

# Some Education Minnesota Alumni Reminiscences. 2021

Primarily 1970s-2000

Staff Contributors as of Jan. 23, 2022:

Stephanie Wolkin

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See contents for others

## **Terms used in this writing:**

AFT – American Federation of Teachers

AHEA – Anoka-Hennepin Education Association, after merger renamed

AHEM – Anoka-Hennepin Education Minnesota

EM – Education Minnesota, merged name of former MFT and MEA

MEA – Minnesota Education Association

Meet and Confer – 1967 Minnesota Negotiations Law preceding PELRA (1971)

MFT – Minnesota Federation of Teachers

MinnSPRA – Minnesota School Public Relations Association

NEA – National Education Association

NSO – National Staff Organization

PELRA – Public Employment Labor Relations Act (Minnesota)

PSA – Professional Staff Association (MEA Staff Union)

Feb 1, 2022

This paper as most recently revised can be read in its entirety at

<https://outsidethewalls.org/blog/two-unions-mature/> (Dec. 1, 2021)

### **Fore-Words**

In February, 2021, I was thinking back to my now-long ago career as a field representative for then-Minnesota Education Association, which ended with two years in the newly merged, with Minnesota Federation of Teachers, Education Minnesota.

My career began, literally, with the advent of collective bargaining in 1971, and ended with a merged teacher union, something which could scarcely have been imagined by either union 27 years earlier.

I sent a letter (p. 4-5) via e-mail to any former staff members whose e-mail address I had on file. Of course, many of the old e-addresses were no longer functioning, some of the staff had died, etc. But in the end, I theoretically at least reached perhaps 40 former staff colleagues.

Near a year later, there does not seem to have been much interest in written memories, but one colleague, Stephanie Wolkin, came through above and beyond, and over the months I have added brief snips of memories of certain aspects of my work with Minnesota Teachers.

The following pages are the result of the work, still in rough draft form. Perhaps as circumstances allow I will add to this narrative, or others will as well. Everyone is receiving a Word copy which they can add to as they wish.

I invite your participation.

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February 17, 2021

Dear Colleagues:

Since I asked you to think about jotting some memories of our years in the Union (MEA/MFT/Education Minnesota), I'll offer a few thoughts to perhaps help the process.

Mid-March of 1972 I was asked to take a six-month position as AHEA staff. That was 49 years ago! I was president-elect, and probably was in that position since I was active in the local and had been public relations chair and got active in 1968 when my colleague, Ron Swanson, became volunteer President of AHEA and it was obvious to me that the job was very hard. I'd hear him complain about migraine headaches, and would see him heading to meetings with a box of files, etc. At the time Anoka-Hennepin probably already had over 1,000 teachers and was growing by 2,000 students a year. MEA had a few staff for the entire state.

I was greener than grass, of course. Anybody was more expert than I was. This doesn't embarrass me – at the beginning we were all in the same boat.

I was the third Director. Bob Reed was first, and worked from MEA. Lois McArdle was lifesaver. She would have called herself Secretary. I know better...now. (It was 1977 when Dolly Parton's movie "Nine to Five" was the 'call to arms'. The first Strike in Anoka-Hennepin was of school secretaries, 1981.

I came into the position when we were all about to negotiate the first teacher contract under PELRA [Public Employment Labor Relations Act] and entering the era of binding arbitration of grievances. Barney Palmer and Jim Connerton (NEA Regional office) gave me the keys to the tiny office in Anoka and there I was. My predecessor, who some of you knew, had a doctorate, but a substance problem. That's all I'll say. (Preceding PELRA was Meet and Confer beginning 1967, perhaps a poor cousin of collective bargaining, but good training for the future.)

Near the time I started, I attended the first MEA Rep Assembly in Rochester. I think that might have been Don Hill's first convention as a state leader. Probably at that meeting the MEA Professional Rights and Responsibility Committee became the Teacher Rights Council. That change evoked the change in statutory relationships between management and labor and the role of labor union, generally, in the new age of PELRA. It was a big deal. We learned on the fly.

We all worked with people full-time, so I'll leave that topic alone for now. I very soon learned that every day would be its own adventure. I could never say that "I'd seen everything". Time in the car (no phone, of course) was time to think about what to do about the latest current problem(s) on the plate. I used to

say that about half of each day seemed to pop up unannounced – some crisis defined by someone other than yourself. Living from phone call to phone call – no e-mails, then.

When I started thinking about what to say in this note, I first thought about our shared technology at the start.

I did the AHEA newsletter copy on a regular old manual typewriter (my first issue, from September 1970, is attached.) Headlines were done one letter at a time off of impression sheets. We used photos, we took the black and white picture and got them half-toned at the local printer in Anoka. Everything was cut and paste. They were the real deal!

The office had electric typewriters; I don't recall an answering machine then – no caller id or messages. (Wikipedia says that answering machines didn't become common until the 1980s. They existed, but unfamiliar and too expensive for most.) If the phone rang, you answered it. But there weren't spam calls then.

Those were the days of spirit duplicators, mimeograph machines, stencils and thermofax...And file cabinets with file folders and paper.... I remember when they started to scan contracts at MEA. It puzzled me for a long while. What were they doing? What did 'scanning' mean?

If you happened to be on the road to some meeting or other, to call in you looked for a pay phone, or asked to use the phone at your destination, or in the hotel. This had its advantage. In the car and enroute was an opportunity to escape the phone. For me it was a time to think. I still use driving that way.

The first negotiations I was part of, in Anoka-Hennepin, the personnel director, Tom Arneson, used a massive old adding machine that was pretty spectacular to watch. I think it multiplied and divided too.

The first time I recall seeing a computer of any kind was in early 1982 and it was scary to use. About a year ago I saw essentially the same machine I had encountered back then in a local computer shop. Last summer I did a blog about another experience that might bring some memories to others. It's about Tower-Soudan in the summer of 1984. See <https://outsidethewalls.org/blog/distance-learning/> (August 18, 2020, check archive).

I think we staff first got training on computers in the later 1980s – I recall a session in Bagley MN. From 1985-2002 I did a volunteer newsletter for French-Canadians (my heritage). It wasn't until right before I retired from Education Minnesota (2000), that there was first mention of an e-mail address, or website, in this newsletter (that was mailed to members by U.S. mail)!

It wasn't until 2004 that Facebook appeared; 2005 YouTube; 2006 Twitter; 2007 iPhone, and on we go.... (fact check me on these). We have more ways to communicate less.

**STEPHANIE WOLKIN:** (1233 Birch Pond Trail, White Bear Lake 55110, 651-653-1664 infosteph@aol.com):

**Early days:** I was the city reporter for the Faribault Daily News when teachers in that district came within six hours of striking for the 1974-75 contract. The teachers had set up a strike headquarters downtown and Pat Churchill, an MEA field organizer, had come down for the "grand opening." I remember asking him if he was an "outside agitator" and he got ANGRY! I attended a meeting of the city administrator, police chief, and representatives for the school district and teachers. Teachers were warned not to leaflet because of the city's anti-littering ordinance. I asked how teachers could be held responsible for the actions of anyone who threw the papers away. Administration and the police didn't like that question but I thought it was the logical thing to ask.

The teachers and school district ended up in mediation. The mediator, Frank Madden, closed the talks at the Rice County courthouse so a group of us (Churchill; MEA communications staffer Kenn Pratt; NEA director John Urseth from Elk River; Don Hill, chair of the MEA state negotiations council; Doug Carnes, the KDHL radio reporter; and me) went to have dinner at the Evergreen Knoll restaurant. Kenn went crazy when I asked for a separate check -- I told him I had ethics and wouldn't let MEA pay for my meal!!! Pat and Kenn whispered a lot during that dinner and, by the time we left the restaurant, they told me that they thought I should be working with them.

The contract was settled for that time period but the teachers ended up going on strike in December 1975 for the 1975-77 contract, one of seven locals to strike that year.

**A real life changer:** I had worked in the US Senate when in college and before I attended graduate school so I had extensive experience in legislative work. An opening for "technical staff" came in the MEA Governmental Relations department at the end of 1975. I applied, was interviewed, and was recommended for hire by the chief lobbyist, Roger Erskine. Subsequently, Roger was hired as executive director for the South Dakota Education Association, so my hiring was put on hold. I was then interviewed by the new lobbyist, Gene Mammenga, was hired, and began employment on Jan. 19, 1976.

I worked side by side with Gene at the legislature, helped deliver training and updates to locals, and prepared a weekly newsletter for local activists. I laugh now, because we thought we were so "on top" of everything but it took several days for those mailed newsletters to get to teachers and they were out of date almost from the time they were printed!

**Movin' on up:** I continued to work with governmental relations but was "loaned" to the communications department when the legislature was not in session. I worked with many locals as we engaged in bargaining elections with the rival Minnesota Federation of Teachers to see which union would represent teachers in a particular district. The work was challenging and energizing. In May 1979, the MEA newspaper editor lost his job and I was slotted into that position. I was still considered "technical" staff, which was a lower pay grade than so-called professional staff. I was put on the pay scale for professional staff temporarily. The Professional Staff Association was in the middle of contract negotiations and things weren't going well so, one day, I was called into the office of "Mr. Gallop" (A. L. "Bud" Gallop, executive director of MEA). Yes, we all called him Mr. Gallop. He told me that I had a choice...if PSA went on strike I had to decide whether I was with the strikers or whether I would continue my job. I told him I would be with the members of PSA. Almost immediately, PSA told me I would have to pay dues retroactive to May -- which I did.

The strike started the day after Labor Day, 1979. We were on strike for four days. We all picketed, got to know each other better, and made our point. John Martin, field representative headquartered in Northfield, put his culinary skills to work and catered our lunches from a truck. I think we all gained weight that week! The contract settled over the weekend, and we were back at work the following Monday.

I then had to apply for the editor's job, which I had been doing since May. I was hired, and delighted to officially be PSA staff! I attended the monthly staff meetings where I learned so much about the field operations of the union. I really felt I had found the ideal career.

In 1981, locals were flexing their muscles and learning more about community organizing as a strategy for settling contracts. We ended up with about 30 locals on strike that year. A central location was set up at MEA headquarters in St. Paul to track local efforts and deploy assistance as needed. We had so many requests that the state was divided into three areas for communications assistance: north, central, and south. I was assigned to the central area, and worked with a number of locals in communications efforts. With so many demands on staff, I worked with many locals in crafting messages to the various communities about contract issues. But the workload strained staff in MEA's negotiations department and the field staff who worked with locals, so I was assigned to also work with negotiators in the Isle Education Association, on the southeast shore of Lake Mille Lacs. I had no experience in negotiations but was lucky to have listened and learned to my staff colleagues. I stayed in a "resort" room in a local hotel, which was a large room with six beds, a small kitchenette, and a shower that had mold growing on all four sides! Our strike headquarters in Isle was a winterized lake cabin. I brought sparkling water to our daily meetings...no one looked at the labels on the green bottles -- I found out later that they thought I was drinking beers during our meetings! I worked with the local during mediation and learned SO much. We eventually reached settlement and it was off to the next assignment.

A number of years later a retirement opened up the position of communications specialist which meant working with the state communications council, helping locals with member and community relationships, and filling "other duties as assigned." I moved into that position and enjoyed several years of that work, along with being liaison to the Teacher of the Year program and our state fair booth exhibits.

In mid-1994 I got a call from the commissioner of the Minnesota Department of Education. She had read columns and articles that I had written and wanted me to work for her as director of communications. I was flattered but not ready to give up my work at MEA. Department attorneys came up with the idea of a "loan" -- I would remain an Education Minnesota employee, retain my salary and benefits, but would work for the state. I worked at MDE for about 14 months. Navigating state bureaucracy required patience, and the work was not nearly as meaningful as my work at Education Minnesota.

When I returned to Education Minnesota I applied to be a field representative. Management was hesitant to hire me because I hadn't been a classroom teacher. I suggested that many current staff had been out of the classroom for more than 25 years, and teaching had changed. I pledged to do my best, was hired for the position, and spent the next 15 years in the most challenging and rewarding assignment of my career.

My colleagues were excellent resources and coaches...and I took it all in. I worked in various assignments with locals from the Minnesota-Iowa border to the suburbs of Minneapolis. I negotiated contracts for teachers at three private parochial schools. I even came full-circle when Faribault became one of my locals! I helped organize several paraprofessional unions. Locals came within hours of striking and, in some cases, we had strikes that lasted for weeks. In Red Wing, striking teachers were supported by US Sen. Paul

Wellstone who walked the picket line with them. Three days later, we were in mediation when the mediator brought us together to tell us that Wellstone's plane had crashed and he and five others died. I still shiver when I think of that day.

I became a trainer for the AFT's Positive Negotiations Program, an offshoot of the Harvard Trade Union project, and trained teachers throughout the United States, and in Serbia and the Republic of Georgia.

I had a number of successes -- won arbitrations against some of the most well-known school board attorneys in the state, coached teachers to improve their actions in the classroom, negotiated separation agreements for teachers who were too burned out or too ill-suited to the profession. Ultimately, I hope -- and believe -- that my successes were built on the success of the members I represented. If I helped them understand the law, strategies, responsibilities, and rewards of union membership, we all won, and their students won, too.

I retired in 2010, after nearly 35 years "in the business." I subsequently went back to substitute on a short-term basis for two field colleagues, and was asked by NEA to work in Wisconsin during the assault on teacher unions by former Governor Walker.

**Reflections:** I came to union work at a most exciting time. A new state law that expanded collective bargaining with educators ready to learn and act. I was fortunate to spend my career with one employer but with many facets...never bored, always challenged, happy to go to work every day! The changes from my first day on the job were staggering: going from manual typewriters to notebook computers; the advent of cell phones; mimeographing leaflets to mass emails; more women on staff and in elected leadership positions; a rise in activism...and so much more.

**ADDED May 26, 2021:** So many times during staff meetings UniServ staff would share their latest stories about members and administrators. Your request for memories made me think of several stories from my career in field work, and I am sharing them with you -- for fun, if nothing else. My dad often said I should put these stories in a book and I told him it would have to be classified under "fiction" because no one would believe them!

Hope you are well.

Stephanie

**Torah Academy**, a private parochial school for Orthodox Jewish children ages K-8, is located in St. Louis Park. It was one of three parochial schools organized by MFT prior to the merger with MEA.

The religious teachers were all Orthodox rabbis. The lay teachers were all non-Jewish and overwhelmingly female. Teachers had to be outside with students at lunchtime and at school dismissal. Because it could get very cold, female teachers often wore wool pants. Orthodox women do not wear pants, only long skirts. One year the school tried to institute a dress code for non-religious staff. We filed a grievance, as that would have been a change in working conditions. During the next round of bargaining, I was able to negotiate a clothing stipend for all returning teachers, and language specifying the dress code so that all new hires knew what to expect. This would have been around 2000, and the stipend was in excess of \$250 per teacher.

**Hill-Murray**, a Catholic junior-senior high school in Maplewood, also had a negotiated agreement for non-religious school teachers. The Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis had created a working paper called

“Justice in Employment” which was to provide guidance for employment-related issues for employees of the archdiocese. The school/archdiocese wanted that document to replace our negotiated agreement. We, of course, said no. In the end, we agreed to quote portions of their document that sounded nice but reinforced our contract language, and agreed that the contract was the binding document for H-M staff. In several instances, the school wanted to make the grievance procedure subject to the decisions made by the vicar general. I had to remind the negotiator for the archdiocese that, at that time, there was no vicar general. That proposal was quickly moved off the table. I was especially proud of that, since I am not Catholic and was not expected to know about the inner workings of the archdiocese!

**Waseca** teachers were going into mediation and, as always, the first step is to establish norms for how the sessions would be conducted. We were meeting in the evenings in winter in an old part of the middle school where the heating system was on its last legs. I had my coat around my shoulders and still had my arms crossed, as the temperature in that room was barely 60 degrees. I proposed that “we make no judgments about body language” as some people view folded arms as a sign of hostility or resistance. As soon as I said that, everyone agreed, and arms were folded and coats put on around the table!

**New Richland-Heartland-Ellendale-Geneva** was a challenge. The superintendent was no friend of educators, and even less of the paraprofessionals we had recently organized. So our first contract negotiation was a challenge. Then, once we had a settled contract the local members needed to learn about policing the contract. There was a provision regarding pay that the superintendent violated almost from the start. We put him on notice, followed through appropriately, and ended up filing a grievance. He was stubborn and wouldn’t meet so we ended up in arbitration, with George Latimer as the arbitrator. I presented the case, our witnesses were wonderful, and then it came time for the district to present. The superintendent asked to be excused because he said he had relevant information in a file in his office. He returned with a page torn so hastily from a yellow legal pad that the upper left corner was ripped – not even torn along the perforation – and the page had a scrawl across the middle that said “teachers said ok so no grievance”. It was not dated, included no list of who was in this supposed meeting, was not signed...you get the idea. Latimer saw through this sham and we won the case, with back pay and interest!

**Medford:** This small district, sandwiched between Faribault and Owatonna, never lacked for drama. The superintendent saw himself as a big fish in a little pond, and was always throwing his weight around. Contract violations were a fact of life for teachers in this local.

As per state law, all negotiations sessions had to be audiotaped and would be available for listening after negotiations were completed. We had a grievance over a pay issue. We had contemporaneous notes taken during the bargaining sessions but wanted to consult the tapes as back-up. So we requested the tapes. We were rebuffed many times and finally had to file papers to get access to the tapes. It was at that time that the superintendent told us that there had been a theft in his office and the tapes, which were in a locked safe, had been stolen. We asked to see the report made to police and found that the report was made the day we first requested the tapes. We also found that, although many items were reported to have been stored in the safe, the only items stolen were the tapes that happened to be in that safe. Once again, we won the case in arbitration – with interest! The superintendent left soon after to take a position with the state Department of Education.

**A Cannon Valley local:** A probationary teacher was accused of meeting a student outside of school hours, starting when he delivered pizzas to her home. They set up multiple tennis dates, bet on the outcome, and the “loser” had to buy dinner at a local restaurant where liquor was served and where the teacher

consumed alcoholic beverages. The teacher also was accused of sending suggestive “jokes” via email to the student and of sending some personal photos.

Pat Flynn was representing the district. He had copies of everything from the internet and showed us the “evidence” page by page. At one point I said “Pat, that’s enough, you can stop now” and he replied that “you ain’t seen nothin’ yet.” Unfortunately, he was right. The teacher admitted to everything but said the student knew it meant nothing because she was engaged. Her fiancé lived in California but she said everyone knew she was getting married over the summer. As proof, she began waving her left hand in everyone’s face, showing off her engagement ring. She did that a lot. I finally got her to stop showing off the ring and to realize how serious this was. I was able to secure health insurance for her through the end of the contract year. I don’t know if she ever got married.

**Another Cannon Valley local:** A teacher/basketball coach believed the gym floor needed to be refinished. The district said it didn’t. He wanted to file a grievance. I told him there was no basis for a grievance. The district was pretty indulgent with his demands – even contacted the company that had installed the new floor and would have made money if they got a contract to refinish it. But they said it was not needed. So, over the Christmas break, the teacher used his passkey to get into the building, broke into the custodian’s supply closet, and started to refinish the floor himself. But he got tired and didn’t finish the job. When school resumed in January it was obvious that something had been done to the floor. He admitted he did it. His brother-in-law, an insurance agent, told him his homeowner’s policy would cover the damages. It didn’t. He had to cover the costs of the refinishing, and his team had to forfeit games while the floor was being re-done. By then the season was over and the district told him he would not be coaching the next year. He wanted to fight that, too. He didn’t win.

**DICK BERNARD: May 25, 2021** (6905 Romeo Rd Woodbury 55125-2421, 651-334-5744, dick.bernard@iCloud.com): I'm writing this, not having read Stephanie's. Hers is first reminiscence received, intended to be shared. Of course, I've been thinking about this ever since my memo sent to you all earlier. Your memories are solicited, any time. **Just let me know that it's okay to share them.**

It's been a long while since my first-year teaching (1963-64) at Hallock. I was just out of two years in the Army, missing the first month of school. It was a very tough rookie year, including the assassination of President Kennedy, and no fault of Hallock or my college. We all go through these....

56 years ago, I came to Anoka-Hennepin[1965]; 49 years ago became AHEA/MEA staff [1972]; 21 years ago I retired [2000]; the last two years, from August 31, 1998, in the newly merged Education Minnesota.

Thinking back, I was an unlikely recruit to this band. I was 28, a single-parent of a four-year old when I first became active in the Anoka-Hennepin Education Association. Immediately before staff, I was President-elect of that Association, before that public relations chair and building rep in that same Association. Things like bargaining and grievance processing, central to post-PELRA (1971), were not in my training or even vocabulary. This came with/by on-the-job training.

I've always had a bias towards Justice, which comes from somewhere. Hopeless cases were not hopeless, to me. (For some reason, our colleague, Audrey Erskine's, passion comes to mind.)

Perhaps there was a genetic component that helped me, though I didn't realize it at the time.

In recent years I had to close out the North Dakota family affairs of my mother's roots, including going through all of the 'junk' on the family farm.

In an old ledger book were four newspaper columns by my Grandpa Busch, written and published in the local weekly newspaper in 1928. He was apparently one of the first members and local organizers of the North Dakota Farmers Union, founded 1928, and he was making his pitch to colleague farmers in LaMoure County. (He would have been about 48.) The pitch was the same that all of you would know, addressed to prospective members at meetings, then in newspaper columns in the local weekly. They were, and are, fascinating.

I knew Grandpa as an 'old man' – he was 59 when I was born – and the Stock Market Crash of 1929, and the Great Depression of the 1930s, put a serious damper on his and others dreams. The Farmers Union still exists.

(As I write, I'm aware that my oldest son is 57 now; just this morning a college classmate wrote that their son, 59, just died of a massive heart attack. Time races by.)

**FAMILY:** We were all – Association and Federation - 'family', albeit "Hatfields and McCoys" till the merger in 1998. School faculties were motley collections: elementary specialists, coaches, high school, etc. – all with different personalities and demands. Our "village" was full of 'characters': ourselves, administrators, teachers, support staff.... We knew the turf, the roles and the rules, and had equal but diverse skill sets. I was always field staff. At full complement, I'd guess MEA probably at most had under 125 employees at any one time. Less than 40 were field staff. A goodly share of us were career employees, so the total staff ever worked for MEA was not that large.

We all were in exciting (sometimes scary) times. The bargaining law, PELRA 1971, leveled the labor-management playing field, which was fine for our side, whose members largely had no experience in shared power; and terrifying for the other, which had had all the power. Both sides made sometimes big mistakes. Adding to the mix were outcomes of the 1960s and 70s, like the federal Titles. Pregnant teachers no longer had to resign like they used to. Hard to believe, this was almost 50 years ago.

Back then, as we so well remember, MFT and MEA were competitors for the same members in the same industry. Our offices were a few blocks (planets?) apart. Why do I think of us, then, when I see contemporary political relationships in our country?

I once tried to get a read on the actual memberships – “apples to apples” - of Association and Federation in the late 1980s. Somewhere I have the data. Back at that point the membership was basically classroom teachers in both organizations. Probably the total number for both groups totaled somewhere around 60,000 or so, almost all teachers at that time. (Administrator dominance of the MEA was history by 1970; in the earlier 60s and before they played an important role.)

**SPECIALTIES:** I think we all had our strengths, and our interests, which we migrated towards in assorted staff assignments, and which were wisely utilized by management.

My work emphasis oriented toward teacher rights. But my personal interest was always in the public relations area. One of my most vivid memories was the beginning of “The Year of the School” in 1984, organized by Minnesota School Public Relations Association (MinnSPRA), one of whose founders was Pete Pafiolis, of the MEA PR department; Peter was well respected in the school PR community.

In 1987 I joined MinnSPRA, and the year of my retirement from EM, I became President of MinnSPRA, at the end of which we hosted the national conference of the National School Public Relations Association in Minneapolis.

At about the same time, 1987, I got active in the NEA Family-School-Community Partnership (FSCP) group, which went by various names over the years. MEA was active in this activity. I recall the specific year, since in 1986 my first grandchild was born, and I introduced myself at a subsequent NEA FSCP meeting, as concerned about the future of my grand-daughters generation. This year she’s 35.

About the year of formal merger, MEA and MFT partnered in an NEA Community Conversation project in South Washington County 1997-99. I wish that project would resurrect. I’ve lived in “SouthWash” since 2000; one daughter, Joni, who was active in the Association years ago, is a long-time Principal, currently at Oltman Middle School. Oltman, originally in St. Paul Park, now in Cottage Grove, integrates students from four unique suburbs, Woodbury, Cottage Grove, St. Paul Park and Newport. It is not an easy job.

**MERGER:** From the beginning of my staff assignment I was in competing situations between MEA and MFT. My first staff assignment included Anoka-Hennepin and Osseo. AHEA became exclusive rep because AHFT couldn’t come up with sufficient cards (30%) to challenge; Osseo FT became exclusive rep for the same reason. In 1974, AHFT did challenge, but lost the bargaining election by a large margin. The power of incumbency was huge in all the situations, I think, regardless of who was exclusive rep. All politics is personal. The old tactic “grass is greener on our side of the fence”, and many others were always tried by both “sides”, not always successfully.

**RE MEA AND MFT**, I think the earlier mentioned “Hatfield and McCoy” analogy is not all that far off. There was family loyalty, no matter what the ‘pitch’ of whoever was the minority. Each of us were sometimes Hatfields, other, McCoys.... Who was good or evil depended on what side you pledged allegiance to.

Personally, I never relished the competition. To me, it was counterproductive.

I first witnessed the national situation in person at the 1972 NEA Convention in Atlantic City – first I’d attended – where AFT’s Al Shanker attended as a new member of the NEA. We heard Shanker speak at an evening optional session. The breakout room was packed. (At the same convention, Alex Haley spoke about his soon to be released book, “Roots”. I still have the recording of that speech.)

50 years later, there is still a strong NEA and a strong AFT.

I remember two specific events which moved me actively towards merger: in the summer of 1988, I did a workshop about bargaining elections in Little Falls. I only remember the place, not the reason. It was the standard “we’re better, they’re not” that was used by both organizations, each of which had locals in both camps. (see also page 32)

In the same general time in history, the Aurora-Hoyt Lakes Federation of Teachers went on strike on the Iron Range. MEA had only two members there, but the teachers were part of the Iron Range family, which was more or less equally split between EA and FT locals. Range MEA hosted a dinner for the AHLFT leaders. There was no motive other than support. Such gatherings break down barriers, and that was a result of the gathering, not in any specific way, but a general change in tone of relationships across the Range. It is not easy to fight someone you actually come to know.

During 1988-89 or so I did an organizing history of the two organizations. It was a personal discretionary assignment. I did a great amount of work on the project, in addition to my usual work. The MFT was not impressed with the results. As far as I know, it got wide circulation in MEA. Most memorable find for me was the cache of old MFT newsletters I discovered in the tombs of the east-bank Library at the UofM. Someone had saved them there for posterity.

In 1990, I was transferred to the Apple Valley - Rosemount EA, which had earlier lost a bargaining election to the RFT by a single vote. I didn’t request the move and don’t know why I was transferred there.

There never was another bargaining election in District 196. In the early 90s the leaders of the two locals decided on their own to figure out some way to work together. I remember a meeting, after which I delivered a proposal from RFT to the MEA Executive Committee, which was meeting at McGuire’s in Arden Hills. Over time the process escalated. Of course, I don’t know what was happening on the MFT ‘side’, and I’ve never explored it either.

In about 1993 the two locals merged with support of state and nationals, in my recollection. It was a big deal.

In 1998, MFT and MEA merged. One of my never to be forgotten memories was in August of 1998, when the MFT sign was taken down at the Aurora office, and we formerly warring staff took up office locations in

close proximity to each other. It was a little uncomfortable, but not tense, in my recollection. That was 23 years ago.

**PSA.** I can't close without a few comments about PSA, the Professional Staff Association which organized in 1973 as its own bargaining unit. We still benefit from PSA Union efforts back then. Union matters.

For some unremembered reason – probably as simple as no one else wanted the job - I became President of PSA just in time for the staff strike against MEA, then presided over by firebrand President Don Hill.

The strike was a short one, ending about Labor Day of 1979 as I recall. It was news – a union striking against a union. We didn't have many examples of strikes to give guidance at the time – it was practice for later, I suppose. 1981 was the year of strikes, as I recall.

I recall another memorable meeting in that year as PSA President. I represented Minnesota at a meeting of the relatively new National Staff Organization (NSO) in, I recall, Louisville KY. We met in a conference room at a hotel there. NSO was still evolving as a large union of union staff nationwide. It had no national office nor bureaucracy or even dues, and was a puzzle to its enemies. It was simply a union of union organizers who had occasional activities together. John Warms, a New Jersey staffer, comes to mind.

It was after this meeting that I caught my flight home to Minneapolis. I changed planes in Chicago. The return flight was on a DC-10, and was the first DC-10 to take off on the same runway that the tragic flight of the last DC-10 had gone down some days earlier, losing an engine, crashing, killing all aboard. Every one of us on the plane knew this of course. There was no bantering as we took off that day....

For awhile I was PSA Grievance Rep. Yes, there were grievances and arbitrations.

I left staff work for two years, 1981-83. (see also page 30)The first year was on sabbatical, the second followed my resignation from MEA. I had been MEA staff for 9 years and the decision was mine alone.

I have described the second year as both the worst and the best year of my entire life. I've had better, and I've had worse, but neither in the same exact time period.

Reflecting back, I took a leave and then resigned because I had 'burned out' – I had no energy left, and my entire life experience had been in public education – both parents were career teachers. I needed a change of pace which I couldn't afford, but couldn't defer, either.

Just a decision, which I am still glad I made.

**IN SUM:** I write this 21 years after I retired from Education Minnesota (Jan 2000).

I don't follow union things very closely anymore, though I'm a life member of Education Minnesota Retired, and NEA.

I'm very proud of what we all accomplished, very glad I'm part of the Education Minnesota family, and I hope the new generations don't get sloppy!

## UNISERV

My entire career with MEA/Education Minnesota, 27 years, from March of 1972 to January 18, 2000, was part of the UniServ program of the National Education Association, which was initiated in 1970 and first implemented in 1971.

I am writing this from my own perspective, as part of field staff. Details about the program itself, and its administration at national, state and local levels is for others. I feel I have a pretty unique perspective, however. My entire life has been in public education, as follows:

- 1) Birth to age 18 (1940-1958) growing up in the family of two public school teachers in tiny North Dakota communities. The family story is on-line at <https://chez-nous.net>, (click on the box Esther and Henry Bernard family).
- 2) Valley City State Teachers College 1958-61, thence U.S. Army 1962-63. Bachelors Degree in Education, majoring in Geography.
- 3) Junior High Teacher 1963-72, first in rural Minnesota and North Dakota, thence beginning 1965 in suburban Minneapolis, Anoka-Hennepin School District, Roosevelt Junior High, Blaine Mn.
- 4) First active in Teacher's Association in 1968; temporary appointment as a UniServ director in March of 1972, which extended on to an entire career, ending with retirement in 2000.
- 5) At time of retirement I became President of Minnesota School Public Relations Association, on whose Board I'd been since the late 1980s.
- 6) I have remained visible and active in assorted activities in retirement. One daughter is a long-time school administrator, currently a Middle School Principal in a large suburban school; another daughter is essentially a full-time teacher, as a long-call substitute.
- 7) Several of my nine grandkids are graduates of public schools.

In short, I have been immersed in public education my entire life.

"UniServ" was a revolutionary concept in the organized teacher movement. At the time I started teaching, there was a Minnesota Education Association which was essentially the province of school administrators. It was a professional organization, having an annual convention. It was often the Superintendent who encouraged teachers to join the MEA.

NEA was long established, but membership, as in MEA, was individual option, teacher by teacher, district by district. It was very difficult to organize. UniServ helped a great deal.

(Federation purists thought of MEA as an administrator dominated organization, where teachers had no clout. Their argument had validity, only to a point. MEA teachers included activists who simply played the game though under different rules. Both were equally effective.)

In about 1970, activist teachers in the national affiliate set about re-creating the NEA, a major part of which was changing the governance structure, essentially leaving administrators with little power. The results led to administrators leaving NEA, which became a much more teacher-oriented organization. The debate is endless about the value of this change. I felt and feel that the change was dramatic and immediate and irreversible. I obviously have a bias that I don't even need to articulate.

Enter "UniServ" in your browser, and doubtless information can be found, both pro and anti. Organized locals were one thing; organized national was viewed as a threat including to some state leaders whose own empires were at risk.

Many life-changing ideas in history have occurred in conversations ending up as scribbled notes on, say, restaurant napkins, stuffed in someone's mind or pocket. At the time the concept of UniServ was first discussed, the idea was probably and simply a "pie in the sky" idea..."what if...?".

In 1970-71 I was a local building rep, and I was on the ground floor of UniServ, without knowing it.

The general premise of UniServ was very simple, as I understand it: NEA knew how many members it had, and where they lived, which is to say in virtually every nook and cranny of the United States. There were members elsewhere, and different categories as well, but by and large NEA's members were teachers in U.S. public schools.

I can visualize the initial conversation as it might have occurred... and the napkin notes. After endless conversations in increasingly large and diverse groups, it was agreed that a staff to member ratio for UniServ of about 1:1,200 – one staff to 1200 members.

This was, of course, simply a round number – it gives an idea of staffing needs. As my own history suggests, there were large locals and small locals and urban and rural and on and on. The smallest local I worked with had a dozen teachers and consolidation wouldn't have changed that ratio. The largest was about 1,500 at the time I was there. It now has 3,000.

They all had different expectations and needs and leadership. Not every state leader was enamored of the idea, since it involved in sharing power and autonomy with the national. Teachers like anyone else, are of infinitely diverse personalities, expectations and needs.

Sometimes I marvel that the coalition worked at all, but it really worked very well.

I doubt that most teachers, indeed teacher union leaders, would identify immediately with the word "UniServ". When I googled the word, the first credible description I saw was from someone who is no friend of organized teachers. I don't identify links. You can look on your own. Just try to find some balance in points of view.

In my opinion, UniServ was one of the finest programs ever devised for the organization and long-term benefit of teachers and indeed public education, which is, in my opinion, the foundation of a civil society.

I'll leave it at that. Others can debate the fine points.

## MEA SUMMER LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

(Dick Bernard August 11, 2021)

An annual fixture of the MEA in my years was the Summer Leadership Conference (SLC), which brought staff, leaders and members together for a few days in August. I began on staff in 1972. The first conference I remember was 1974 at College of St. Benedict St. Joseph.

There were one or two years, I believe in the 1970s, where the conference was at St. Cloud State, but virtually every year was at St. Ben's.

"St. Ben's", as we called it, is impossible to boil down into a few words. Probably several hundred persons enrolled. Each person who actually attended even a single SLC will have some, perhaps a flood, of memories.

In my snapshot, I choose these specific memories:

1. A group of us watched President Nixon resign the presidency of the U.S. in the Commons of Mary Hall August 9, 1974. It was a somber group.
2. The 1990 SLC after Jacob Wetterling disappeared (Oct 22, 1989), was also a somber affair. Jacob was a child of St. Joseph. Many activities were built around Jacob's case.
3. In the summer of 1994, a working group of us had a session on building community partnerships, including community representatives. One of our speakers was a Minnesota Sheriff. Nicole Brown Simpson had been found, murdered, June 12, 1994, so there was no question that it would be a topic of conversation. The sheriff opined that he was sure that O.J. was guilty – I remember it vividly even today. This was months before O.J. trial began, and in the relative infancy of instant communication. I knew about Due Process then, and it seemed inappropriate to convict someone before he'd had his time in court.
4. In 2012, the Minnesota Orchestra was locked out in an effort to kill its union. The musicians rose up, united. We're long time orchestra subscribers, and in July, 2013, I asked Education Minnesota to make a Crisis Fund grant to the Orchestra. One of my proudest moments was to be at the auditorium at St. Ben's when orchestra flutist Wendy Williams spoke about the lockout, and MEA Secretary-Treasurer Rodney Rowe gave the Orchestra Union, a generous crisis fund check, which was greatly appreciated.
5. Really my proudest moment at SLC came one time when I had to do a session, I forget the title, which drew a goodly number of teachers. It evolved that the entire session was in the introduction where I asked each person to remember **one outstanding trait of one teacher** they had as a student. The exercise took the entire session. Only one person couldn't think of a single teacher who inspired him. I've kept the list of attributes, and this is what they said, in no particular order: **Affirming, Acceptance, High Expectations, Creativity, Approachable, Inspiring, Personable, Confident, Advocate, Reassurance, Caring, Involvement, Passion, Insight, Pride, Caring, Affirming, Personal Contact, Impact, Passion, Encouraging, Friendly, Accessible, Making students feel special, Human aspect, Challenge, Valuing, Confidence Vision, Valued as a person, Outgoing, Self-esteem, Support, Well-Traveled, Caring, Confident, Sharing of self, Expressed thanks, Personable, Reality, Enthusiasm, Made Learning real, Alive, Dedication, Fun Loving, Fun, Self-confidence, Perspective, Encouraging, Guiding, Feeling important, Empowering, Confidence, Warmth, Spontaneous, Exciting, High expectations, Spontaneous, Professional, Caring, Inspiring, Humor.**

**HELPING OUT:** (Dick Bernard October 15, 2021)

A few days ago, came a reminder of the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Anoka-Hennepin Strike which began on October 13, 1981. I will write separately about that event which began at the same time as I was beginning a sabbatical leave from the Association (no relationship between the two events).

Time passes too quickly. Just a few days ago was the memorial service for **Ward Wilkins**, long-time Anoka-Hennepin Elementary School Principal, who for quite a number of years was one of the representatives for the school district at these negotiations, including 1981.

In the Anoka-Hennepin Strike, and in innumerable other situations over the years, the operating policy, usually unwritten, was “helping out”. From the beginning of my staff life, helping out was a standard and unwritten part of everyone’s staff job description. If somebody needed help, it was presumed that you were available, whether expert or not.

There were mistakes. Everyone made them. I was a totally unwashed staff rookie in 1972 when I invited Dorothy Brooksby from NEA to do a local assessment in Anoka-Hennepin. She did an excellent job. I was reminded, politely but firmly, that it would be nice to involve the state Association in such a decision. It had not occurred to me to ask – I only knew the local at that time.

Any one of us who was staff could generate a long list of occasions at which we helped a colleague out. The reason might be related to expertise, or other specific reasons, but most likely it would simply be an allocation of a staff resource to someone who at the time had more things to do than he or she could handle.

My first and probably most memorable outside assignment was to help out during the Luverne teachers strike of December, 1974. It is described here: <https://workdayminnesota.org/luverne-teachers-took-part-in-historic-strike-40-years-ago/>. I hardly came in as an expert: zero experience in strikes, two years on staff. But myself and the others “similarly situated” who came down were essential help for the teachers and for our colleague, **Chuck Kehrberg**, who was resident staff and even less seasoned than I.

Sadly ironic, but one of the most recent staff deaths was Chuck Kehrberg, on August 4, 2021. <https://www.ohalloranmurphy.com/obituary/Charles-Kehrberg>. His Memorial will be October 22 and 23 in Roseville MN. Details at the funeral home website.

Some weeks ago, I had handwritten a few other specific memories about this topic. I have them in front of me as I write.

Somehow, none of them seem all that relevant now, but at the time they were relevant either to me or to some other staff colleague or teacher local in the state of Minnesota.

**PSA (PROFESSIONAL STAFF ASSOCIATION):** Dick Bernard October 22, 2021 see also p. 11

The MEA staff submitted a petition to be recognized as a bargaining unit September 21<sup>st</sup>, 1973. I would have been in my second year as staff. Others were more seasoned than I, but not a whole lot more, I can safely attest. It wasn't until about 1970 that the concept of a large staff was even contemplated by MEA. Prior to 1970, the Association was most identified as an administrator dominated professional organization. National Education Association Constitution Convention in 1970 completely changed the structure, resulting in essentially the departure of school administrators. At the same time, the Uniserv program was initiated which endeavored to staff groups of members approximating 1200 teachers. We went from a fairly passive organization, to an organization attracting activist teacher leaders.

The most vivid memory I have of the early days came in the first Convention of MEA which I attended in Rochester in the spring of 1972. As I recall, one of the results of that Convention was renaming the Professional Rights and Responsibility Committee to Teacher Rights Council. This was a very major change in emphasis. In that same year, the Public Employment Labor Relations Act (PELRA), which had passed the legislature in 1971, became the Minnesota collective bargaining law.

PSA was a natural outgrowth of the new reality.

In 1997, PSA published a Directory, more or less anticipating the 1998 merger.

The Directory lists the Presidents "in order of service", acknowledging the possibility that some may have been inadvertently missed.

Chuck Purfeerst  
Pat Churchill  
Larry Wicks  
Dick Klein  
John Borgen  
Dick Baldwin  
Dick Bernard  
Ken Berg  
Wayne Hyland  
Doug Stiteler  
John DeSantis  
Chuck Kehrberg  
Doug Solseth  
Bob Larson (who succeeded to President when Doug Solseth died)  
David Moracco  
Ken Hughto  
Harley Ogata

You will notice my name on the list. You will also notice Chuck Kehrberg, whose memorial services are today and tomorrow [Oct 23-24, 2021]. Chuck died on August 4, 2021.

I am quite certain there was no footrace to be PSA President. I doubt there were contested elections; I'm pretty certain there were some second terms of one year, but not many. The Directory doesn't answer the question.

I can only share a few words about my own term, which was, as I recall, about 1979-80.

Over the years I probably have a reputation of being an easy mark for volunteer work for no pay. It must be some genetic flaw! But usually, if someone asked, I answered affirmatively.

The short straw I drew in 1979 was marked by the first and only strike of the PSA against MEA, in late August. It was pretty unique: a Union striking against a Union, so it became a newsmaker.

Others who read this who were there at the time may disagree with some details, but I think the basics are pretty straightforward. The strike was short – my memory is that it was over about Labor Day and it maybe was a week or so at the most.

We picketed the MEA Building, which on reflection was rather amusing. Management was on the second floor and could observe most everything that went on. This was pre-high-tech days, and I think we had a walkie-talkie or two. A TV station interviewed me on the front steps of the MEA (the Sherburne Ave side) and it was good and enduring training on media.

One of our members – I think it was John Martin – was an avid cook and, again if memory serves, set up shop on the west side of the building.

There were probably 40 or so of us in the Union. Plenty of room for differences of opinions and arguments.

Also, about the same time I was President of PSA, a National Staff Organization (NSO) gathered together those new state Uniserv Directors, like ours. There easily were over 1,000 staff from all over the U.S. I recall a report once about the quandary NSO presented to those who mistrusted unions. Large as it was, NSO had no headquarters nor staff. It was an ad hoc group of staff people – a mutual support group.

I probably attended only one gathering and that was in Kentucky, if I recall correctly. This gathering was pretty small, in a large conference room in the hotel.

Most memorable at that meeting was the trip home. About the time I'd flown there, was the same time a DC-10 lost an engine and all were killed on takeoff from O'Hare Airport. Enroute home, the connecting flight was in the same equipment down the same runway, actually the first flight out after the mishap. There was no frivolity as we took off....

After my time as PSA President I would on occasion go to NSO's "War College", usually in Florida. Those were always interesting.

PSA did as unions do, representing its members, likely still, similarly.

I'll let **Harley Ogata** get in the last word, from the frontispiece of the 1997 Directory:

*"I have the bittersweet distinction of most likely being the last in a long line of PSA presidents. Reading the enclosed sketches and history gives one a taste of the full breadth and character of our organization. The PSA, like the MEA, has undergone tremendous change and upheaval through the time that the PSA has been in existence. If there is any one constant through all of this, it's the notion that change is an inherent part of staff work."*

**CHUCK KEHRBERG AND UNION:.** Dick Bernard October 24, 2021

Yesterday, I attended the farewell for colleague Chuck Kehrberg in Roseville. There were a few of us there; there had been a few others at a memorial event the previous evening. Such events are for the living. Chuck would have been pleased, I think.

Chuck crossed the goal-line at 85 years. It causes pause. I was a year and a half senior to him on the PSA seniority list when he joined staff in 1973. The clock stops for no one.

He and I shared an interest in Habitat for Humanity; we did not share a similar interest in golf. For some years, I went out once a year with a four-some whose sole purpose for gathering was to remind ourselves that golf wasn't our thing!

After the Memorial Service (listen to Chuck's choice, Aaron Copland's "*Fanfare for a Common Man*" on YouTube), **Darrell Baty, John Borgen** and I went out for what turned out to be a near two-hour lunch at Good Earth, Roseville, revisiting the Union days.

This was certainly a propitious time to be talking Union. Good Earth – where I had breakfast on the day I retired from Education Minnesota January 18, 2000 – is no longer open for breakfast. They can't find sufficient staff. Earlier the same day, at the Caribou which has been my early morning haunt for years, I saw a new sign, asking for patience from customers. The nearby Panera has closed for the same reasons as Good Earth; the same week, the neighborhood Keys also closed. Closure was temporary, but....

And we all see the news. Unions fell out of fashion beginning in the 1980s. We still may not be fully in fashion, but workers are organizing in some individual ad hoc ways to send a message: we have value too. As an old Union guy, I find this a welcome (though inconvenient, sometime) development, and I wish unions well.

John, Darrell and I conversed about the old days in the same ways that anyone reading this would do. Call them what you will, but everyone's life is a series of stories, sometimes triumphant, mostly mundane, sometimes "can you believe that!?" What was, was, and is....

Through our respective staff lives, mostly we were devoted in one way or another to Justice, often representing people who even some of their colleagues weren't sure were deserving of representation.

My generation came of age during a time in history where teachers had finally had it with the status quo, and were willing to rise up and say "enough" in all the assorted ways available to them.

Then there came a time, which began before we retired, where individualism struck a chord. People forgot, in all the ways available to humans, that advances gained through solidarity could be and were easily lost when the only “power” was the power of the individual.

It is too early to know, yet, if the recent restiveness of workers will inspire a new era of Saul Alinsky-like organizers. I’ll be watching. It was not easy – no ‘walk in the park’.

**And in the mean-time, I hope that more of you will add a few notes to this expanding piece of writing. As for me, I have one more piece I want to do, about the 1981 Anoka-Hennepin Strike, which began Oct 13, 1981. I will hold on that for some time yet, but it will be coming.**

In the meantime, here’s a memory of that strike from an Anoka-Hennepin building representative in the fall of 1981, as printed in the AHEM Friday Blast from **AHEM President Valerie Holthus**, October 8, 2021:

“40-Year Anniversary of Anoka-Hennepin Strike.

40 years ago, the Anoka-Hennepin District was growing by leaps and bounds, and teachers earned low wages, had few rights and the District was losing talented young teachers. So, on October 13, 1981 Anoka-Hennepin teachers voted to walk the line.

*“I knew something had to change or I could not afford to stay in the profession. My salary hardly covered the rest of my one-bedroom apartment and the payments of my small used car”, wrote **Sandy Skaar**.*

**Frank Meuers** commented, *“As a building strike leader, I had to coordinate picket schedules, arrange for a small mobile home for breaks, find homes for making coffee, bathroom facilities and provide for mutual babysitting. The word was the board didn’t think we would ever walk out, because it had never been done, and we had always been intimidated. We DID go out, and made great strides for our teachers, not only in salary, but in grievance arbitration, leave policy, and many more issues. My first contract was one page long, and had no sick-day or leave provisions, no salary schedule, not much of anything except the total salary and contract year. Without our union and countless hours of work by so many, we would not be in the position we are today.”*

Negotiator **Paul Rogne** said, *“We added many important provisions to the teachers’ contract that are still there today...but what occurs to me now is how easily those provisions could be lost if taken for granted...only through continued resolve and unity of the entire teaching staff will the gains of the past be maintained and built upon.”*

....Fast Forward, October, 2021

No matter how things change, some things remain the same.

Anoka-Hennepin continues to grow in leaps and bounds, and teachers continue to make lower wages than in other occupations that require a college education. The District is still losing talented young teachers, and we must still fight for better wages and benefits. However, what has changed is our right to organize, to communicate to our school board and bring up issues to our supervisors without fear of losing our jobs. We find ourselves in contract mediation, and when we stand together, and show unity, we know we have the power to improve our salary, benefits and working conditions.”

**Dick Bernard:** It occurs to me that “40 years ago” I had been a teacher for near 9 years, active in the Association for 4, Union staff in Anoka-Hennepin for near 9 years.... Stay tuned.

October 31, 2021: Time to add a few thoughts about the 1981 Anoka-Hennepin Teacher strike from my point of view. These are simply extemporaneous thoughts.

First, I was not an active participant in the strike. Simply by circumstance, in the Spring, I had been granted a sabbatical leave by Minnesota Education Association for the 1981-82 school year. All of the key actions of the strike occurred when I was on leave, but I certainly wasn't absent either.

The time preceding, during, and the two years after the leave I have often described as both the best and worst years of my life. I emphasize best **and** worst. Others who knew me between 1980 and 1983 can fill in the blanks. I've used 'burnout' to describe the time period for me.

I came to Anoka-Hennepin in 1965, 25, a widower with a 1 ½ year old son. I came to Roosevelt Junior High School. Roosevelt was a brand-new school in then-exploding suburb of Blaine, which was attracting many young families buying new first homes without garage.

In 1968 I became an AHEA building rep; in 1970-71 I edited the local newsletter; in March, 1972, I was hired as a six month Uniserv Director – a term which stretched out to 27 years.

The summer before the strike began I had been a teacher for 18 years, in Anoka-Hennepin for 16 years, active in the Association for 13, full-time staff for AHEA for 9 years. All but my second year, in North Dakota, was in Minnesota. All but one of the Minnesota years, the first at Hallock, was Anoka-Hennepin.

In 1971 the Minnesota State Legislature passed the Public Employment Labor Relations Act, the bargaining law which officially brought collective bargaining to Minnesota's public school districts. As best I recall, the Law's passage depended on both Republicans and Democrats.

Before that, from 1967, an Act called Meet and Confer was in effect, formalizing relationships between public employees and their employer, compared to the earlier 'bring and beg' years. In those in-between years, an unsettled contract had to jump through a previously unavailable “adjustment panel” where a neutral party became more-or-less a mediator between teachers and school board. I recall participating in one of these, with prominent attorney Leonard Lindquist in Minneapolis. They helped encourage settlement, but had no final authority. Meet and Confer wasn't perfect. It was practice for PELRA.

Meet and Confer, in fact, continued in PELRA time as an important Teacher-School Board Forum for discussion of school related non-negotiable policies of all sorts. It was important.

(The so-called Cities of the First Class, Minneapolis, St. Paul and Duluth, are not dealt with here. They were under different statutory rules than the rest of the school districts.

As Valerie [President of AHM, above] knows well, bargaining entities of any kind, anywhere, are complicated by all sorts of factors. It is a marvel that any negotiations involving many people succeeds, much less endures.

In Anoka-Hennepin a big change occurred in 1975 when then-Superintendent Erling Johnson retired and the School Board hired a new Superintendent Lew Finch.

Superintendent Johnson was old-school, former Commissioner of Education. He had signed my contract when I first came to A-H in 1965. His office was then in what is now the Fred Moore building.

As Association staff, I attended the interviews for the successor Superintendent, where Dr. Finch was selected. I was just an observer. Dr. Finch wouldn't have been my choice, though I had no personal animosity towards him. I don't think he had much regard for unions generally, and it played out as his tenure in A-H began and continued.

In 1981, the PELRA law had been amended to allow strikes. In 1981, President Reagan slapped down the Air Traffic Controllers union, and it was a harbinger of bad times for unions generally.

In Anoka-Hennepin the secretaries struck in the summer of 1981. I don't remember the exact circumstances, but let it never be forgotten that they were the first to walk the line in the school district.

Bargaining didn't seem to have very good prospects in the spring and summer of 1981. I was involved as part of the team, but negotiators were **Paul Rogne** and **Walt Munsterman**, and they were excellent. The District was represented by Tom Arneson, with administrators in support. I think Ward Wilkins, Hoover Principal who recently died, was often part of the team. I don't recall the other administrators, off hand.

By September, 1981, I had started on Sabbatical.

I vividly recall the massive strike vote meeting at (I think) the Bel Rae ballroom. There was absolutely zero question that the vote would be very strong authorization to strike. There were mediations before and after the vote, but I don't recall any meaningful overtures to really get down to work and get a settlement.

The strike, when it happened, turned out to be the most successful of many in Minnesota that fall. Strikes never are assured successes. A-H had a very good ending. I seem to remember that the Anoka-Coon Rapids Homecoming game in Coon Rapids sort of speeded up the process to get a settlement – at least that is my opinion.

I particularly resonated with Paul Rogne's comment (p.22), where he articulates the danger of taking for granted items that years before were gained by very hard bargaining. Nothing is forever.

**From JOHN HENDRICK, Anoka-Hennepin teacher leader:** Johnhendrick@hotmail.com. 6020 Creekview Lane N. Brooklyn Park, Mn. 55443

#### HATFIELD JOIN McCOYS

I began teaching in Grove City, Mn. in 1964....I negotiated my own salary for 1965 as did all other teachers in the district.

In 1966, I moved on to Prior Lake and then AH#11 in 1968 when Jackson Jr. opened. By then there existed a very basic tenure law but no seniority provisions, no grievance procedures or arbitration, no collective bargaining or right to strike.

After becoming active in the Federation I was eventually elected President during the 70's when we were challenging the AHEA in so-called bargaining elections.

During my term we lost a bargaining election by a 2 to 1 margin (I believe something like 600 to 300) and the future for the Federation did not look bright. Then two things happened:

Paul Rogne and Jerry Barfuss both in separate conversations said that they had discussions with Walt Munsterman and that "he was one of us." Meaning, of course, an agent for change.

Then, somehow, Bob Marcotte reported that he had a meeting with new MEA President Don Hill and that "things in the Association were going to be different". We needed to be part of that.

After much discussion, "if you can't lick em, Join em" prevailed. Much of the leadership of the old Fed. left and joined AHEA.

The resulting unique combination of talent, intelligence, and experience turned AHEA into a "real union." Consider the unique combination of Walt Munsterman and Paul Rogne at the bargaining table. Consider the "activist push" of Bob Marcotte combined with the leveling influences of Dick Bernard and Sue Evert.

It was the "perfect storm." I was lucky to be a part of it.

#### SIGNIFICANT EVENTS!

Collective bargaining and teacher rights are now being threatened. What we gained for the profession is now under attack from both the left and the right. If we are to continue to attract good people to teaching the charter schools must be unionized.....salary and benefits must be improved etc. etc.

**from KATHY GARVEY, Anoka-Hennepin teacher leader:** When I came to Anoka-Hennepin in 1970, women were required to wear a dress. Women could not wear pants. A group of women got together in the winter to ask if they could wear a "Pant Suit" because the buildings were so cold. Dick Bernard went to Washington Elementary to take a picture of the "pant suits". An elderly teacher in my school was sent home for wearing checkered pants and a sweatshirt. She thought she had a pant suit! Midyear a teacher named Barb came to me to talk. She was being terminated because she was four months pregnant. The contract read "4 months".

The substitute came on Monday to take her job. Barb would not leave. Pretty soon the sixth grade girls were crying. District called to say she had to leave. She then said “what if I would have lied and not told you I was 4 months pregnant”. To which she was told “We read birth announcements in the Sunday paper and we would have known you lied.

Birth announcements are no longer printed in the paper. On the way out the door Barb said “There are people in this building with bigger stomachs than mine, including the men.”

I believe Moundsview MEA took a case to court and women could take a Maternity Leave and not be terminated.

I was on the Teacher Rights Panel for 25 years and saw many wonderful changes for teachers.

**From DICK BERNARD responding to Kathy and John about Anoka-Hennepin:** Back in those good old “Hatfield and McCoy” days, the other side was the enemy.

It wasn’t quite that simple, when we got past the war business. We were all colleague teachers in Anoka-Hennepin.

From the time I got active in AHEA, I was also involved in the Anoka-Hennepin Conceptual Geography Project. I’m not exactly sure who initiated that through the UofM, but I think Bob Marcotte was key, and people like myself, and Jim Rumley, and John Snowfield and Mark Ryman and maybe others I’ve forgotten. Jim taught at Roosevelt with me. I think four of those 5 were AHFT. We worked together, basically Jackson and Roosevelt Junior High. I don’t recall anyone from Fred Moore or Coon Rapids Junior, and I think the Junior high school in east Coon Rapids, Northdale, had not yet been built. Twice we went to national geography conferences, in Houston and Atlanta, about 1968 and 69. We developed a curriculum together that was used in Anoka-Hennepin for many years, I understand. We were at school board meetings together. Several of us went to a 1971 summer school at Oregon College of Education together – one of those post-Sputnik summer schools.

So, we competitors weren’t exactly strangers.

Ideologically we were poles apart, though I was just barely beginning to know there was a difference. On the way back from Atlanta in 1969, we stopped at Galesburg IL for overnight enroute home. There (I think) Bob Marcotte and the FTers met with somebody(ies) from the Chicago FT. I was stuck in the motel.

So, by no means were we strangers.

We in AHEA thought the 1974 bargaining election would be closer than it was. We had no idea. It was nerve-wracking to wait for the vote totals. It was at the time of the MEA Convention and I think I was the one who reported the vote count to the MEA folks.

Then came the question of what now?

What I remember best was a summer gathering at future-AHEA President Maynord Steensgards apartment in, I think, Spring Lake Park or Fridley. EA and FT leaders came. The agenda was informal, I’m sure the meeting related to how or if we could relate. Maynord was very nervous about the meeting. My

recollection is that it went well. It was not a rocket science deal, and from our side at least it wasn't strategized, to my knowledge by any outsiders – at least on our side. Allowing for defective memory, I think I recall it relatively correctly. **(See Bob Marcotte's recollection below. Bob had been a very active Federation activist.)**

Life went on, as we all know. Everybody had a part in later successes.

I have one other memory that sticks in my mind. Lyle Root and I in the 1972 negotiations season were no friends of Supt. Erling Johnson and the Central office. We did – rather I did – something stupid which doesn't deserve repeating, but was at a Board meeting, which in those days was held at the TEC Center.

A year or two later, Erling retired, and AHEA at the time – I don't recall who – came up with the idea of having each faculty autograph a piece of their school stationery for a notebook – one sheet for each school. People weren't pressured – at least not from our end – and when Erling retired we just presented him the notebook at the recognition. It moved him, I think.

Then came the next guy who was going to teach the union a thing or two..... Why am I blanking on his name!? Lew Finch. I was at the open meeting where finalist candidates presented their case in a public meeting. I think Lew was last on my list. He didn't seem very friendly to unions.

Some years later Dr. Finch was superintendent in Jefferson County Colorado – the school district in which Columbine is located, and where my son Tom has lived since the late 1980s. I actually went out to the District office and said hello. This was before Columbine. The visit was a surprise, brief and cordial.

I think collectively AHEA as a collective group accomplished a great deal for the profession.

**BOB MARCOTTE** remembers the 1974 meeting at Maynard Steensgards (Dec 11, 2021: Yes Dick, that meeting happened, but before I give my recollection let me share a bit of inside history (some of which I'm sure you already know).

Don Hill [MEA President] was a major part of the reason why I decided to join the EA. He had good and bad points, but I saw in him a strong no nonsense leader who wouldn't take shit from administrators, school boards or even the politicians. It is my opinion that he was the EA's first forceful progressive president. I had several long talks with Don and was encouraged to change the AHFT strategy, especially after losing that long shot bargaining election. Now let me share a bit about the situation you are inquiring about.

The AHFT leadership which included Paul [Rogne], John [Hendrick], Jerry [Barfuss], Tom and the list goes on and on (mostly rebels at Jackson JH placed there so Al Clemmons could shape them up) decided on a new strategy to have our voices heard after the election. The "IF YOU CAN'T BEAT UM ----JOIN UM AND TAKE OVER" decision was the strategy we felt would give us a chance to make change and improve teaching conditions for both students and teachers. So yes, I did attend that Executive Board meeting, though I was not warmly welcomed. In fact, the table at which we all sat was not long enough for everyone to get far enough away from me! Thankfully, you were more welcoming, Dick, as we had some history from curriculum development.

I'm afraid I can't recall what was said or how the meeting went (possibly there are meeting minutes going back that far?). But needless to say, it became an ice breaker and opened the door to our working in unison

instead of opposition. As you know, it didn't take long for the former FTers to take their places alongside EAers and work together for the common good of education in Anoka-Hennepin. The best example is Paul and Walt!

As minds get more fuzzy over the years, this may have only been a dream, hope it help jog others memories.

**Dick Bernard: Remembering the earliest time of competition June 21, 2021:** Yesterday, Kathy Garvey sent me the obituary for a legendary Anoka High School science teacher, Lyle Bradley. The obit is below. I sent her the following response.

“The very first crisis in my career as staff was a meeting with Lyle Bradley at AHEA President Lyle Roots house in August or September of 1972. Lyle was an AHFT member, and he was extremely upset that Principal Art Dussl had ordered a custodian to clean out his classroom without his permission and he wanted us to file a grievance. Lyle’s classroom was a working place, probably cleanliness was not one of the major values.

As I recall it, there was no contract language on which to defend the grievance, and, of course, we were novices at this brand new right under the first collectively bargained contract. As I recall nothing happened. The three of us met, and life went on. I may miss some essential facts, but the essential situation will always stick with me! Lyle was an outstanding guy and teacher; he just didn’t have a sustainable grievance or a legal case....”

**OBITUARY:** Bradley, Lyle R. (96) of Andover, MN passed away peacefully with family at his side on Monday, June 7, 2021. He was preceded in death by his parents, Roy and Blanche Bradley; and sister, Ilomay Sarchett. Lyle is survived by his wife, Carol; children, Beth (James) Denny, Jeff (Sharon) Bradley, Howard Bradley, Susan Nimmons, Tom (Nicola) Bradley; 11 grandchildren; many great-grandchildren; nieces, nephews, extended family and friends. Lyle was born November 22, 1924 in Dubuque, IA to Roy and Blanche Bradley where he developed a love for birds and fascination with flight that was central to his life. As young man Lyle went off to war in the Pacific flying the F4U Corsair in WWII, and continued his service in the Korean War and many years in the Marine Reserves, retiring as a Lt. Col. after 42 years. In 1954, Lyle met Carol at a teacher's summer school class in Duluth, MN. They were married June 25, 1955, established their homestead on the Rum River in Grow Township, outside Anoka, MN where they raised their five children and resided until the end. Lyle was a beloved Science Teacher at Anoka Senior High School from 1955 until he retired as the District 11 Science Consultant in 1984. He will be remembered by hundreds of AHS students for the famous Summer Biology Field Trips, every summer from 1961 - 1983, where he was known affectionately as Bugs. It was through a field trip to Wyoming that he discovered the dinosaur site the Science Museum of Minnesota has on display. Throughout his life, to the end, Lyle was a committed citizen having served on the Metropolitan Airport Commission, the Minnesota Zoo Board, local Grow Township government before it was the City of Andover, Community Ed Ornithology classes, started the Wood Duck Society, belonged to a writers group and a published co-author of a book called Marine Wings. We will miss you, and have peace knowing you are flying with the birds and planes. Memorials received will be used to establish a scholarship in his name at Anoka High School. Lyle lived a full and eventful life that cannot be expressed with these few words. We invite those who knew him to join us in a Celebration of Life, Saturday, June 26th from 4-6 PM at Golden Wings Museum 8797 Airport Road, Blaine, MN 55449. Use the south entrance to

the airport and enter through Gate A. [Goldenwingsmuseum.com](http://Goldenwingsmuseum.com) for map Private Interment Fort Snelling National Cemetery. Neptune Society 763-545-8095

## **TRANSITION:**

I left staff work for sabbatical in September, 1981. In the spring of 1982, a national recession led to MEA considering layoffs, and I decided to leave union staff work at the conclusion of the sabbatical. I've always said it was both the best and worst decision I've probably ever made.

By September, 1983, I was at the end my rope, psychologically and financially. There wasn't a market for Union reps and my personal safety net had become family. I didn't qualify for unemployment since mine was a voluntary quit, and I was too proud to go on welfare. I tried several versions of multi-level marketing, but I am not a direct sales kind of person. It was an interesting trip down the rabbit-hole of false "opportunity" – nothing is 'get-rich-quick'.

One opportunity, A. L. Williams, did turn out successfully for me as it was a great introduction to personal financial planning...for myself. Williams was a high school football coach who got rich selling term insurance. I actually saw him in person in Minneapolis. I expect he's still rich. I'm not. But what I learned in my time with his group was very important to me personally.

In general, my life lesson from all of this: explore, but don't bet the farm. Nothing comes without lots of effort. Never risk your reputation on something that sounds better than it is.

I always remember a particular incident, probably in the early summer of 1983, when I was on the Corporate Board of Catholic Charities and we sponsored a picnic kind of affair for homeless and poor folks at a church near Franklin Ave and Cedar in Minneapolis. I helped serve the poor; at the time, my status was not much different than them. I was in genuinely hard times.

Corporate Boards particularly seek people of high net worth and/or connect to companies with substantial funds to contribute. By 1983, I was "the poor one" on the Board, though no one ever said that to my face.

In August, 1983, I drove my Dad back to his home in south Texas. It was a wonderful trip. I know he was worried about me. The trip was very hot, and the air conditioner in the car wasn't working. We visited the Eisenhower Museum in Abilene KS, and Lyndon Johnson's birth home in Johnson City TX, and had lots of time to visit. It was a very good trip. I've always been grateful.

In September, 1983, a couple of MEA staff vacancies came up. I was asked to come back to Anoka-Hennepin, but I declined the position – for reasons having nothing to do with the assignment, I needed a change, and declined. Later in the month I was offered, and accepted, the staff assignment on Minnesota's Iron Range, to replace Doug Solseth, who was transferring to another assignment in western Minnesota.

## THE IRON RANGE 1983-91

My son and a friend of his helped me move to an apartment in Hibbing which was to be my home for the next 8 years. I don't think I had ever been to Hibbing, and only a single trip to one town on the Iron Range years earlier, and it was a completely new experience. I was also broke, literally. I remember sitting at the Village Inn in Hibbing, doing micro-budgeting to climb out of debts incurred earlier. Some things you never forget. It was a slow tortuous lonely process.

My time on the Iron Range was very interesting, working with very good people who were part of what most would consider to be a unique culture. I don't think I ever really fit in – I was an outsider, representing the state Union, and had no roots there, but I think it basically worked out fine for everyone.

The Range was very different from Anoka-Hennepin (A-H). A-H was already one of the largest school districts in Minnesota. The Iron Range was very diverse mix of mostly small locals, about half Federation, the other half Association, covering an immense amount of geography. The Range went from Deer River to Ely, from Orr to Brookston. One district, St. Louis County, quite likely was geographically the largest district in the state. It encompassed many small schools, some elementary only, none very large. One district, Nett Lake, was a reservation school, and the entire faculty was in a single building, and negotiations could and did take place at daily lunch with the superintendent. The whole faculty was the negotiations committee....

All in all, however, working with smaller locals was really not that much different than Anoka-Hennepin. Of course, there was one President of AHEA, on the Range, there were about 14 locals, roughly half and half Federation and Association. In almost all of them there was a minority union competing for bargaining rights. Sometimes the majority was EA, others the FT.

The division of allegiance to Association or Federation was pretty serious in those days. My apartment was almost directly across the street from the Range Federation of Teachers office, but I don't recall ever meeting or even seeing the then-Federation staff person, or either of us visiting the others office. It just wasn't done. Down the hall from the MEA office in the Teske Building was the regional office of the United Steel Workers. I recall only a single occasion where there was interaction between them and me. There was simply nothing to talk about. The one occasion was probably near the end of my time there when Range MEA was supporting the Aurora-Hoyt Lakes Federation strike. (Now, Education Minnesota is apparently the largest single union in the Minnesota AFL-CIO, and the former President of the Anoka-Hennepin local, who was AFL-CIO Treasurer, is Minnesota State Auditor. Times have certainly changed.)

As best I recall, these were the Range locals: Ely, Babbitt, Tower-Soudan, St. Louis County, Virginia, Mountain Iron-Buhl, Eveleth, Gilbert, Aurora-Hoyt Lakes, Biwabik, Chisholm, Hibbing, Nashwauk-Keewatin, Hill City, Coleraine-Bovey, Grand Rapids (including Cohasset and Big Fork), Deer River. Also part of the mix were Technical Colleges in Hibbing and Eveleth, which were part of the Association bargaining units to my recollection. Hibbing and Virginia (both Association), and Grand Rapid (Federation) were the largest locals.

St. Louis County was an interesting entity. To my recollection, this Federation local included the following places with schools, during my time or earlier: Orr, Cook, Alango, Forbes, Cherry, Toivola-Meadowlands, Brookston, and possibly Cotton and Canyon. Each was their own unique entity. St. Louis County went on strike the first year I was there, and it was a unique experience, just trying to visit the sites in the middle of winter.

There was other posturing for strikes in my time on the Range, but the only regular sabre-rattling I recall was Eveleth, which seemed to have a bit of tradition of going to the brink each two years, and settling at the last minute, but rarely actually striking. It seemed almost a local tradition. Between the verbal fisticuffs, the parties in combat seemed to get along well, before, during and after....

For much of my Range years, I had office space in Duluth in the Arrowhead building overlooking Lake Superior. On occasion I would have some assignment in places like Silver Bay and Proctor, etc. Duluth was a Federation local, as were most other area locals.

Basically, all of the locals, Association and Federation, were self-supporting. They had to be. As noted, some were competitive internally, but it was impossible to discern any significant difference between the two unions: we both did the same things in the same ways in the same environment.

On the Range, as had been true in all my other assignments, I generally knew only the local leaders, and those souls who had some employment related issue (grievance or like). Most of the ordinary rank and file members had no direct dealings with people like myself. On occasion, something would erupt. I can recall some pretty heated meetings where it fell to me to represent the state organization which had taken a position not in agreement with local priorities. There was an alleged sex related charge against a teacher which ended up as front-page news: ultimately the teacher, who demanded a public hearing, won his case.

Another case saw a hockey coach being summarily fired. It, too, became front page news. The school board reinstated the coach. This was how the work went. Not all conflicts led to successful results, of course. We did our best.

For me, an important inflection point came when Aurora-Hoyt Lakes went on Strike about 1988. (See also p. 13). There were only two Association members in the District, against perhaps 80 Federation. The Range MEA worked in solidarity with the Federation local, and the collaboration I am convinced helped ultimately to merger at the state level a few years later.

It was about this time that I began researching how it was that the Federation and Association had come to be at war for many years. It started after a meeting in Little Falls where I was supposed to talk about bargaining elections in some Central Minnesota locals. It evolved into something larger than I had anticipated, and I think became a useful document as talk moved more and more towards some kind of merger.

Also, during the Range years, starting mid-1980s, I had the opportunity and interest in the Family-School-Community Partnership (FSCP) idea being nurtured by the NEA, and I discovered and became active in the Minnesota School Public Relations Association, one of whose founders was MEA's Pete Pafiolis.

## **BACK TO THE TWIN CITIES: 1991-2000**

In 1990, I began to transition back to the Twin Cities. I didn't request the transfer, and there was no reason to challenge the new assignment. The Cities had been my environment for 17 years before moving to the Range. I've never asked why I was transferred. It is a topic of no interest to me, now retired for 22 years.

My initial assignment was to Rosemount-Apple Valley District (AV-R), though as I recall my final move to Apple Valley didn't take place till 1991.

AV-R was a large south suburban district which not long before I arrived had suffered the worst possible fate (in my opinion). The local Federation of Teachers had won a bargaining election over the Association by a single vote, in a district of over 1,000 teachers. I really had no awareness of the back-story in AV-R, but I do know that in 1989, while on the Iron Range, I had done what I considered a major piece of research on the Minnesota Federation of Teachers, and the long conflict between MFT and MEA, dating back to the 1960s. Nobody commissioned me to do the paper, which was motivated by my belief that there was no future in competition between the unions. The paper of about 40 pages or so got lots of distribution in the Association leadership ranks. I'm sure it was not the top of the MFT's best-seller list.

Officially, we were supposed to go back to war to win the local. My heart wasn't in it. My guess is I wasn't alone. Bargaining elections had become an exercise in futility.

Within the first year, we had the first more or less official meeting with the local Federation, and at some point the Federation made a proposal for working together, which I hand-carried to the MEA Executive Committee, meeting at McGuire's in Arden Hills. For some reason, I can remember the day, which included bad driving conditions. I also remember that I did nothing more than deliver the proposal. I don't recall seeing even the inside of the room where the MEA Executive Committee was meeting.

I delivered the proposal, and left.

The war between teacher unions in Minnesota was now essentially over, though nothing official indicated that.

Two years later, in the winter of 1993, the Association and Federation locals officially merged in AV-R, and the merger was accepted and recognized by the state and national organizations. It was a major development. I was proud to be at the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the merger in February, 2013.

The remainder of my career seems to have been more miscellaneous kinds of duties. I say this not in a dismissive sort of way about myself or anyone else. The organization was moving on, to ultimate merger of the state organizations in 1998.

My involvement for the rest of my career was mostly to locals like Forest Lake, Stillwater, South Washington County, Hastings, and other duties as assigned.

As in Anoka-Hennepin, and on the Iron Range, you never knew for sure what the next day would bring. Near the end of my career, one of my final acts was to deliver a letter for a female teacher in county jail for alleged sexual relationship with a junior high male student. It was basically a given that the teacher was guilty, but she was a member, and at minimum the right to due process. In pretty short order, the teacher

lost her license to teach and was fired. As I recall, there was no need for hearing, she resigned, but due process was followed, a basic legal right.

My passion on Family-School-Community Partnerships, which began in the 1980s, escalated in my final years on staff, and I was most actively involved in these kinds of activities on the state level, and also doing trainings at the national level.

In the late 1980s I got actively involved in the Minnesota School Public Relations Association, and became President of that group the year after I retired, in 2001. A reminder of that passion remains on the internet at <https://outsidethewalls.org>.

## SOME FINAL THOUGHTS – Dick Bernard November 13 and 14, 2021

It occurred to me today that I was a teacher union activist for about 10,000 days from 1972-2000. This was 27 years, not including one year (1982-83) when I left MEA employment.

That thought led back to another I've had over the years. Being staff – indeed, being a person - is not to be perfect.

I began to make a list of Stupid things, or Smart, that I could remember over the years. I even began to write things down, but that would be pointless at this stage in my life and of no abiding interest to anyone.

Suffice to say that it is a given that when your daily work is with, against and around human beings, one of whom is yourself, most who you hardly know, certainty is an unreasonable expectation. Lots can happen in 10,000 days, or 1,000, or one. Throw in laws, rules and regulations, particularly when these are changing rapidly, including how one set of human beings are to relate to another, and there are additional problems.

In the teacher union arena in Minnesota from 1972 forward, and before, and beyond, books of 'can you believe it?' can and should be written....

But my list will remain my own, as will everyone else. And as we age, the stories remain vivid, perhaps embellished, and diminish as memory begins to lose its edge.

A few days ago, waiting for a medical appointment, I began another list of some of the lessons learned when I left the junior high classroom and was tossed into the arena of learning new schools and hopefully helping represent colleagues in different places and at different levels. Most of my training was 'on the job'. I think that was true for most of my colleagues as well. It was bit like learning to swim (I still don't) by being tossed into the pool. To survive, you learned by each new experience.

Here's what I wrote down the other day, and I emphasize that this was just the first very rough draft, and the items listed are in no order, other than how they appeared on the paper.

1. There is no such thing as "clearly" – a favorite lawyer word.
2. Expect the unexpected, no matter how much experience you have. People are creative.
3. Learn early that different points of view are a constant, each a learning opportunity.
4. Look for solutions in unlikely places from unlikely individuals. The higher up the hierarchy, the less likely the person willing to take the risk necessary to accomplish change.
5. Balance is essential even if the game is to win.
6. Losses are learning opportunities.
7. The "bottom line" is never the "bottom line" for even the most determined 'side'.
8. Celebrate the half-full rather than lament the half-empty
9. Make it a practice to look back and see what you've accomplished. It is as important as goals.
10. Know the other sides case as well or better than your own. You don't need surprises when its too late.
11. Your word is all you've got. Keep it.
12. If you're feeling burned out, you probably are, and it shows in your work.
13. Think and act the long game.
14. "The grass is not greener on the other side of the fence."
15. If you decide to strike, remember that, once out, you'll need to get back in.

16. Killing the opponent might feel good at the time, but carries a big cost.
17. There is something to the philosophy of “win-win”, that is far superior to “win-lose”
18. A “no” is simply one step on the road to “yes”
19. Avoid making promises you may not be able to deliver.
20. Patience and persistence pay
21. Progress is like going upstairs – take one step at a time.

This is just a handful of words, and like I say, these were simply random thoughts in a waiting room on a Fall day. Add to the list...or refute some that are listed.

60 Years ago – early December, 1961, I graduated from college. Not in my wildest dreams could I have imagined the years which followed. I would imagine I’m not alone. Life is its own road, with potholes, pavement, wrong turns, on and on. Mostly, we all roll with the punches and endeavor to leave behind a little bit better world than we found it. Sometimes it’s discouraging and it seems hopeless, but never lose hope.

Thank you for reading.

Dick Bernard  
November 13 2021

#### **MORE FINAL THOUGHTS NOVEMBER 14, 2021**

I notice I began this effort on February 17, 2021. My motivation was an attempt to summarize a career before all of us are deceased and the memories die with us. I had no outline for this. What is printed is what ultimately resulted. Hopefully others will add to this in their own ways.

I started this writing near the personal one year anniversary of the deadly Covid-19 Pandemic, which still continues, now over 600 days. My personal Covid-19 anniversary is March 17, 2020, when everything started to close; March 6, 2020, was when I was first cautioned by daughter Lauri that trouble seemed to be ahead, the time of masks and social distance.... We were naïve, then.

600+ days into the pandemic, the Sunday Nov. 14 Minneapolis Star Tribune primary front-page story was headlined “Teachers Most Difficult Year”. A sub-headline for the story quotes Education Minnesota President Denise Specht: *“The amount of stress, anxiety and mental health issues we’re hearing about is unlike any other year. And we’re only two months in.”*

A few minutes ago a PBS program features a number of workers in various places coping with these two years of reality. The last bit is of a young California teacher, laid off, but just hired for a new teaching job.

Sandwiched between, headlines are of many workers quitting their jobs, inflation, spontaneous independent strikes for living wages, the Glasgow Cop26 Climate meetings, the supply chain crisis, the Rittenhouse trial in Kenosha, on and on and on. When/How will the craziness end?

Ours is a very different world than the one I entered as a teacher in 1963, and as Union Staff in 1972.

When I came to Anoka-Hennepin in 1965, the District of over 20,000 students was growing at a rate of over 2,000 students a year, full of lower income first-home residents who were young with very young families. The average age as I recall was under 18. Suburbs, particularly Anoka-Hennepin, were exploding.

I really had no concept of union, then. "Union" was not part of my environment or even vocabulary in North Dakota. Much was made of the difference between Association and Union, then. There was some validity in the compare/contrast. But the words are, truly, synonyms as they apply to our organization. In my time, they were synonymous as well. We did the same things in the same ways for the same people.

Circumstances change, and here we are these many years later. Stresses and tensions brought us together, first to organize in the 1960s, then to conflict in the 1970s, finally to merger in 1998. I think the subsequent 23 years as Education Minnesota has proven that unity achieves.

No system is perfect; by no means is the current environment ideal. At the same time, even without direct knowledge of what it is like inside public education in Minnesota and the United States, I am convinced that today's generation of activists will follow through, and that they will be assisted by the base which we all left behind.

## EPILOGUE February 1, 2022

This recollection project began more or less officially about a year ago, with the letter at pages 4&5. Actually, it's been rolling around in my head much longer than that. As the years pass since my assignment as staff for Minnesota Education Association (50 years ago in mid-March, 1972) I became more and more aware of the history being left behind which was very significant, thus began these recollections with encouragement to other colleagues from those years.

As I did these memories, old mental 'pictures' came more and more into focus, as things I lived through at the time, when looked at from a distance, made for a clearer picture of what happened and what it all meant. I thought I had finished the task in Nov. 2021, then contemporary politics brought further clarity to distant events around competition and conflict between teacher organizations during most of my staff years. This led to a blog post just a few days ago, on January 28, 2022, which you can read here <https://outsidethewalls.org/blog/one-year/>, or reprinted below (beginning mid p 39).

The blog post catches the essence of my thoughts. Some of its origin comes from a snippet of conversation between a former union colleague who at one point shared the same piece of geography in which I worked, with the same locals, though somewhat earlier.

But the blog also misses some of the back story which I'll fill in from my own memory base, which in terms of teaching goes back to 1963, and involvement in teacher unions from 1968.

Public Education is much like any organization, management and labor. Most of us have been involved in one or another or both management or labor divisions at one time or another.

Public Education probably differs from most sectors in that it is entirely based on human interactions, involving young people, their parents, and government at all levels. Usually public education is one of the primary responsibilities of government. In addition, school districts of any and all sizes and locations are managed by elected school boards whose membership fluctuates from year to year, based on who has been elected by the public. In short, school is a complex entity, as has become especially obvious in recent months and years due to Covid-19 and ideological passions about things like curriculum and so forth.

\*

My parents were both school teachers in tiny town public schools, so I grew up in public education. I went to Teacher's College and got a teaching degree. In my first years of teaching, the old rules prevailed. Teachers had few rights and many responsibilities. Rarely were teachers organized. There was one major strike in St. Paul in the 1940s, and perhaps two in Minneapolis a little later, but these were not the norm.

Into the Minnesota mix came two teacher organizations. The Minnesota Federation of Teachers was smaller and younger and was a labor union, mostly in the bigger cities. The Minnesota Education Association, my group, was much larger, statewide, and for most of its history viewed as dominated by administrators (management). Neither organization really had much power, beyond what was conferred by management and/or government policy. Much was made of the ideological difference (which I never much noticed, or cared about).

The 1960s were restive times in the U.S. There was a push for better wages and working conditions.

In 1967 the Minnesota State Legislature, likely in a bi-partisan move, passed something called the Meet and Confer Law, which was a long step towards collective bargaining, but still ended with management in control. It gave organized teachers more power and influence, which I think was a very good thing for everyone, not just teachers. Others may disagree with me...but that's life. I was early in my career when Union beckoned, and not active in MEA at the time.

Meet and Confer made a big difference, substantively. It required the parties to meet, and to at least involve some neutral outsider in what was called an Adjustment Panel, if no agreement could be reached. I remember being involved in one of these, in the office of a prominent lawyer in downtown Minneapolis.

The lawyer could and did make recommendations, but in the end it was the School Board who had the sole right to agree or not, and ultimately set terms and conditions of employment consistent with Law.

A very important aspect of Meet and Confer was that it recognized that there were two teacher organizations in Minnesota, and they were in competition in some places. If there was competition, the teacher team had to proportionately represent both organizations in proportion to their membership. As I recall this, the teacher team would be five members. If 80% or major fraction of the members were Association, they would comprise four-fifths of the team. The other person was Federation. Or vice versa. The minority had equal standing to each of the others, but of course the usual outcome was that the majority made the decisions; the minority had and exercised the right to criticize the majority in all the ways which happen in politics today.

In 1971, four years after Meet and Confer began, the State Legislature passed PELRA, the Public Employment Labor Relations Act, which basically brought collective bargaining into public education, and remains in existence today. This, too, was a bi-partisan initiative. And as time went on there were changes to the law, which are unimportant to this conversation. "Bargaining Elections" required that only one of the organizations represent all the teachers – a big change from Meet and Confer.

Thence comes the conversation which I wrote about in the blog, and is below. Enjoy, and express your opinion if you have one!

### **Competition - some personal thoughts (Blog of Jan 28, 2022):**

The American political system - probably democracy generally - has always been based on competition, often nasty. We consider ourselves winners ("exceptional" among the nations), though we now are in the process of destroying ourselves from the inside - competition run amuck.

This is not a matter of "they're all alike". Of the two major parties in this country, one is still attempting to work together - the Democratic Party; the other is absolutely committed to permanently disabling the other - a "fool's errand" - another topic for another time.... Try thinking of the body politic - us - as a real body. What is gained by permanently disabling one side, versus the other? Nothing. Most all of us can prove this by simply reviewing our own life experience. We need each other.

As life happens, I spent 30 years of my work career - 27 of those full-time - representing school teachers in a state which had collective bargaining, and two competing teacher unions, which ultimately merged two years before I retired, 22 years ago.

I was sometimes on the winning side, sometimes on the losing, more than fifteen of the years in places where my assigned locals were in both winner or loser "camps".

Personal observation: it made not much difference whether the local was large, or tiny. Division contributed more to weakness than to strength.

Both sides had leaders. If you won, your local leaders had the responsibility to represent everyone; if you lost, your main right was to criticize - you had no accountability. There was much investment in proving one side was better than the other, but in numerous experiences on both sides for many years, there really was no genuine difference. Both sides, both organizations, their members and leaders, did the best they could under the existing circumstances. In one way or another, each squandered their power by internal competition. No, this wasn't dramatic, but it was evident.

I noticed a dynamic back then, and it made no difference which union was in charge, mine or the other. There was a certain luxury in being out of power. All you needed to do was complain that the majority wasn't doing this, that or the other. Your only objective: to win a future election.

Ultimately, the state organizations merged (Aug, 1998), which started with merger of a single large local organization (Spring 1993) where the last bargaining election had been decided by a single vote out of perhaps 1,000. I was closer than most colleagues to this merger. The main dynamic, which changed after merger, was there no longer was a reason/excuse for one side to go in combat with the other. Both became responsible for outcomes. Folks had finally decided to sail in the same boat, and the only choice they made was to what extent they participated individually in the solutions for the entire group. Qualitatively, the unity system worked better than the division. Of course, it was never perfect, but it was much better.

**On Activists and Activism:** Some years after I retired, I went to an Awards program honoring a minister who was a great friend, and had been a campus minister during the turbulent times of the Vietnam War.

Verlyn mentioned something he had observed during those years as a Lutheran pastor on California campuses. He estimated that perhaps 2% of the students he observed were what we have come to know as activists - shall we say, the 'spear carriers', the warriors, the leaders, in his case: peace (anti-war) activists.

The 2% was just a personal observation of his, but I have always resonated with it, from my working career, when I observed similar dynamics everywhere, including in my retired activist years.

It plays out in American national politics as well. But this year, unlike any other in my long life experience, there is a stark choice to be made in November, and the sorting out begins, in my state, next Tues, Feb. 1.

One Party has decided to go for the kill - to render the other Party permanently impotent and thus irrelevant, by any and all means available. This process began years ago, but has intensified. The strategy may seem to work, but the success will be short lived, and everyone, including the so-called winners will suffer.

It's up to you to be 'on the court' the coming months. It's your future.... We, not "they", ARE "politics", for good or ill.

## MEA and MFT Staff at and prior to merger August 31 1998

**DRAFT August 12, 2021**

**(pp 42-44) Minnesota Education Association Staff before and until 8-31-1998, the date of merger with the Minnesota Federation of Teachers. Special thanks to Stephanie Wolkin.**

**(Below) Minnesota Federation of Teachers Staff Prior to Merger  
As of August 12, 2021. Per Greg Burns**

### **MFT Staff Representatives**

Alswager, Jan  
Averbook, Marcia  
Arens, Dianna  
Bennett, Dick  
Bolstad, Ed (Executive Secretary)  
Brown, Gerry  
Carlstrom, Ron  
Cole, Charlie  
Coombs, Jack  
Elg, Duane  
Freeman, Carol  
Garber, Bill  
Gunderson, Bob  
Gjerdrum, Sara  
Hermodson, Rose  
Herriges, Richard  
Holstrom, Dale (Executive Secretary)  
Jackson, Kate  
Krisnik, Anne  
McDermott, Jim  
Mikkelson, Larry  
Millett, Mary  
Mills, Gayle  
O'Brien, Diane  
Olson, Al  
Poole, Jim  
Prosen, Bob  
Schmaus, LuAnn  
Seavert, Larry  
Stafki, Joe  
Walerius, Tom  
Winkles, Henry

### **MFT Office Professional Staff**

Afflerbaugh, Bob  
Coombs, Kris  
Cone, Wanda  
Komula, Gail  
Hemmelgarn, Janie  
Hess, Jackie  
Hopkins, Rhonda  
Johnson, Brent  
Masanz, Sophie  
Montez, Mary  
Nyman, Lois  
Peterson, Opal  
Privatsky, Rita  
Rachuy, Sharon  
Rozales, Ray  
Sandhoefner, Kris  
Vanderhyde, Jeanne  
Warner, Janelle  
Westman, Cheryl

### **MFT Large Local Staff**

Arndt, Wayne, St. Paul  
Moen, Norm, Mpls.  
Noack, Barry, Robbinsdale  
Rogers, Gary, Mpls.  
Scribner, Jerry, St. Paul

**MEA staff, 1998 and before,  
largely per Dick Bernard  
and Stephanie Wolkin Aug  
2021**

A – Attorney  
BG – Building and Grounds  
C – Communications  
ED – Executive Director  
ES – Executive Secretary  
ESI – Member Services  
F – Field Staff  
Fi – Finance  
Fo – MEA Foundation  
G – Government Relations  
Gr – Graphics  
HE – Higher Education  
I – Instruction Prof Dev  
IT – Tech  
M – Manager  
Me - Membership  
N – Negotiations  
O – Officer  
PR&R – Prof Rights  
and Responsibilities  
S – Support Staff  
T – Teaching experience  
TR – Teacher Rights

Asterisk – e-address/list

**Bold-face** - Deceased

Abrams, Mary Lee -F  
Adams, Donna – S ES  
Anderson, Bob - S  
Anderson, Ellen - A  
**Ashby, Marvel** - S  
Astrup, Bob – T F O

Baldwin Dick – T F  
\*Barrett, Roger – T A  
\*Baty, Darrell – T F  
Baty, Debbie Manke - S  
Baumgard, Jackie – T F  
Bellesen, Trina  
**Bennett, Pinky** – T F

\*Benson, Nancy – S  
Berg, Ken – T F  
\*Berger, Don - T F  
\*Berglund, Judy - C  
Bernard, Dick – T F  
Black, Bob – T F I  
\*Borgen, John – T F  
Borgstrom, Kathy - S  
Brakke, Marilyn - S  
**Bresin, Ken** – T G M  
Brunell, Herb - Fi  
Busch, Brian - Gr  
Byrd, Elaine Nolen - S

**Carlblom, Dean** - TF  
Carlblom, Debbie - S  
Carlin, Chris - S  
**Carlson, Dave** - Gr  
Carter, Mike - F  
**Chesebrough, Ralph** – T F HE  
**Christofferson, Gary** – T F  
Churchill, Pat – T F ED  
\*Clark, Christina - A  
**Cobb, LaVonne** - S  
Cole, Dawn – T F M Fo  
Conroy, Frank – T HE  
Corhouse, Deb – T A  
\*Crest, Patti - S

Dallman, Celeste - S  
Day, Scott – F G  
**DeSantis, John** – T F  
**Dermody, John** - C  
\*Dobrancin, Jim – T F  
? Doder, Lorna  
Dooher, Doug - C  
\*Dresel, Barbara – T F

Edwards, Liz - S  
\*Ellertson, Millie - Fi  
Ely, Deborah - C  
Engdahl, Kathryn - A  
Erickson, Carl – T F  
**Erskine, Audrey** – T F  
Erskine, Roger – T G

\*Fairbanks, Kathy - S

Fairbanks, Norma - S  
**Fandel, Jan Hastings** – T F  
Farmer, John – G  
Fenna, Cheryl - S  
Fields, Sandra – T F  
Fisher, Corrine - S  
Forbes, Curt – T F  
Forner, Elinor - S  
Foster, Eshaka - S  
\*Fournier, Bonnie – C  
\*Franklin, Garnet – T I  
**Franz, Nancy** – T F  
**Furrer, Cheryl** – T G M

Gallagher, Jowan - Gr  
**Gallop, A.L.** – ED  
**Gestie, Bernice** - C  
Gilmour, Mike - Gr  
Gleason, Dave – T F  
**Greeley, Barb** - S  
**Green, Gary** – T A  
Gurak, Greg - IT

Hall, Juanita - S  
**Halupczok, Donna** - S  
Hamblin, Rebecca - A  
Hanson, Rosalee - S  
**Haring, Bill** – T F  
Hastings, Jan (see Fandel)  
**Helgerson Roger** – T F  
Hemann, Mary Ann - S  
Herrera Dave - Gr  
Hill, Don – T, O  
Hilleman, Bob – T F  
Houghton, Mary - C  
\*Hughto, Ken – T F  
\*Hutchison, Carol – F Me  
Hyland, Wayne – T F M

\*James, Winnie - S  
\*Jemtrud, Alve – T ESI  
\*Johansen, Lee – T F N  
Johanesen, Mike – F  
Johnson, Valerie - S  
Jung, Annette - S  
**Jungermann George** – T F

**Kahn, Bill – T F**

\*Katzenmeyer, Mike – T F

Kautt, Ruth – S Me

Kavanaugh, Jean – S G

**\*Kehrberg, Chuck – T F N**

Kendall, Kristen - S

Kerber, Shelley - C

King, Glen – T F

\*Kinney, Debbie - S

**Klebe, Brian - BG?****Klein, Dick - F**

Knudsen, Fred – T F

**Koenck, Larry - O**

Krisnik, Anne - A

Kube, Dori - S

Kundin, David - F

Lara, Rene - G

Larkin, Hal - Gr

**Larson, Bob – T F**

Lathrop, Rick – T F

Laubach, Marlys - S

\*Leipold, Ed – T ESI

**Lentz, Chuck – T F N ED**

\*Lilyquist, Candace – T F

Linder, Judith - S

Lindstedt, Roy – T F

Longtine, Aaron – T F

Lynch, Susan (see Vento)

MacDonald, Shelley - S

Mackowski, Barbara

Makarenko, Roseann - S

Manke, Debbie (see Baty) - S

Mammenga, Gene – T G

\*Marinkovich, Corky - T F

**Martin, John – T F**

Mattheisen, Debbie - S

Mattocks Patrick - IT

McArdle, Lois – S

McCoy, Ray - A

McCray, Carolyn

McDonough, Mary Jane - S

McGree, Mary - S

McKnight, Matt - IT

McLane, Loreen - S

**McNeilly, Greg – T F M****Meyering, Don – T F****Minnehan, Mary – T F**

Mische, George – F

Moe, John – T F

Moen, Paul – T F

Moilanen, Doug – T F

Moore, Diane – T F

\*Moracco, David T F

Moreno, Carlos - Fi

**Moriarty, Dan – T I**

Morris, Irene - S

\*Munsterman, Walt - T O

Murray, Marilyn - Fi

Nelson, Dawn - S

**Nelson, Don – T C**

Nelson, Linda

Nelson, Lois - S

Nelson, Rich – T F

Nentl-Bloom, Lisa – T F G

Newton, Bill – T HE

Nordby, Thomas - C

**Nubel, John – T F**

\*Ogata, Harley – T A

Olson, Lana - S

Oman-Wicklund, Helen

\*Owen, Linda - C

Paetznick, Barbara - S

**Pafiolis, Pete - C****Palmer, Barney – T F**

Parker, Jan ?

Pederson, Valerie - S

Peninger, Judy - S

? Penning, Cheryl

Perry, Carole – T F

\*Peters, Carmen – T O

Peterson, Kristine - S

Phelps, Genny – T F

Phillips, Cherie - S

Pierce, Elaine - S

Powers, Barb - S

**Pratt, Kenn – C**

Price, Len – T G

\*Purfeerst, Chuck – T F M

Raabe, Bill – T F

Reasoner, Harry - C

\*Reed Bob – T F N

Richardson, Phillip – T F

? Richter, Darrell - T

Riley, Russ T F

Rivera, Dan – T F

Roberts, Robyn (Rumpca)

**Roderick, Ed – T F**

Rosenau, Marie - S

Rumpca, Robyn (see Roberts) S

Sabot, Barb Schmidt - S

Sand, Karla - S

Saulsbury, Valerie - S

\*Schaubach, Judy – T, O

Schenz Lu - S

Schlagel, Cathy – T F

Schleck, Peggy - S

Schmidt, Barb (see Sabot)

\*Schneider, Arne – T HE

\*Scholen, Renee – T F

Schulz, Lorna - S

\*Seivert, Evonne – T F

Shaffer, Charlie – T F

Shay, Bob – T F

Simbeck, Betty - S

Slagell, Susan

Sloan, Donna - S

Sogg, Tash – T F

**Sollom, Al – T F****Solseth, Doug – T F**

Soltess, Bob - S

Spindler, Kristi – S

\*Stankiewicz, Hank – T F N

Stanton, Russ – HE

Stiff, Gloria -

**Stiteler, Doug – T F**

\*Sunderland, Mary Rae – T F

M

Sweeten, Frigga - Fi

Tauber, Barb - F

Tavis Sharon - Gr

**Thiemich, Al – T PR&R**

Thomas, Jeannie – T, O

Toffle, Martha

**Tonra, Bob** – F N HE

Toppin, John

Vacca, Teresa - S

**Vang, Mai Lao** - S

Vega, Adrian BG

\*Vento, Susan Lynch – T F G

Vern Stock - S

Walker, John

Wannigman, Melissa – S ES

Watson, Mary Rose – T F

Weimer, Connie – T F

Welligrant, Joe - Fi

\*Westorff, Gary – T F M

\*Whitinger, Leila – T F

\*Wicks, Larry – T F ED

Wiering, Marion - - S

Wiertzema, Sandee - S

Wikstrom, Gunnar - HE

Williams, Jeanne - S

**Wilson, Duane** - T N

\*Wolkin, Stephanie - C F

**Zagrabelny, Sue Ellen** – T F

Zanoni, Muriel - S

Zins, Marti – T, O