

# St. Margaret Mary Spirit



Fall 2016

A Publication for the Alumni of St. Margaret Mary Catholic School, Omaha, NE

Vol. 1, Issue 12

## Four Generations at SMM

By Nan Tiedeman

The Brownrigg/Thurmond Family has a very unique distinction. They have four generations of St. Margaret Mary alumni who graduated over a 77 year time span. The alumni are; Jean O'Neal Thurmond ('39), John Brownrigg ('62), Jennifer Brownrigg Miera ('85), Kate Brownrigg Parker ('99) and Lauren Brownrigg ('16). Other family members have also attended SMM, including Lauren's father, Brian.



The base of the tree is Jean O'Neal Thurmond, one of six O'Neal girls who lived in a small house on 50th St. The girls managed to get ready for school ev-

ery morning with only one bathroom. They walked to the original SMM School building at 50th and California. Jean O'Neal Thurmond was the mother of Elizabeth "Betsy" Thurmond, who married John Brownrigg. Thus the tree branches out to the Brownrigg family.

When asked for their favorite memory, John remembered an announcement over the PA system that the Fitzgibbons family, after 7 boys, finally had a baby girl. That baby girl was Janie Fitzgibbons Mikuls ('75), wife of current faculty member, Greg Mikuls.

Jennifer was excited when the hot lunch program began. The days of packing PB&Js were over. Brian loved being greeted every morning by Mr. McCormack. He would always be in the old entryway smiling and singing a tune. Kate and Lauren noted that they were members of great classes. Kate's highlight was the 8th graduation and dance. Lauren enjoyed being close to all her friends.

On the opposite side, John's least favorite memory was a classmate being trapped under a giant snowball. The ball was approximately 7 feet x 4 feet. Students rolled it

down the east slope of the school during recess. When they reached the area where the soccer fields area is now located it started to tip over. All but one of the kids was able to get out of its way. The one who did not was trapped under a huge mound of snow. Fortunately it only took a few minutes for the teachers and students to dig him out.

Other "dislikes" included Jennifer's 3rd grade timed multiplication drills. Brian recalled receiving his first detention. Mr. Vogel sent him to Sr. Mary Helen's office for picking at the linoleum on the gym floor. He remembers Sr. Mary Helen and his teacher, Sr. Celine, staring down at him and talking as if he were not there. They were trying to determine the appropriate punishment. He did not understand their conversation, but quickly figured out that a detention was not good. It was his one and only. Kate disliked casual days since she almost always forgot and arrived in her uniform. Lauren felt that it was too easy to get detentions for homework related reasons.

Favorite teachers over the years included Miss Rochford who was very stern and demanding, but also had a heart of gold; Mrs. Schall who had a jar of hard candies on her desk...which the students quickly found were granted for well-timed coughing fits; Mrs. Cuadrado who was extremely warm and kind; and Mrs. Meysenburg who was so much fun.

When asked to think about the school today versus when the alumni graduated, John explained that the auditorium used to be an auditorium. It was used for plays, movies, etc. The lunch area was in the basement. There was only a carport shelter on the west side where kids could be dropped off or picked up by parents.

Though Kate knows there have been many updates and changes since she left, she says it still looks and feels the same. Brian said what hasn't change is that the auditorium still smells like baloney.

When asked to select one word to describe SMM, the top choice was "family." "Caring" and "community" were also cited. Brian summarized the family's thoughts by stating, "It's such a welcoming, enduring community of which we hope to be a part of for many more generations." Thank you to the Thurmond/Brownrigg family for their commitment to Catholic education, to St. Margaret Mary School and Parish through the years and their contributions to this article!

### In the Loop...Do you have an interesting update on an SMM alum...

Or other news or memories to share? We welcome your additions to the newsletter. Please send to alumni@smmomaha.org.

We are accepting memorials, honors & donations. Please send to: St. Margaret Mary School 6116 Dodge Street Omaha, NE 68132

### School Wish List

There are so many ways you can help SMM. Currently we need to replace the carpet and paint all classrooms.

If you would like to help with these items please send a contribution to: SMM, Attn: Peggy Grennan/Wish List 123 N. 61st St, Omaha, NE 68132.

Your support and any donation is greatly appreciated!

### St. Margaret Mary Spirit

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### Notable Alum Accomplishments

Taylor Stormberg '05 is the Director of Annual Funds at Creighton Prep. Taylor is part of a long line of Stormbergs who have walked the halls at Prep. He brings great desire and enthusiasm to his new role.

Megan Spelic, SMM Class of 2005, made her first profession of Vows with the Little Sisters. She is now Sister Bernadette Rose Spelic. She will be going to Newark, DE for her first assignment serving the elderly.

Thanks for your newsletter. I'm one of the 14 graduates from 1947 and from the old school! My favorite teachers were Sister Jean Marie and Sister Josepha. I have fond memories of SMM and the processions we were in and how we had to memorize all the songs we sang. I did graduate in the new church and have been back a couple times. Submitted by: Alice Birdener (Hasenjager), 1947

### Upcoming Reunions

Following are the classes that have upcoming milestone reunions in 2017:

2007 - 10 yr.; 1997 - 20 yr.; 1987 - 30 yr.;

1977 - 40 yr.; 1967 - 50 yr.; 1957 - 60 yr.

If you would be interested in planning a reunion for your class please email: alumni@smmomaha.org.

**Email Request!** If you received a paper copy of this newsletter in the mail please send us your email as we would like to begin sending our newsletter electronically. Please send your email to: dschinzel@smmomaha.org.

## Reunions...Reunions...Reunions Celebrating 50 Years Class of 1966



Here's a recap of the Class of '66 Reunion Weekend: At graduation, the class had 92 members – some moved in 6-8th grades, but we still claim them. Eleven members have passed. 34 made it to at least one of the reunion events. People traveled from Iowa, Missouri, Virginia, Florida, Arizona, and Pennsylvania. Friday evening was a casual get-together at The Phoenix (owned by class member Bob Freshman). Saturday morning a "walk with Ward" (Peters) through the old neighborhoods. We went by each of the homes of the walk participants. (There were 12-15 of us.) Saturday - tour of the school with Peggy Grennan. Then they attended 5:00 Mass. Two class members (Jo Roza and Cathy Beck) sang from the choir loft with John Beck and Ralph Roza. Then off to dinner at Lo Sole Mio. The Undertakers – a class "garage band" from grade school – played a set of the greatest hits of the 60s and 70s. Sunday, ten class members met at the lake home of Bill McGargill for barbeque and more conversation.

## SMM Principal and an Alumnus Receive Awards at Prep's Loyola Dinner of Honor and Distinction



SMM Principal, Peggy Grennan, was awarded the Ancilla Domini Honor for dedication to faith, family and community. SMM Alumnus, Sean Mullen, Class of '70 (far right) was a Hall of Fame inductee. Congratulations on these honors!

**Your contributions are welcome. Thank you for your Support! Please send to: St. Margaret Mary School 6116 Dodge Street, Omaha, NE 68132**

## Celebrating 40 Years Class of 1976



From left to right: Joe Finocciaro, Liz Beitenman Mckillips, Dr. Pete McLeay, Molly Egan Witt, Joe Klosner, Gen. Judd Lyons, Kristin Bergquist, Tom Kenny, Joe Casey, Tom Ervin.

On September 16, the Class of 1976 had its 40th Reunion. It was celebrated by about 10 alumni and some of their spouses at Gorat's Steak House in Omaha. All had such a wonderful time talking and reconnecting that no one even thought of ordering dinner, instead snacking on heavy hors d'oeuvres and animated conversation. Prior to Gorat's the group received a special tour of the school led by Peggy Grennan. They all marvelled at their memories of the enveloping green tiles, paints and colors, as well as Msgr. Suneg's masterful woodwork and the "tornado tunnel." All were impressed not only by the new library, replete with Apple laptops, but also the old card catalogue and the many major improvements over the past four decades. Following Gorat's, a hearty subset of the original dinner group headed to the Holiday Lounge to continue the revelry. The following Sunday, Fr. Gabuzda celebrated the Mass in honor of the Class and offered special prayers for our deceased classmates, Jenny Carlson, Colleen McCarthy and Mary Beth Quinn. Archbishop Cupich (soon to be cardinal), who concelebrated the original graduation Mass in 1976, was unable to attend but offered his blessings to the first students he taught after the seminary.

## Alumni Update...

If my understanding of our history is correct, our 1960 class of 56 students included nine students who obtained law degrees, five students who obtained medical degrees, and one student, Jim Brown, who received both a medical and a legal degree. Submitted by: Jim Fenlon, 1960

## In Memoriam

It is with great sadness we remember these alumni who have recently passed. Please remember them & their families in your prayers.



Anna Abbott Class of 2012



Mary Beth Quinn Weber  
Class of 1976

- Dr. James Regan Class of 1954
- William Brennan Class of 1950



## From the Principal

By Peggy Grennan

Dear Alumni,

Our theme this year is Do SmALL Things with Great Love! The classrooms are figuring out ways to live our theme: What are some of the small ways they can show great love? – smiling at someone, saying a prayer for someone, helping someone, letting people play a game, picking up trash, recycling, and being kind are just a few of the ways they will live out our theme.

New Teachers and Staff this year:

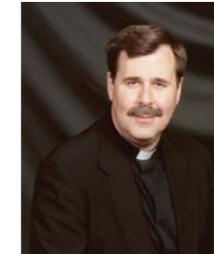
- 2nd grade Teacher - Mrs. Kristin Huber replacing Mrs. Joanie Knowles who retired.
- 4th grade Teacher - Ms. Cece Bartek replacing Miss Franco who got married and moved.
- Mrs. Carey Hernandez has been hired as SMM's first part-time Art Teacher!
- 1st grade TA - Mrs. Ela Ripp, Ms. Tina Scherr
- 2nd grade TA - Mrs. Anne Fangman, Mrs. Kelly Gering, Mrs. Ali Britt
- 3rd grade TA - Mr. David Henry

Highlights:

- The crisp fall air is invigorating everyone – especially the PE classes. They are going to run a marathon this year (in total) by running or walking four laps around the building (in good weather) and in the gym or Raynor (in inclement weather), every time they have PE class. By the end of the school year, each child will have run, walked, etc. 26 miles!
- The 3rd grade performed their music program for us on October 27.
- The kindergarten has been to the pumpkin patch and attended their first all-school Mass.
- 2nd grade is preparing for their First Reconciliation in November.
- K-8 continues working on their writing skills. All grades have taken a fall writing assessment, which our Writing Curriculum Committee helped develop. The students will also take a spring assessment as well.
- We are so excited to have Mrs. Hernandez teaching art to K-8 once a week!
- The hallways are alive with color and the elements of art
- Work continues on our school's strategic plan and our accreditation visit next spring.
- Our Monarch butterfly weigh station received another year of funding from an NCEA grant. The 3rd graders love feeding the caterpillars milkweed, watching a chrysalis form and a butterfly hatch, then tagging it and letting go. They use their math skills and are learning the importance of taking care of God's creation. Follow us on Facebook at St. Margaret Mary Monarch Meadow or Twitter.
- The 8th grade English classes are studying the descriptive essay through analysis of Pope Francis's Papal Encyclical Laudato Si'.
- You can follow us on Facebook at St. Margaret Mary Elementary School and Twitter @SMMschoolOmaha

Thank you for keeping us in your prayers,

*Peggy Grennan*



## From the Pastor

By Father Greg Baxter

Dear St. Margaret Mary School Alumni,

As I write this letter it is a cool autumn day in Omaha and the leaves on our majestic trees here on campus are beginning to turn into their beautiful fall colors. As we enjoy our autumn weather and prepare for the winter, I wanted to send you my greetings and also ask for your support.

St. Margaret Mary Parish and School have just embarked on a capital campaign to enhance our parish and school endowment which currently stands at 2 million dollars. Only earnings from the endowment such as dividends, interest, and capital gains will be spent. All gifts to the endowment will continue to draw earnings in perpetuity. This is a wonderful opportunity to give thanks to those teachers and religious sisters who have helped us blaze our path in life and to also help prepare for the future Catholic education of our children.

While some of the campaign will directly help enhance the pastoral life of the parish, much of the campaign will assist the school in many ways. For example, it has been a major goal over the past 20 years to achieve a base teacher compensation equal to 90 percent of the Omaha Public Schools base for the prior school year. Unfortunately, this goal has been difficult to achieve through parish operating revenues. Currently, St. Margaret Mary's School base teacher compensation is 78.5 percent of last year's OPS base.

Achieving the following goals in the Endowment Campaign will allow us to do the following:

Adding \$4 million to the endowment will fund annual compensation increases over a 10-year period to reach approximately 80 percent of the estimated OPS base and provide an additional \$15,000 towards education and curriculum needs.

Adding \$6 million to the endowment will fund annual compensation increases over a 10-year period to reach approximately 85 percent of the estimated OPS base and provide funding for a full-time language teacher for the school.

Adding \$8 million to the endowment will fund annual compensation increases over a 10-year period to reach approximately 90 percent of the estimated OPS base and provide funding for a full-time art teacher for the school.

Given this need, I will be asking our St. Margaret Mary School Alumni to prayerfully consider helping us reach our goals for the school portion of the campaign. I will send you additional information on the campaign in November and look forward to hearing from you.

Enjoy the pleasant autumn weather and God bless you!

*Fr. Greg*

**SMM & Social Media: visit our Facebook Page St. Margaret Mary - SMM Omaha Alumni. Also follow us on Twitter @SMMschoolOmaha. There is also a school blog you can find at: [blog.http://stmargaretmaryparish.blogspot.com](http://stmargaretmaryparish.blogspot.com)**