

## **IN THEIR OWN WORDS**

### **2018 Hall of Fame Inductee - Mary Pettis (SPHS Class of 1971)**

#### **Describe how your high school years contributed to your maturation and success:**

I feel very fortunate to have attended St. Peter High School in the late sixties and early seventies. The access to Humanities and the various arts afforded me many opportunities. Through Chorus, Art Class, Theater, Declamation, and Debate, I was able to develop myself and find the strengths that I would carry into my future. Although at the time I felt I was just exploring my interests and enjoying time with my classmates, I was laying the groundwork for a lifetime of dedication to the arts.

Through the course of various competitions, I accepted that I wouldn't necessarily be the best at what I do. I didn't always place in Debate, I didn't make it past regionals in Declam and One Act, and we took a lot of second places. But I also learned that I probably wouldn't be the worst either!

If I worked hard, if I gave structure to my optimism, if I sought out the right people, if I continued to allow myself patience and space to improve, I could reach fairly high in a field that I value.

#### **Describe your best memories of St. Peter High School:**

I have fond memories of the camaraderie we built during travels outside the district for music, speech and plays.

I was once chosen as a Soprano to join the Dorian Festival at Luther College in Iowa. The ensemble was immense. When the hundreds of us all joined in the song we had separately learned, I truly understood for the first time what art can be and what art can do. I recognized that art is about communicating emotion. Art lifts us. It connects us beyond the present and beyond ourselves. This is a belief that is central to the art that I create today.

#### **What teachers or individuals at the High School influenced you? What made them so special?**

Through the years I have come to realize that what made Mr. Harvey so special was NOT that I can still recite several of the poems I learned in order to avoid the dreaded Poets' Corner, nor the cohesive outline he taught that has helped me over the years in creating speeches and presentations. Rather, he showed us that we deserve respect and dignity. I remember being surprised that he had learned our names from day one. He demonstrated to every last student a disposition of kindness, compassion, and good will.

Our chorus director, Miss Kathleen Kelley, taught me that there's more to singing than simply hitting the right notes. She approached music with strict discipline, and urged us to focus on the artistry of the sound; the balance of voices, the message of the piece, and the power that we had over our audience when we worked together as a unit.

#### **What advice would you give today's High School students?**

Pay attention to what gives you a sense of pride and purpose. Notice what brings you deep joy, beyond simple pleasure. Consider how you can benefit others while doing what you love. Find and keep people who are kind and open, who listen to you and are supportive. Work hard. Know that your every effort contributes to your ultimate success. Seek out mentors who hold and honor the values that you do. Strive to hold an optimistic heart, and allow it to inform your choices.

Always look for, and work toward, what is good.