A Thoroughly Modern Millie
From the Class of 1955

Interview by Tom Daly

Millie Bjergen Caspersen was born in Minneapolis’ Swedish Hospital on January 2, 1937. She was the first child of Magnus and Margit Bjergen who married and settled in Minneapolis after emigrating from Norway. Three more children followed: Nancy and the twins, Joan and John. Millie’s mom said that every time Franklin D. Roosevelt got elected president, she got pregnant (1936, 1940 and 1944).

Millie grew up in Prospect Park and loved the neighborhood. The hilly streets and alleys topped by Tower Hill with its witch’s hat water tower reminded her family of Norway. It was a great neighborhood where kids could play outside all day and no one worried about their safety.

In those days Millie’s closest friends were Liz Jackson and Judy Brackney. They went to Sidney Pratt Grade School along with quite a few future Marshallites including Ken Holkestad, Carole Keay, Allen Kienitz, Mary Lohn and Barbara Pelak.

Millie, a petite, blue-eyed blond, was very shy during her early years, and her mother used several tactics to help Millie overcome her shyness. One tactic was to have Millie answer the family’s telephone and another was to have Millie phone in the family’s grocery order to the local grocery store. On one occasion, Millie’s mom sent her alone downtown to pick up and pay for an item that her mother had ordered.

Millie spoke very fondly of her mother who died of cancer rather suddenly when Millie was seventeen. Millie said her mother loved to read, was very funny, and deeply loved and valued her friends and family.

Millie recalled how her mother gave all the kids chores to do around the house: dusting, washing dishes, dry mopping, and laundry. Of all the household chores, Millie still enjoys doing laundry: sorting clothes, folding clean laundry and putting things away in their proper place. She feels that she inherited from her mother an “organizing gene.”

Although Millie says she is an introvert, at Marshall she seemed to lose her shyness as she became involved in extracurricular activities. They included being in Silver Tri and Blue Tri, and being elected Blue Tri president as a senior. She served on the student council and sang in the choir. She became sports editor on “The Judge,” the school newspaper, and served on the yearbook staff. As a senior, Millie became a cheerleader and was chosen Homecoming Queen.

Millie enjoyed her years at Marshall, especially being editor of the sports pages. And she really liked Miss Chapman who taught journalism and moderated “The Judge.” Millie took Latin and chemistry because she wanted to become a nurse. Miss Simonet (Latin) and Mr. Mikelson (chemistry) were among her favorite teachers as was Mrs. Anderson (modern problems) who was really liked by nearly everyone.
Millie had lots of friends at Marshall, but in our interview Liz Jackson, Jan Hathaway, Marg Caspersen, Anne Moellman, and Jack Brown seemed to top her list of friends. Paul Giel, Minnesota football great, was not one of Millie’s close friends, but she said he caused quite a bit of excitement when he bought a ticket from her at the Varsity Theater where she worked during her junior year.

Millie wanted to become a nurse from the time she was eight or nine years old. She recalls being jealous of Liz Jackson in grade school because Liz had a “nurse’s watch.” (A nurse’s watch has a second hand that a nurse uses when taking a patient’s pulse.) Millie’s preparation also included reading all the Cherry Ames, Student Nurse novels.

By the time she was a senior at Marshall, Millie was pretty well prepared to become a nurse except for one thing, she didn’t know what to do next. That’s where Mrs. Leemhuis, Marshall’s guidance counselor, came in.

In the spring of 1955, Mrs. Leemhuis called Millie into her office and asked her what she wanted to do after high school. Millie told her that she wanted to become a nurse.

“Have you applied anywhere?” Mrs. Leemhuis asked. “No, I don’t know what to do,” Millie said.

“I think you should go to Northwestern Hospital School of Nursing,” said Mrs. Leemhuis. And with help from Mrs. Leemhuis, that’s exactly what Millie did. Recently Millie said, “Mrs. Leemhuis was pivotal in my getting where I got.”

Millie lived in a dormitory at Northwestern with other student nurses and made a number of lifelong friends. After more than fifty years, they continue to get together several times a year and enjoy each others company.

They graduated in 1958 and Millie began working full time at Northwestern Hospital. That year, 1958, was also the year that she married Paul Caspersen whose sister, Margaret, was one of Millie’s best friends.

For the next six years, Millie worked at Northwestern while Paul earned his Master’s degree in Social Work and began his career in Family Court Services in Hennepin County. When their daughter Dana was born in 1964, Millie cut back her nursing career to part time. Their son John was born in 1967 and Todd in 1970.

Millie decided to refine her nursing skills and focus on mental health nursing. She entered the Master’s degree program at the University of Minnesota School of Nursing. In 1978 Millie Caspersen earned her Master’s degree and joined the Crisis Intervention Center at Hennepin County Medical Center. She worked full time with patients who had serious mental health issues until 2002. At the time of her retirement, Millie’s supervisor praised her as a “shining example” of a clinical mental health nurse.

Millie’s compassion for people
Millie is chosen the Queen of the Class of 1955. Presenting her with her crown is Barbara Heider.

Lifelong friends: Millie Caspersen, Anne Lindgren and Janice Ott.

Millie and lucky friend from Henry High.
in crisis situations was not limited to patients in Hennepin County. On three occasions she took a leave from her work at the Crisis Center to help people in need of mental health services in refugee camps in other parts of the world. Twice she traveled to Thailand (1983, 1987) to help people in crisis, and then in 1992 she went to Uganda in Africa to help refugees who were victims of the horrors of Rwanda. Altogether Millie spent about eight months working with patients in refugee camps.

In addition to being caring and compassionate, Millie is determined and fearless. Perhaps the practice of yoga has helped her become the person she is. She is committed to its discipline, and she traveled to an ashram in Pennsylvania for twelve years in a row for weeklong retreats. Three times Millie went to an ashram in Rishikesh in northern India. “Yoga,” she said, “is an important thing in my life.”

During the years following her retirement, Millie continued to help out at the Crisis Center, but also traveled frequently to be with family members including her one grandchild, Magnus, who is the apple of her eye. She continues to care for friends and neighbors, and she volunteers at an animal shelter.

Over the years, Millie Caspersen has shown how to be a good daughter, sister, wife, mother, grandmother, nurse, yoga practitioner, and lifelong friend.

During our interview, Millie recalled how a number of years ago, she and Paul went to the Dominican Republic to visit their son Todd who was serving there with the Peace Corps. They were going to stay overnight in a very primitive location when someone asked Todd, “What about your mother?”

Todd replied, “You don’t have to worry about my mother.” The memory brought a smile to Millie’s face and her blue eyes sparkled.
Future members of Marshall High’s Class of 1955 were Confirmed together at Prospect Park Methodist Church.

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Can you find Barbara Pelak, Carole Keay, Ken Holkestad, Allen Kienitz, Mary Lohn, and Millie Bjergen?

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A bouquet of beauties in the Spring of 1955 on Margery Baker’s front porch

Front Row: Margery Baker, Anne Moellman, Liz Jackson, Millie Bjergen, Pat Clough, Jean Upton, Barbara Pelak, Jan Hathaway.

Middle row: Jackie Norman, Carol Wray, Arlene Kavensky, Evonne Jorgensen, Marg Caspersen.

Top row: Jeanie Murray, Mary Lohn, Peg Desmond, Arlene Thorkelson, Jackie Hreha.
The Marshall
Now Leasing

David Klabanoff, the community manager of The Marshall, was very happy to spend a few minutes describing the complex of apartments, townhomes and retail spaces that are being built on the site of our alma mater, Marshall High School. David and his assistant, Aly Klinker, are staffing the temporary leasing office at 405 14th Avenue SE in Dinkytown.

David said that The Marshall will include 316 apartments and 50,000 square feet of retail space plus an indoor swimming pool, indoor basketball court, a computer lab, a resident lounge, a sand volleyball court, an outdoor grilling area and other amenities. There will be one, two, three and four bedroom apartments. All apartments will be fully furnished including kitchens with granite countertops and stainless steel appliances. There will a number of different layouts and some apartments will have balconies. The Marshall will comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) by providing a number of apartments designed to accommodate residents with disabilities.

The lease for a one bedroom apartment will be $1,135 per month. Apartments with more than one bedroom will cost $775 per bedroom. For a complete understanding of the range of possible layouts and leases, a prospective resident should contact David or Aly at the leasing office or at www.LiveThe-Marshall.com. Their office is open Monday through Friday, 10 am to 6 pm and on Saturday from 10 am to 5 pm.

If you want to get a good idea of what The Marshall’s apartments will look like, stop by the leasing office. David and Aly will be happy to show you the plans; they even have a mock-up of a one bedroom apartment.

David mentioned that a few relics of Marshall High School were retained to be used in the new complex. They include part of an archway, a section of flooring from the basketball court, and a trophy case. Perhaps Minneapolis school officials could think of a way to put some of Marshall’s trophies back in that trophy case.
To access disability Services Web Page and the page containing MHS Alumni News issues, type this web address in the web address bar. Next click on the item John Marshall Newsletter(s).

John Marshall Newsletter(s) dating back to the January Issue of year 2007 and will progress up to this, latest issue January 1, 2014. ENJOY!
MAEF Scholarships Announced

On September 24, 2013 at the University of Minnesota’s Sports Pavilion, 26 students received a total of over $60,000 in scholarships from Disability Services. Three of the students received $1,000 Marshall Access and Education Fund (MAEF) scholarships for the 2013-2014 academic year. The students who received the MAEF scholarships are Kelli Blankenship, John Charles Rock, and Rhea Smykalski.

Kelli Blankenship is majoring in dental hygiene through the School of Dentistry. Kelli is a first generation college student. She knows in her heart that dental hygiene is her calling and works hard every day to overcome the challenges she faces. Kelli calls MAEF support “a powerful gift” and one day, when she can, she hopes to support someone else’s education. Kelli plans to graduate in 2014.

John Charles Rock will graduate this year with a master’s degree in public health. Next fall John plans to attend law school at the U of M where he will continue working for social justice. Specifically, John “would like to focus on disability, discrimination, mental health, poverty and HIV/AIDS law.”

Rhea Symkalski is an undergraduate student working toward becoming a researcher of animal behavior or marine ecosystem ecology. Rhea is a first generation college student who is a member of the honor society Phi Theta Kappa. She calls herself “determined” in pursuit of her education and career goals. She sees MAEF’s gift as an opportunity to reach her full potential, in her words: “…not only as a student, but also as a member of the community.”

Each of these scholars has amazing gifts to offer our community. The University is fortunate to be on the receiving end of that relationship. Their experiences and their triumphs are sometimes both heartwarming and heartbreaking. Because of the generosity of Marshall alumni and friends, these students and the University community are richer and better prepared to meet the world...Thank you past Marshall students for your generosity to the MAEF Scholarship fund!

Class of 1955 Begins Planning for 60th Reunion

On November 22, 2013, the Class of 1955 had its first planning meeting over lunch at Kafe 421 in Dinkytown. The committee began the process by deciding that Thursday, August 13, 2015 will be the date for the main event of the reunion which for the first time will begin in the early afternoon and probably conclude before dark. Fortunately, dark comes pretty late in early August.

The particulars of the reunion have not been decided although the early favorite venue appears to be Jax Café on University Avenue NE. Related reunion activities such as a boat ride on the Mississippi, picnics, golf, and tours were also under discussion. The planning committee is very open to new ideas and to new members joining the committee. We really appreciate hearing from members of other classes about good places to go and good things to do.

The current committee members are Joel and Eleanor Westerberg, Janice Ott, Anne Lindgren, Millie Caspersen, Carl Ahlberg, Bob Lerfald, Ron Andersen, Otto Lausten, and Tom Daly. If you would like to serve on the planning committee, please contact any of the committee members and include your phone number and email address. You can also contact Tom Daly at 952-884-5016 or email him at tmdaly@q.com. Tom says, “Half of the fun of class reunions is being on the planning committee.”
**Coming Class Reunion Celebrations**

Marshall & MUHS Class Reunion Announcements—

“All School”, ’51 ’53, ’54, ’67

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Marshall U-High All School Reunion will be held on March 9th, 10th and 11th, 2015 at the Riverside Casino in Laughlin NV mark these dates on your calendar and watch for upcoming information in the May 2014 and future issues. Sharon (Butler) Padulah ’54 email: slpadula@yahoo.com.

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The Marshall Class of 1951 held a pre-Christmas get together at Jax Café on December 9th. “Before everyone takes off for the warm climates” reported Ardie Swenson Lilja.

The Marshall Class of 1951 held a pre-Christmas get together at Jax Café on December 9th. “Before everyone takes off for the warm climates” reported Ardie Swenson Lilja.

The weekend of Sept 27, 28 and 29, 2013 found the MHS Class of 1953 celebrating their 60th class reunion. On Friday noon a luncheon was enjoyed by about 50 classmates, spouses and friends at the Ramada Plaza at 35W and Industrial Blvd, N.E.

Saturday afternoon we cruised the Mississippi River aboard the Minneapolis Queen. It was raining, but the boat was enclosed, so that was no problem. The paddleboat is red and white--our school colors!

The Black Bear Crossings Restaurant on Como Lake near Como Park was the site of a coffee party on Sunday afternoon for the conclusion of the reunion weekend.

Classmates came from as far away as Florida, Arizona, Colorado and Virginia. (Continued on top of next column.)

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MHS Class of 1954 will hold their 60th class reunion on Sept. 11th and 12th, 2014, Watch for more updates in the May issue. Any questions call: Shirley (Stemper) Rasmussen 763-493-4562, Lyman Swenson, 763-441-1481, Sharon (Butler) Padula, 763-486-9141. Please pass the information on to all of our classmates.

Marshall Class of 1957 says “We plan to have another fun reunion in 2017, and hope that every classmate will mark August 26, 2017 on their calendar and make every effort to attend. A number of classmates who were unable to attend the 45th reunion promised to see us in 2017. We look forward to seeing you there too.” [www.marshallclassof67.org](http://www.marshallclassof67.org)

This website is intended to be a continuing work in progress through 2017 so classmates may update their personal and contact information (with their desired level of privacy) and stay in touch with other classmates, in addition to reliving memories of the 40th and 45th reunions.

We had so much fun being together that we are already planning a 65th reunion in 2018!

We also meet for lunch at 1:00 pm at Jax on the third Wednesday of every other month (January, March, May, July September and November). No reservations are necessary, and everyone is welcome.

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The Marshall Classes of 1948 (Jan. & June Classes) held their 65th and Final reunion September 18, 2013 at Jax Café. Jim Patterson reports they have been holding annual reunions regularly for the last decade. This September 40 people attended. Jim Roberts, a classmate living in Keswick, Virginia called before the reunion with a proposition…he offered to spring for a round of champagne for the group if we would ask them all to stand and offer a toast..."TO ALL OUR CLASSMATES TOO ILL TO ATTEND AND THOSE DECEASED—A MOMENT OF SILENCE IN REMEMBRANCE”.

On September 18th, the reunion ceremonies commenced; the invocation was given, the wine was served, the glasses raised, the toast recited and the meals were served; all very warm and nice…a real feeling of good fellowship…the bubbly works its magic. After the lunch, classmate Don Hadrath stood and proclaimed a love for all his classmates and very generously offered to buy a round of drinks for everyone. There was a mad scramble to get the waitresses back…the drinks were served. When our reunion ended and we said our goodbyes I think it was with a feeling of regret that this was our final reunion. Who knows?...maybe in May or June of 2014…if we’re still here…maybe we’ll feel strong and enthusiastic again. And if there’s enough interest maybe we’ll even plan a “Second Final” Reunion…or is that a contradiction in terms…
For those who want a printed copy of each issue of the Alumni News, Bob Hayes offers the following:

**NEWSLETTER HARD COPY AVAILABLE**

A one year subscription, 3 issues, arriving in January, May and September are available for $7.00 for a one year subscription. To subscribe include your name and address with a $7.00 check made out to Bob Hayes & addressed to: Bob Hayes, MUHSAN 9142 W. UTOPIA ROAD PEORIA, AZ 85382

Your newsletter mailing will begin on the next publication month following receipt of your subscription.

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**Job Opportunities that Fizzled!**

- My first job was working in an Orange Juice factory, I was canned ‘cause I couldn’t concentrate.
- Then I worked in the woods as a Lumberjack, but I just couldn’t hack it, so they gave me the axe.
- After that I tried being a Tailor, but wasn’t suited for it--mainly because it was a sew-sew job.
- Next I tried working in a Muffler Factory but that was too exhausting.
- Then I tried being a Chef; figured it would add a little spice to my life--but just didn’t have the thyme.
- Next I attempted being a Deli worker; but anyway I sliced it...I couldn’t cut the mustard.
- My best job was a musician but eventually found I wasn’t noteworthy.
- I studied a long time to be a doctor, but didn’t have the patience.
You are important to us! Have a Happy, Joyous, Peaceful, Prayerful and Loving New Year filled with Family & Good Friends.