

Diane Lee Bakko – A Eulogy

Seeing the obituary of Diane Lee in The Daily News last Thursday, ignited a host of memories about those golden days in my first teaching job at Walcott High School in 1962. She was one of my seven juniors and was truly in a *best friend forever* relationship with her *bestie*, Barbara Jordheim.

But Diane and Barbara seemed always together, happily chatting up every event big or small at Walcott High School. Diane was unique in her sunny disposition and her picture in the Daily News showed her with exactly the same bright smile at 60 that she had at 16. I recognized her instantly as that ebullient Diane Bakko I taught at Walcott. Her picture brought to mind lines from a timeless poem: Ransom's *Bells for John Whiteside's Daughter*.

“There was such speed in her little body/,
Such lightness in her footfall/,
It is no wonder her brown study/,
Astonishes us all/...But now go the bells and
we are ready/
In one house we are sternly stopped/
To say we are vexed at
her brown study/
Lying so primly propped.”

Meaning how could anyone with such joy in her, ever possibly lie, pale and still, propped in a cold casket? “*Brown study*,” is an art term usually applied to still-life paintings, such as Picasso's *blue* period work, or Ellen Sturdevant's painting: *A Study in White* at our Red Door Gallery.

Also, I thought of Matthew Arnold's poem Requiescat: Her mirth the world required, /She bathed it with smiles of glee./ But her soul was tired, tired, /

*And now they've set her free/Her cavern'd, ample spirit/ Fluttered and failed
for breath/ Tonight it doth inherit/ The vasty hall of death/*

But Diane will not experience the fearful hall of death. She will be walking through fields of flowers lovelier than Utah's Wasatch Mountain Alpine meadows.

An event linking Diane and Barbara *happened* when I arranged a prom date between Barbara and my young brother-in-law, Roe Walker. Diane was already going steady with her future husband, Mark Lee. Everybody at Walcott High was very impressed that Barbara could land such a cute prom date, and from Wahpeton even. She would meet her own future husband next year, Dennis Blilie, a transfer.

The beauty of that whole time was that these kids were all *Mayberry*-innocent, and *Happy Days* alive in their busy swirl of life. Many already dreaming about a bright future, theirs for the seeking.

Reflecting on those golden days, I now see how blessed I was to start my career in such a perfect place-where every day held exciting possibilities.

All my condolences to Mark, and all her family and loved ones who also must miss Diane's sunny company. But good news --we will all soon get to see her again "*In that great getting-up morning/ When we meet on that beautiful shore.*"

Gene Pinkney for the Daily News 23-03-28-