



NOJOSHING

Indian word for "straight tongue"

land protrudes out into Lake Michigan like a straight tongue

Newsletter published quarterly

Non-Profit Organization 501c3

December 2023

How Title IX Opened the Door for Girls' Sports

By Karen Gersonde

I loved sports growing up in St. Francis. Baseball, volleyball, football, and basketball--I loved playing each and everyone of these sports with the neighborhood kids. And I believe I was pretty good at them. However, growing up in the 1960s and 1970s, there were no organized sports for girls at the high school level when I went to St. Francis High School. I was the Class of 1973, and all that was available to the girls was cheerleading and the Marinettes, the pompom team. We also had GAA night. The Girl's Athletic Association let the girls have the high school gym on a Wednesday night to hang out and play sports. You could play basketball, volleyball, swim, and jump on the trampoline, or just hang out with you friends. It really was a nice time and a lot of fun. Any girl from any grade was welcome to participate.

Organized sports for girls to play against other schools in our conference eventually did materialize, but it came too late for me. Title IX changed the make up of high school sports forever, and for girls it was a blessing and about time.

Title IX is the most commonly used name for the federal civil rights law in the United States that was enacted as part of the Education Amendments of 1972. It prohibited sex-based discrimination in any school or any other education program that received federal government funding. This became Public Law No. 92-318, 86 Stat. 235 (June 23, 1972). In part it read, "No person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any education program or activity receiving federal financial assistance."

Some examples of common types of discrimination covered under Title IX included: sexual harassment, failing to provide equal athletic opportunity, sex based discrimination in a school's science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) courses and programs, and discrimination based on pregnancy.

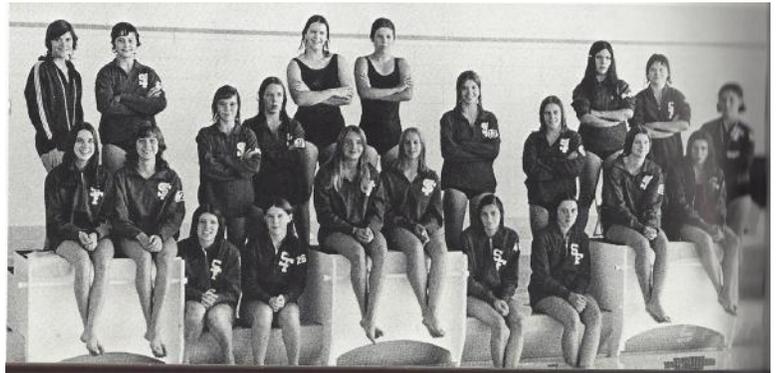
Hence, with this clearly spelled out in the law, high schools across the land that received federal funding had to allow girls the same opportunities in school that the boys had. And this, of course, pertained



Top: Juniors GAA 1972
Below: GAA 1973
Karen is middle row far left

to sports. This law opened up a whole new chapter for girls in school to participate in conference play, the same way that the boys did. Volleyball and swimming quickly became the go to sports for girls in high school. Girls' track was soon to follow. Soon, high schools across the nation also added girls' basketball, softball, cross country, and numerous other sports. I was a year too late to enjoy these benefits. St. Francis High School began girls' sports in 1974, a year after I graduated.

In 1974, girls' fall sports began with volleyball and swimming. By the second season at SFHS, over 70 girls participated in these sports. Another sport introduced to girls was track. It got off to a slow start because the coaching spot could not be filled, but it was finally filled and over 50 girls came out for the sport. The rest is history for girls' sports, as every year girls' sports, gained in popularity. And it is still going strong today.



Top: 1974 girls swim team
Below: 1974 volleyball team

So, there you have it. The story of how girls' sports in high school came to be. I am sure not many of the students today know about the history of girls' sports in high school. But I am sure glad Title IX changed the course of history for them. I only wish that I had that opportunity. You go girls!



Footnotes:
[St. Francis High School Year Book 1973](#)
[St. Francis High School Year Book 1974](#)
[St. Francis High School Year Book 1975](#)
[Wikipedia: Title IX](#)
[UW-Milwaukee: Title IX \(uwm.edu/title IX\)](#)
[US Dept. of Education: Title IX](#)
[Milton Vretenar Memorial Park Bandshell](#)

Restoration of the Zenker Family Cemetery Monument

Joseph and Rose Zenker lived on East St. Francis Avenue across the street from Sacred Heart cemetery most of their married life. In the 1890s, Rose attended grade school at Sacred Heart. Joseph and Rose were married at Sacred Heart, attended mass there, and are buried there. The Zenker family plot was purchased sometime in the early 1900s. The first burial in the plot was Joan, their one-month-old grandchild, who died in August 1940. Joseph was buried there in September 1941 and Rose in October 1976. The Zenker large white monument, topped with a finely detailed sculpture, is hard to miss. Resembling Michelangelo's *Pieta*, it has weathered through the years. The elements have caused the monument to deteriorate to a point where it would be destroyed if not professionally repaired. Mary Zenker Drehfal, her brother Michael, and cousin Kathleen hired Jake's Masonry Restoration. Jake Bunk and his wife Aimee restored the base. Bill Drehfal removed layer after layer of paint from the main sculpture. The Bunks filled all the remaining cracks with epoxy filler and finished with special epoxy paint. You can see in the photo on the right how the restored monument looks brand new.



St. Francis Park Bandshell

by Anna Passante

In 1982, a bandshell was added to the St. Francis Memorial Park, now known as Milton Vretenar Memorial Park. The park was created in the late 1970s, the land having been purchased from the St. Francis School Board for \$1. This 1,543 sq. ft. (42' by 24') bandshell, with an office and storage area, was dedicated on August 25, 1982.

Three hundred people attended the dedication "under a brilliant sun in a cloudless sky," wrote the *Milwaukee Sentinel*. The attendees were treated to a live performance of a popular Viacom Cable television show, "On the Stage Milwaukee." Also, singing comedians Sherwood Alper and Dave Ruka, the Redo Sisters, and magician David Seebach entertained the crowd.

The wooden and brick bandshell cost between \$30,000 and \$60,000 to complete. The construction of a bandshell had been on Mayor Vretenar's mind since 1978. Architect John Spoden sketched a drawing of the structure on a piece of notebook paper, and the mayor carried around the sketch for nearly five years. Unfortunately, Spoden died before the bandshell was completed.

A number of city and county officials sat on stage, including Supervisor Dan Cupertino and Council President John Kroll. Robert Freimuth was master of ceremonies for the dedication. At the time, he was the owner of Dittmore-Freimuth Corporation and the producer of the Miss St. Francis Pageant. Freimuth, in his speech, felt the bandshell would be a place to stage events such as St. Francis Days, as well as business and corporation picnics. In a previous interview with the St. Francis Reminder-Enterprise, Freimuth said the band shell was funded totally through private funds, and that Vretenar was "instrumental in obtaining the financial support. One of the donors, Freimuth, presented on behalf of his company a \$5,000 donation. The estimated cost of materials was \$60,000, according to Freimuth. Mayor Vretenar's construction company, Vretenar Construction, saved the city an estimated \$125,000 by donating all the labor.

In his speech, Mayor Vretenar spoke about the development of the 4-acre park, which was originally known as St. Francis Park. In 1977 a flagpole was dedicated. The mayor expected that the new bandshell would attract park activities, such as concerts, shows, and plays, and hoped it would attract "popular and name stage performers..." according to the St. Francis Reminder-Enterprise.

The mayor's wife, Betty Vretenar, christened the bandshell. She broke a bottle of Champagne on a pedestal that held a scale model of the bandshell. The scale model was presented to Vretenar. It took her four swings for Betty to break the bottle. After the dedication ceremony, attendees enjoyed refreshments including smoked fish and sandwiches.

The park is now named for the late Mayor Vretenar, and he would be happy to know that the bandshell is still being used. "St. Francis Concerts in the Park" is held every Thursday evening, free of charge, at 7:00 pm at the bandshell during the summer months. Food sales at the concession stand pay for the cost of the bands. The "St. Francis Concerts in the Park" is supported by three separate organizations: The St. Francis Civic Association, the St. Francis Lions' Club, and St. Francis Days. All are volunteer organizations.



Mayor Vretenar (far left) and Freimuth watch Betty Vretenar break the bottle of Champagne on the fourth attempt to christen the bandshell.

By George....I think he's got it!!!

A new column by St. Francis Historical Society board member George Ramponi



Lem Putt, the Outhouse Builder

The outhouse was a fixture of the American rural landscape for centuries. The outhouse was the modern Port O John/ Porta Potty without the amenities. As modern sewage and septic systems advanced, the need for the “wee shed” outback diminished. But before disappearing almost entirely from the public consciousness, the outhouse was memorialized by Charles “Chic” Sale in his story, *The Specialist*, about the building of privies. His story honors one Lem Putt¹ known as “the champion privy builder of Sangamon County.”

Chic Sale was born in 1885 and grew up in rural Urbana, Illinois. He absorbed stories told by the oldsters at gathering places, such as the dry goods store, the feedlot, and the barbershop. When Sale joined the vaudeville circuit at age 20, he used these stories and yarns in his “rube act” / “country bumpkin.”

In his act, Sale successfully portrayed folks 30 to 40 years older than himself. The act proved popular, and within five years he was playing the Winter Garden (big time) and Flo Ziegfeld “Follies” (VERY big time) in New York. Eventually the movies found him, producing 18 photoplays that spanned the silent and early “talkies” years. In 1929, everyone knew Sale’s name.

His vaudeville act, “The Specialist,” began as entertainment for a Rotary Club meeting. It was a hit, so he took it on the road. With a farm scene backdrop, he would sit on a box wearing a straw hat, smoking his pipe, and talking to the audience about his “specialty”—privy building.

After discovering that some fellow entertainers were cribbing bits of the act, he decided to publish and copyright the work in a booklet form. Within a few months, he had sold a million copies.

Personally, I consider *The Specialist* a classic American monologue, hilarious and sensible. Here is some of Lem Putt’s advice for privy building:

“Dig her deep and dig her wide. It’s a mighty sight better to have a little privy over a big hole than a big privy over a little hole.”

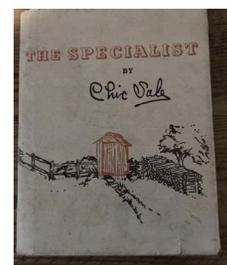
“I can give you a nail or a hook for the catalogue, and besides a box for cobs.”

“I put a four by four that runs from the top straight on down five foot into the ground. That’s why you never see any of my jobs upset on Halloween night.”

Lem Putt may have been fictional, but he sure was capable, with nothing but solid advice on topics such as: why a lean-to-outhouse is better than one with a pitched roof; why to always select white trimming for the paint job; why to go with beam construction rather than joist.

The Specialist is accessible online. YouTube.com has two exceptional monologists reciting it: Jean Shepard (of “Christmas Story” fame) or Wilfrid Lawson for a more rustic feel.

By the way, by the 1930s country folk took to calling their privies “Chic Sales.” Chic Sales hated it!!



Top,
Charles
“Chic” Sale

Above, The booklet *The Specialist*

Below left, a single hole outhouse (Wikipedia)



¹Not having found Lem (or Lemuel) Putt in any census records so far, I’m given to believe he was a composite character.

What's New?

Annual membership meeting, January 21, 2024 at 9:30 am

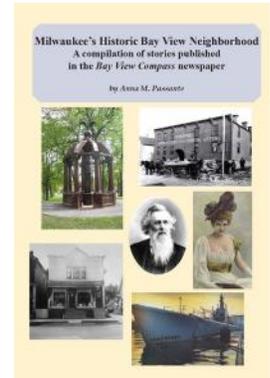
This is our annual membership meeting. There will be the election of board members. At 10 a.m. Juliet Hills will present: "Children's Books with Milwaukee Connections."

Renewal notices

Renewal notices for the 2024 membership went out in the mail. Please return the renewal form and payment. You don't want to miss the March newsletter!!

Your president, Anna Passante, has self-published her seventh book

Milwaukee's Historic Bay View Neighborhood: A compilation of stories published in the Bay View Compass newspaper is available through passante.anna@yahoo.com, Amazon.com, and Woodland Patterns on Milwaukee's eastside. There are 77 stories in all about Bay View's historic buildings and people.



The dedication of a historic designation plaque on the Lovely Spa and Salon building at 3724 S. Kinnickinnic went off without a hitch. We had a nice sized crowd. George Ramponi spoke about the history of the circa 1865 building, including the builder and original owner, Victor Schuerbrock.



A St. Francis "Christmas Story"

By Karen Gersonde

I love the movie *A Christmas Story*!! It is a 1983 American Christmas comedy film directed by Bob Clark. It is based on author Jean Shepard's semi-fictional anecdotes from his book, "In God We Trust: All Others Pay Cash." The story is set in the 1940s and features Ralphie Parker who badly wants a Red Ryder Carbine-Action 200 Shot Range Model Air Rifle (aka a BB-gun) for Christmas. He tries to convince his teacher, parents, and of course, Santa Claus, that the BB-gun is the perfect Christmas present for him. All disagree with him, saying, "You'll shoot your eye out." This is not what Ralphie wants to hear, and it seems his hope and dreams of getting this air rifle for Christmas has fallen on deaf ears.

Being set in the 1940s, there are so many details in this movie that I can relate to in my early youth, even though it was the 1950s and early 1960s when I grew up in St. Francis. We had to walk to school in the snow and cold. We wore wool coats, wool mittens, wool caps, and of course, galoshes (or rubber boots.) We also had to wrap around our face a wool scarf, which was as itchy and scratchy as a porcupine. We carried our schoolbooks in our hands most of the time. If you fell, all of your books fell into the snow and got wet.

A Christmas Story was set in a fictional town in Indiana, which was likely an industrial town like Milwaukee was in the 1940s. My father would come home from the factory just as the sun was setting, eat right away and then read the evening newspaper. If you did something bad during the day, you waited to see whether or not mom was going to snitch on you to dad. Once supper was on the table and conversations about the day began, if the subject did not come up about what you did wrong, it was clear sailing from there.

My early Christmases were a lot like Ralphie's. Dad would buy a real Christmas tree and string those big colored light bulbs on it. It never failed, once the tree was decorated, usually a strand or two would go out. He would have to pull them down, and if he didn't have extras, he would run out to the store to buy more. Sometimes, he would blow a fuse. Then he would have to run down to the basement to replace the fuse and try the lights again. It was a never-ending circle. But when the tree was finally lit, it shined in all its glory. Dad was proud of it.

Leading up to Christmas was the same as Ralphie's. We would watch the Christmas parade downtown, and I couldn't wait to see Santa at the end of it. Also, I would visit the department store Santas, usually at Gimbels at Southgate. Or mom and dad would let us visit Santa at Santa's Village behind Southgate Mall. That was so magical! I would always ask for that one special toy in hopes of seeing it under the Christmas tree on Christmas morning. Like Ralphie, every season there was that one special toy that you really, really wanted. The anticipation of Christmas coming grew and grew, hoping that the special toy was coming. Santa was magical and it was a magical time of the year, especially for a child.



Above:
Karen's
family Christmas tree in 1966

Top right: The leg lamp is still an iconic
image in *A Christmas Story*

Middle: House used in *A Christmas Story*
movie

Right: Karen and Glenn with Santa in 1957

On Christmas Eve, we would attend midnight mass at church. As a child, I could barely keep my eyes open, but mass was beautiful and wonderful. Still, I couldn't wait to get home and go to sleep so Santa could come. On occasion, as we got out of church, a light snow would be falling and all was peaceful and beautiful with the world. Not a sound was heard, but sometimes a distant train whistle would pierce the air. Steam engines were very loud back then. The train tracks ran right through St. Francis, so it was common to hear the trains roar past. As soon as I got into the house, I hopped into bed and dreamt of Christmas morning and all of the festivities to come on Christmas day. If it snowed overnight, you woke up to a sparkling winter wonderland.

Christmas morning was never a disappointment. Santa had delivered the goods once again. The Christmas tree with all of the presents underneath was a sight to behold, beautiful and magical all at the same time. It was an experience only a child could have, and that same feeling was never felt again as we grew up and adult life took over. But that magical, special feeling is always in my heart. My parents did a great job making Christmas special for my brother and me. Those early Christmases growing up in St. Francis are the best! As Ralphie said, "And all was right with the world." He was right! It sure was back then.

Footnote: Information for the movie *A Christmas Story* is found on *Wikipedia*

St. Francis Days



In the past, historical society parade participants have ridden in a fire truck and in a boat but never in a convertible.

Marge Tessmer and George Ramponi sat on the back seat of the convertible to throw the candy. Bill Drehfal sat in the front passenger side and tossed candy to the kids. Anna walked in the parade.





St. Francis Historical Society
3400 E. Howard Ave.
St. Francis, WI 53235

2023 Officers

President..... Anna Passante
Vice-President..... Sister Ceil Struck
Secretary.....Bill Drehfal
Treasurer.....Stephanie Maxwell

Board of Directors

George Ramponi
Jan Pientok
Mary Drehfal
Jay Wesner
Marge Tessmer

Honorary

Ralph Voltner
Marge Tessmer
Kathy Matthew
Carol Wojtecki

Newsletter

Anna Passante

Mark Your Calendar

Meetings at the St. Francis Civic Center at 3400 E. Howard Ave.:

The monthly board meetings are the 3rd Saturday of the month at 9:30 a.m. Visitors welcomed.

December 2023 canceled

January 20, 2024

February 17, 2024

Upcoming events (see "What's New" column for details)

Facebook: St. Francis Historical Society

Email: st.francishistoricalsociety@gmail.com

Address: 3400 E. Howard Ave.

Website: stfranciswihistoricalsociety.org

Phone: 414-316-4391