

Dear Class of '59,

Yes, the class letter is early this year. Not sure what was the reason, but it might have something to do with COVID-19 virus. Everyone has been couped up at home for months now, so maybe this letter will hopefully brighten your day.

I send greetings to you all. The most important thing on our minds now is – when do I get the vaccine shot? Can you believe it? I mean, how many of us have ever experienced anything like this? The virus has changed our world as we know it. Most of you who sent me notes about your life during this pandemic have either received your first vaccine shot, or have an appointment to receive it. Others are waiting to obtain the second shot. After the second shot, then, by golly, maybe we can head south for a couple of weeks.

I have included an insert from the Alumni office concerning news about Concordia. This fall there will be some changes that will be implemented. To keep abreast of these important developments, please take time to read it.

Concordia is planning (as of now) to have in-person Homecoming this year during the weekend of October 1-3, 2021. We had decided at our last reunion to have an informal reunion each year since we are not getting any younger. Plans are to attend festivities that are available on campus, meet at the hotel after festivities both Friday and Saturday evenings, and have a Scandinavian feast at the Sons of Norway Lodge (if they are serving groups at that time) following the football game on Saturday. If you have any other suggestions, please let me know.

It has been over a year now COVID-19 has interfered with our lives, but still the generosity of alumni like you has helped keep Concordia running smoothly and supporting the students it serves. Here are a few highlights:

- More than \$2.1 million was raised for The Cobber Fund for scholarships and support to help make sure a Concordia education is possible for every one of the students attending this college.
- During the start of the pandemic, \$59,000 was raised for emergency funding for food, transportation, and other critical needs.
- Last fall, 841 Cobber fans gave \$87,890 to make sure our athletes have the resources they need to compete, despite the COVID-19.
- This holiday season, 1,809 virtual Christmas Concert attendees donated \$68,552 in honor of this Concordia tradition and our student musicians.
- In just ONE day, donors fully funded the Cobber Food Pantry. The Cobber Food Pantry is a joint project of Health Services, Student Engagement, and Sustainability and will be a resource for *any Concordia student*.

Maybe you were one of those who gave donations above and beyond what you are giving already, so, thank you! Are you doing your part with donations to Concordia? A good way to donate, which is what I do, is to have an amount sent automatically each month from my bank account. Also, be on the look-out for the “CobbersGive” Fund-the-Need campaign in March. The class of '59 can truly make a difference in the lives of current Cobbers.

I would like to thank all of you who sent responses to me or to the Alumni office concerning newsworthy items for this letter. Here are some of them:

**Norman Holen**, our sculpture artist classmate, has two pieces added to the permanent collection at the Weisman Museum in Minneapolis. They are “Man with a Buffalo Mask” and “Bust of a Prehistoric Bird”. If you are in the area, stop by and take a look. Norm and his wife Ilene celebrated their 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary recently. Like everything else, funerals, weddings, etc. it was a very quiet celebration.

**Allan Grundahl** lives in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in a wonderful Lutheran retirement center. Allan had a hip replaced and had some trouble with infection which prolonged the recovery. He is thankful for the Canadian universal health care which covered all of the bills. Allan would like to hear from you, and if you would like to email him, let me know and I will send his address to you.

**Christine Maxson Knutson** continues to enjoy watercolor painting. She mentioned that it was her therapy during this pandemic. She resides at a Minnesota cabin in the summer, and enjoys having company, especially family. Christine plan to travel to California and visit with her two granddaughters as soon as possible.

Get this! **Vern Rice** is recovering from having three stents put in near the heart and is doing well. He is avoiding driveway cleaning, but doing much of the things he usually does. He is also thankful for good insurance and excellent care.

**Rose Mary Strom Green** has gone through some tough times this year. Her husband, Don Strom, class of '57, had been in a nursing home since 2012 and died of COVID-19 just before Thanksgiving. Rose Mary lives in Moorhead and feels fortunate to have her granddaughter living with her while attending MN State U.

Both **Everett Bjerke** and his wife Marilyn have had quite a few parts replaced by a former Cobber, Dr. Howard Berglund. Their children and grandchildren are all Cobbers. They will be snow birds down in Mesa, Arizona for three months.

Remember the couple that would go around campus holding hands? **G. Paul Larson** and his wife **Barb**, both Class of '59 grads, have been locked in like the rest of us. G. Paul is having trouble with mobility lately, but improving. Barb is quite the cook making 28 different kinds of bars, candy, and cookies before Christmas, and gave most of it away. They will reside in Florida once the second shot is administered. We may look them up, since they are not too far from Ft. Myers area where we will be in March. Maybe she will have some baked goods for us?

My good pal, **Gordy Lindquist** (Crazy Fingers) lives in Bottineau, ND and entertains all over the country. His gigs have been down this past year, due to the virus. Maybe if Concordia comes through with in-person Homecoming, and the Norway Lodge in Fargo serves groups, Gordy might be persuaded to entertain the class. Wouldn't that be nice?

One of our former classmates and my former roommate, **Carl Grandstand** and his wife Mary Jane have been going through some tough times recently. Mary Jane broke her femur bone last October which placed her in St John's care facility since that time. While there, she fell and broke her leg again, plus, she was experiencing memory loss. Because of the virus, Carl was

unable to visit her, so took a room at the facility to be near his wife of 59 years. Still, they were unable to see each other for months at a time. Now, it is the little things like sending notes to each other, hearing that his wife is singing songs, and saying prayers that life will get better for both of them soon.

**Rod and Connie Olson** live in Golden Valley, MN and miss going to church, like the rest of us. They enjoyed visiting with Cobbers at the social events that churches had to offer such as lutefisk dinners and the like. Rob will undergo surgery for a blocked tear duct near his right eye. We offer our prayers for him. Connie encouraged Rob to write and added a few comments of her own. She mentioned that she had skin cancers removed several times, and many body parts replaced.

**Larry Lystig** and his wife Carolyn are looking forward to receiving their second shot sometime in February. They experienced no adverse reaction from the first one. They have made frequent trips to doctors, hospitals, and emergency rooms, similar to the rest of us. They, like many of us, find excuses to take trips to visit friends and relatives in cities nearby. Also, like many of us, they watch church services on TV, but unlike many of us, Larry served as Interim Pastor at a couple of them. Larry served as election judge at the last general election, and was grateful to see the large attendance by first time voters. I am sure that he would attest that there wasn't any fraud or that the election was rigged.

**Gretchen Gildemeister Nelson** is composing another book while fighting continually against cancer. We extend our prayers for Gretch as well. Don and Gretchen are waiting for their second shot, which was approved by the doctors at Mayo Clinic. She is going for a checkup soon at Mayo to determine her status with the fight against this terrible enemy. Gretch walks indoors and outdoors when possible, a good example for all of us. She extends greetings to all.

**Dave Bjornson** and his wife Dorothy reside in the Seattle area and are living the life similar to the rest of us, with one exception. They have a daughter and son-in-law that live twenty minutes from their home, which has been a life saver for them. Dave sings in a quartet and they meet once a week at various places. They record hymns for on-line services while wearing masks, but as Dave puts it, the singing is important for providing fellowship with others, plus it helps to exercise our lungs, as well. Dorothy has Alzheimer's and it is not getting any better, but is still good company for him. We extend our prayers for her as well. Dave extends greetings to the famous class of '59.

There have been a number of classmates that have departed from our ranks in 2019 and this past year. The entire list now reaches 148 deceased members. They are: Avelia M. Anderson\* Dec. 9, 2019; Earl R. Eidbo Sept. 18, 2019; Duane D. Femrite\* May 11, 2020; Marian E. Jordheim Haugen May 9, 2020; Craig Johnson\* December 15, 2020; Roselyn S. Olson Krause\* October 2, 2020; Mary Beth Nyquist MacMillan\* November 9, 2019; Jean Anderson Rose May 8, 2020; and Kenneth N. Thompson July 9, 2020. \*Indicates that these departed classmates have pictures in the '59 Cobber annual.

If you would like to contact the families of our deceased members or those who responded with news, please let me know, and I will email you the information.

It is hopeful by the time this letter arrives that everyone will have received both of their COVID-19 shots. Don't let your guard down even with the two shots, wear your masks, stay away from crowds, and wash your hands often. Stay safe, and be careful.

Yours in Christ,

Jim Strandlie, Class Agent

Contact me at:

[jimstrandlie@mncable.net](mailto:jimstrandlie@mncable.net)

## 2021 Campus Update

Concordia recently announced three changes to be implemented in Fall 2021: the launch of a new pricing structure for tuition, a change to its academic framework by establishing a schools model within the college, and the introduction of the Cobber Flex Year.

Beginning in Fall 2021, the price for annual tuition will be \$27,500, which is more than \$15,000 lower than current tuition – a reduction of over 35%. The change in the college's pricing model will benefit continuing students as well. Historically, students have seen an average annual tuition increase of 4% or about \$1,700 annually. In the upcoming year, the increase in the out-of-pocket tuition costs for continuing students will be limited to \$800 and no more than \$1,000 for 2022-23 and 2023-24.

To further prepare students, Concordia implemented an academic reorganization to clearly name three schools. Under the new academic model, Concordia introduced the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Health Professions. These two new schools join the Offutt School of Business to encompass all areas of the college. The new schools model resulted in the appointment of two new deans. **Dr. George Connell** is serving as dean of the School of Arts and Sciences and **Dr. Cynthia Carver** is dean of the School of Health Professions. As school deans, Connell and Carver join **Christopher Mason**, who was appointed dean of the Offutt School of Business in January 2020.

Concordia also established a Cobber Flex Year option. The Flex Year option offers current students and those enrolling in Fall 2021 two tuition-free semesters of study beyond their anticipated graduation date. The Cobber Flex Year allows students whose college experience has been affected by the pandemic expanded possibilities to learn in ways they find most compelling.

In the midst of a pandemic, Concordia continued its work to support the vitality of our faith and learning mission. In March 2020, as the realities of COVID-19 swept the nation, Concordia transitioned to distance learning. Concordia was able to transition back to campus for the fall 2020 semester. In-person instruction and residential living were offered with modifications to academic and campus life. Each teaching space was measured to determine appropriate occupancy and classes were held in larger spaces when necessary. In addition, some classes were offered as a hybrid approach and virtual learning attendance was available for those who could not meet in-person.