

HISTORY KEEPERS

2023
Issue 4
NOVEMBER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Members and Friends of WAHS,

WAHS has served the Westby community, sharing our history, culture, and heritage with stories of Westby for over thirty years! We are a recognized destination for local history and are considered one of the area's primary history educators as we make it relevant in today's world. Our volunteers make this possible as they welcome museum visitors,

help people explore family connections to our area, host programs, give workshops, and help with events. Volunteers are a vital and critical resource of our Society as they give their time and talents for even just a few hours each year to a project that is near and dear to their heart. Please reach out to me if you would like to join our core of volunteers!

As I look forward to 2024, I continue to encourage membership in WAHS and continue to recruit those who wish to serve as members of the Board of Directors. Are you interested in preserving local history? Do you have a few hours of spare time to help plan, promote and participate in our programs and events? Please consider becoming a member of the Board of Directors and contact me at westbywihistory@gmail.com. I would love to hear from you!

Financials donations are imperative to the success of the Westby Area Historical Society and Genealogy Center. Whether you support us through your membership or through our annual appeal, I want to thank you! Your past support has played a significant role in keeping our mission going forward. Continuing relevant historical exhibits, historical programs for our community, enhancing the genealogy collections, preparing for scheduled tour groups, or paying for daily operating functions is possible because of your donation! Please be assured that you may safely give to WAHS through the Annual Appeal button on our website at www.westbywihistory.com/annual-appeal or you can mail your donation to WAHS at P. O. Box 42; Westby, WI 54667.

As I close our final newsletter of 2023, I want to thank you for all you have done for WAHS – as a member, a volunteer, a donor and a friend – and for being involved in the Westby Area Historical Society. If you haven't already, I encourage you to find a niche where you can participate in our journey. Please stay in touch as we grow our mission “as an educational organization that responsibly collects, preserves, promotes and communicates the history, culture and heritage of the Westby, WI area for current and future generations” during 2024!

– Blaine Hedberg, WAHS President

2023 VOLUNTEER OF THE YEAR

WAHS is proud to announce Marlo Volden as this year's Volunteer of the Year! Marlo has spent many years working to make WAHS the wonderful organization it is. He has served as not only a board member but as president and vice president. He has taken it upon himself to care for our lefse house and he is often trimming a tree, picking up fallen branches, or sweeping the front porch. Marlo is here for our Saturday visitors, our special tours, our events, and both our fun and mundane-but-needed projects. Thank you, Marlo, for all you do for WAHS!

Photo below: WAHS President Blaine congratulating Marlo



LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

WAHS is proud to announce our third Lifetime Achievement Award! Roy and Joyce Stephan have been instrumental in the success of *Sweet Rides & Sweet Pies* since its inception. As unfailing and tireless planners, volunteers, sponsors and promoters, they have catapulted *Sweet Rides* to a position where it is undoubtedly WAHS's largest and most successful fundraiser, thereby contributing to our financial stability as well as our position as one of the community's primary resources for local history. Thank you, Roy and Joyce, for all you have done for local history!



Photo at left:
Sweet Rides
Chairperson
Garland
McGarvey
with
Joyce
and
Roy



Shining a Light on the Past

Football season is upon us so let's take a look at the winning Norsemen of 50 years ago! This article is part of what was published on November 8, 1973 in *The Westby Times*!

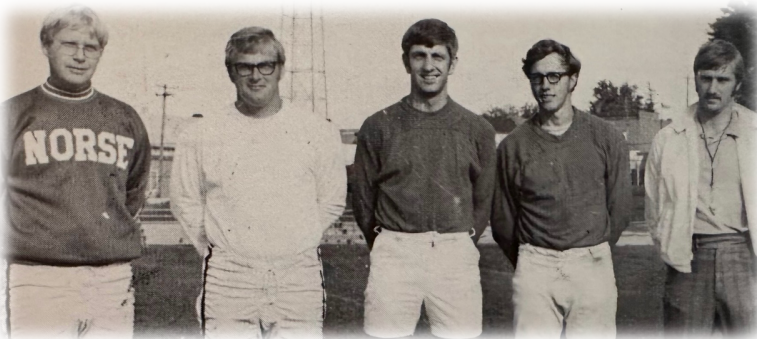
Final Statistics Complete for '73 Football Season

"The Westby Norsemen finished the 1973 season with a 9-0 record and in the process broke several team and individual records. The team's 9 wins coupled with 7 straight at the close of last season gives the team 16 straight victories, eclipsing the record of 13 held by the 1963-64 teams. They also set a team record of 817 yards passing to break the record of the 1964 team.

The Norsemen dominated their opponents in virtually every statistical category during the 1973 season. They outgained their opponents on the ground 1,788 yards to 499 and in the air 817 yards to 550. In touchdowns rushing, the Norse had an advantage of 20-1, in touchdowns passing 9-5, in first downs 106-52, in two point conversions 15-0, in fumble recoveries 18-8, in pass interceptions 19-4, in points scored 228-38, and in the all important aspect of ball control, Westby ran 536 offensive plays to just 385 for their opponents."

Editor's Note: Continuing our research about this record-breaking team, we found the 1974 Ski Annual reported that the team "captured the conference championship and was also rated eighth in the state in the Class B schools." Six team members were on the All-conference team; one was on the 2nd All-State team; and "Head Coach Neil Hoven was named Coulee Region coach of the year in recognition of his excellent handling of his high school football teams."

*Photo below from the 1974 Ski Annual shows coaches L. to R.: Neil Hoven, John Blihovde, Gerry Roethel, Marty Ekern, and Steve Elmer.



to new members:
Alice & Harlan Olson
Lisa Leum Thomas

Happy Holidays!

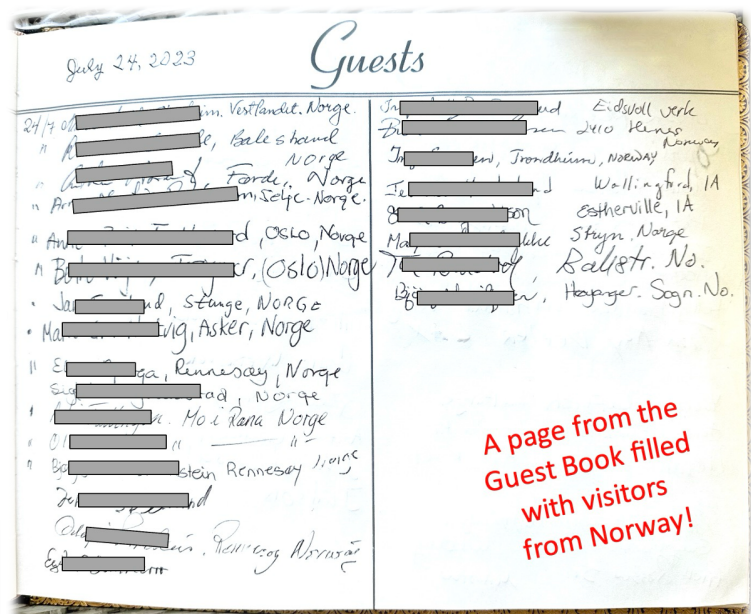


!! 2024 !!

See you next year!

Visitors to WAHS

Although we try very hard to get every visitor to sign our guest book, we know many come through the museum that we miss. What we do know is that **hundreds** of visitors have signed our book so far in 2023! Wisconsin and Minnesota were the states most frequently represented and visitors came from more than 46 cities that crisscross our beautiful country. They came from New York to California, Oregon to Florida, and North Dakota to Texas to see the wonderful displays at our museum. We also had 4 countries represented including several tour groups from Norway. Elementary school children to college kids, and young couples to grandparents covered the ages of people who shared wonderful compliments after touring the Thoreson House Museum. Many others who came were particularly interested in genealogy research using the WAHS archives of bygdebøker, local church records, local funeral home records, Ski Annuals, Vital Records, our collection of newspapers, Norwegian church records, Norwegian census records, Norwegian immigration records and too numerous to mention books relating to local immigration. We are very happy that our mission is exciting and relevant to people from such a wide span of places and ages!



Cemetery Stone Cleaning Workshop

Our popular Cemetery Stone Cleaning Workshop was held again on September 30 and people who have attended the class are telling their friends and family that we are "experts" on this topic. With so much interest, we will continue it as a biannual class so check the February 2024 issue of *History Keepers* and watch our Facebook page for the Spring 2024 date. Our very exciting news is that we have put together a wonderful PowerPoint slide program that simply and clearly explains the process of cleaning cemetery stones. We were thrilled to premier it as a "table presentation" at the Wisconsin Historical Society's 17th Annual Local History & Historic Preservation Conference on October 19 and 20 in La Crosse to wonderful reviews! We will be taking this program "on the road" and already have several groups who have scheduled!

WAHS Helps with PhD Research

WAHS has been busy this summer helping Laura Moquin with her Ph.D. research. Laura is studying the connection, the changes and the influences surrounding the Norwegian and English languages among people who grew up in areas of heavy immigration. Interviews included Laura recording answers to specific questions and asking those who



were interviewed to read from and describe pictures in a children's book. We were able to provide Laura with more than half of the interviews she needs for her research! Board members of WAHS are continuing to talk with people who meet Laura's parameters and would be interested in participating. If you know of anyone living in the Madison area who grew up in Westby, is under 40 years of age, and would like to be interviewed, have them contact us!

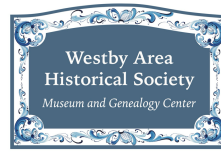
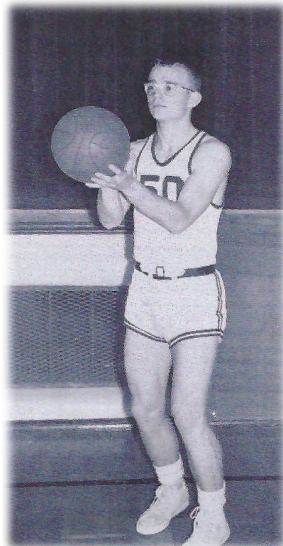
Martin Herbert Bekkedal (1941 – 2023)

It is with great sadness we tell you about the passing of a dear friend of WAHS. "Buzz" grew up in Westby, the grandson of tobacco empire founder M. H. Bekkedal and son of businessman Verdel Bekkedal. He was an exceptional member of the Class of 1959 and his obituary sums up his high school years saying "Buzz was Freshman and Senior Class President, a member of the senior Student Council, and lettered each year in Varsity Football, Basketball, and Track & Field. He also participated in the HS Annual, Mixed Chorus, Badger Boys State, was a Senior Homecoming attendant, a member of the Lettermen's Club, and even had a speaking role in a class play his senior year."

Buzz left Westby for college, married Margaret, his best friend, and raised 2 children. Though his career took him to several states, he always thought of Westby as home, cheered on the Badgers and Packers, and remained best friends with his high school classmate, Fred Jefson.

A memorial service was held for Buzz in Jacksonville, FL, and his burial in the Coon Prairie Cemetery is scheduled for next summer.

Our deepest sympathy is extended to Margaret, her children, other family and close friends that Buzz made along his way. He will be deeply missed.



Important dates!

Annual Meeting: Tues., Dec. 12 at 11:00 a.m.

No Meeting in January

Snowflake Ski Tournament: Feb. 2 and Feb. 3

Monthly Meeting: Tues., Feb. 6 at 1:00 p.m. at Daily Brew

2024 Issue 1 of History Keepers: mid-February

WAHS attends Local History Conference

This year, the Wisconsin Historical Society's 17th Annual Local History & Historic Preservation Conference was held in La Crosse. WAHS President Blaine and Sec't./Treas. Kathy attended workshops and sessions to learn from experts in the industry as they talked about the benefits of social media, the management of an archives, and the benefits of digitization.

Both keynote speakers brought insights to the difficulties of presenting information in a sensitive manner without erasing the hard truths of historical events.

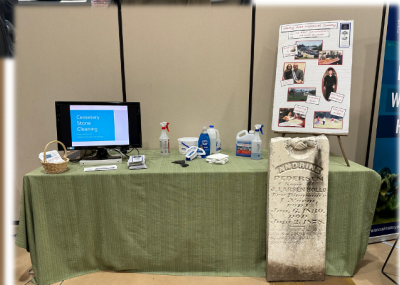
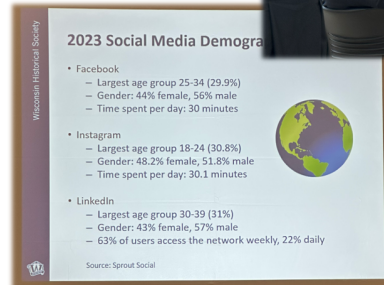
Blaine and Kathy also spent time as presenters of a table clinic that mirrored the WAHS bi-annual workshop, "How to Clean Cemetery Stones." They felt fortunate to be among a limited number of historical societies and organizations that were given space at the conference.

Right:
Blaine talking with best-selling author and keynote speaker Jason Steinhauer.

Below:
a slide from one of the sessions regarding the trends in social media



Below:
the WAHS table clinic "How to Clean Cemetery Stones"



WAHS Offers A Scholarship

Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, WAHS will be offering a \$500 scholarship to a Westby Area High School senior. Our museum, genealogy center, programs and workshops are resources for the local Westby community but adding a scholarship to our contributions is just another way we can give back to Westby. Our museum needs people who are interested in history but also needs the expertise of electricians, plumbers, painters, accountants, lawyers, lawncare people and so many more.

To this end, we are not limiting the qualifications for this award except to require that the applicant volunteers at the museum for some hours during their high school career.

We are excited that the scholarship application process will provide yet another opportunity for students to take an interest and learn about Westby's history and the Thoreson House Museum and Genealogy Center! If you know a Westby High School student who could use \$500, have them contact us!



"History isn't what happened, history is just what historians tell us."

Contemporary English writer Julian Barnes (Getty Image)

"A History of the World in 10½ Chapters"



SUMMER SNAPSHOT STUMPER

If you guessed (L to R) Grant Rudie, Jr., Armin Fruechte, and Hilmer Anderson sorting Snowflake Ski Club buttons, you guessed right!



Please email us at westbywihistory@gmail.com; leave a message at 608-634-4478 or find us on Facebook. Your ideas, opinions and suggestions matter! We want to hear from you!

Only if it's time for you to renew your membership, will you find a separate invoice and envelope with your "History Keepers" newsletter. Dues are just \$20/person and help us to defray most of the cost of the newsletters! We appreciate your renewal!

2023 Officers and Board of Directors

President and Curator – Blaine Hedberg (2024)
Vice President – Garland McGarvey (2024)
Sec't/Treas & Newsletter – Kathy Anderson (2023)
Board Member – Dorothy Skaaland La Due (2025)
Board Member – Carol Erlandson Navrestad (2025)
Board Member – Marlo Volden (2023)

* Officers are elected at the Annual Meeting

The **2023 WAHS ANNUAL MEETING** will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 12th. We will be gathering at the historic Logan Mill Lodge at 11:00 am for a social hour with appetizers, and adult and non-alcoholic beverages. At Noon, we will serve a delicious lunch before President Blaine Hedberg welcomes our special guests. He will share his Annual Report as we enjoy a delicious dessert at 12:45 p.m. Our hostess, Ruth Rupp, will also give us a brief history of her building. A business meeting will follow for members (and any guests who wish to stay) as we update our bylaws, elect the 2024 board members and officers, and start planning next year's events. Please RSVP by 12/5 at 608.634.4478 or westbywihistory@gmail.com so we are properly prepared!

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Please share our newsletter with your friends, and encourage them to join WAHS by filling out and mailing this membership form!

Westby Area Historical Society

P. O. Box 42; Westby, WI 54667

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\$20.00 for Annual Dues from each of our WAHS members supports our education efforts, our quarterly newsletter and the Thoreson House Museum building.

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