports that the teaching staff at the time had 744.5 years' experience. Although all the teachers had their fans, one popular guy of the time was Thomas McCurdy, a science teacher with a strange but entertaining style. Mr. McCurdy might be known to set up a prank from time to time, surprising students and staff alike.

The class made a trip to Toronto together to close out their time in high school. Everyone who went has a few stories to tell, of course, but it was definitely a weekend to remember.

Graduation day heralded the success of all, with Karen Ball, Barbara Wregglesworth, and Carrie Freel leading the way. The class was on its way to the World, to take their liveliness, their creativity, and their humor into every corner of the globe.



Class of '83 25 Reunion:

Nola Grimm, Sandi Jarvis, Sandy Lechich,  
Melinda Fenstermaker, Becky Combs

1982-83 Exchange student Caroline  
Anderson with friend Elaine Timpf.

