

Letter from childhood friend, Nancy Walsdorf read at Jean's 1996 retirement party:
(plus a paragraph added at the end for Jean's 80th birthday/reunion celebration)

I'm really sorry I won't be able to attend the celebration to honor Jean on March 16 (1996), but I'm enclosing an "Ode to a Teacher" for the scrapbook or the memory wall.

We grew up in Ladysmith (WI) and have remained great friends for more than 55 years. We swam together, hiked and biked, picked beans and worked in Stokely's cannery, played and in band and pep band, danced to Jack Howard's Lamplighters, when she played sax, studied chemistry for Mr. Jay's classes, sang Christmas carols with our gang, picked boulders to build the Sanford fireplace, helped her brother Jim make blueprints, worked together on the school paper and yearbooks. My family considered Jean one-of-us ... and still does.

Jean went to the U. of W. at Madison and I went to Minneapolis and graduated from the U. of Minnesota. Even though we went our different ways, we still kept in touch. When we did meet once in awhile, it was as though we had just talked yesterday.

I went to Ladysmith for her wedding on that snowy winter day when Jean and Randy began their life together and I helped Jean pick out their first home in Marshall.

I feel I know Jean, such an extraordinary person, so I've written a prose song that perhaps everyone who knows her will understand. She is one terrific lady!

Nancy Walsdorf

Ode to a Teacher
by Nancy Walsdorf

She was raised near the River - the great rushing Flambeau, making its way through hills and vales of northern Wisconsin, sliding over aged granite rocks and pebbles, crashing against grey boulders, stalling round the eddies and swamp grasses. This lovely river imprinted itself in Jean's heart and became a part of her. She grew up on green slopes watching sparkling waves dance in the sun.

Summer found Jean at the beach, brown and watching over young swimmers, talking and learning. Winter found Jean on sled, toboggan, skis, snowshoes - talking and learning. Winter, the favorite season, bursting with snow birds caught red hair flying in the wind, hearty peals of laughter following in the wake. It was Jean glorying in the beauty of the river, the winter, the many true-hearted friends who were magnetized to her - Jean, talking and learning.

And the river rolls on, making its own music. The music of the river sang in her soul - Jean made her own music of laughter and joy of life and communicated it to all who had the ear for it. It was a song of soul mates, Jean's music. Those who heard it

knew it for their own, and the song echoed and re-echoed. Those of us who sing with Jean sing also with each other. We may not even know each other, but we know the music and the song satisfies the heart just as the murmur of the stream and the spring roar of the river and the twitter of the chickadees.

The Flambeau rolled on, conversing with other great rivers, finally emerging into the oceans. Jean followed the rivers from Wisconsin to Ohio, to the world. She took the rivers, the trees, the music, the great song of life, the laughter and joy of living, along with her and taught everyone she met. And as she taught she learned.

Talking and learning, Jean built a life that flowed like a river, touching, beckoning, pulling, nourishing, ebbing and rising, pushing, pouring itself out in cascades. Lucky indeed are those of us who can bask in those cascades.

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There are no prerequisites for Jean's friendship. Today's children look on her as Grandma Jean. Distinguished teachers and city leaders, heads of businesses, small town mechanics, housewife, artists, doctors, farmers, beekeepers, carpenters, Indians, college students look on her as a genuine friend. As the river has no artful pretensions, neither does Jean. Pretense was never innate and therefore was an absurdity, impossible for her to learn.

Blue sky, leafy green boughs, wispy white clouds reflect in facets of pure water. The images are real, the colors are as true as the originals. As pure light, drawn through the prism of a single drop of the Flambeau, refracts into the colors of the rainbow, so the inner love and energy of Jean Royce Sanford Replinger, when bent in our direction brings new colors, new ways of seeing the world and ideas.

As the Flambeau does its work to perfection, so Jean is the consummate friend and teacher.

The above was written for Jean's retirement party in 1996. Nancy added the following on the occasion of Jean's 80th birthday/reunion celebration:

Jean has now retired from active teaching, but like the Flambeau River, she rolls on, still talking, still learning. Her wisdom may come from years of learning, but the years have made no mark of age on her soul and the song she sings. We still recognize the laughter, the song, and those who sing along. Happy 80th birthday, Jean, from the many choirs who know your music. And especially from your oldest friend, Nancy, who watched you watching the Flambeau, and listened.