

News from Nan

ANNA'S FAMILY HISTORY

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, NAN (YES, I MEAN THE “NAN” OF NEWS FROM NAN)!

DECEMBER 2, 2018 | ANNA

The 112th anniversary of Nan’s birth is December 5, 2018, She was born in her parents’ “Red House” in Minden City, Michigan.



The Riedels’ “Red House” in Minden City, Michigan

In our household we celebrated her birthday along with St. Nicolaas Day (St. Nick Eve is December 5 and St. Nick Day is December 6). We always put out wooden shoes with carrots for St. Nick’s horse, and in place of the traditional “Happy Birthday” my dad always sang her a Dutch song that begins “It’s five December.” He didn’t sing much, but he sang that song with great gusto!

Nan is well known to most visitors to this website, so I’ve been trying to think of things to say about her that some people might not know about.

First is how successful she was as a teacher. She taught Latin, English, and German, and she was year-book advisor in several schools. She went into the profession in Michigan, during the depression. In

those years there was no money for extra reading material or field trips (one year she didn’t get paid at all until the school year was over!), but she put her heart and soul into her classes, and I know her students loved her and she them.



Nan (back row, right) and her students at Harbor Beach High School in Michigan. One of her nieces is in the middle of the front row.

One year after Nan went back into teaching in California she was named Teacher of the Year.



Nan’s “Teacher of the Year” portrait



Nan (front row, left) and one of her classes at Earl Warren High School in Downey, California

Another was how much she loved to travel, which I inherited (my dad loved to travel, too, so I got it from both sides). In 1934, she toured Europe with a “young ladies’ group.” This was during the time when Hitler was “making the trains run on time,” and it was quite an adventure. In 1938, she and a friend drove all the way from Michigan to Seattle, where they hopped on a steamer for a tour of the Inside Passage. It might not seem like much today, but in those days they often had to fix more than one flat tire every day! She and my dad went to Europe several times, including a trip to the former East Germany (DDR). They also toured the former Soviet Union in the 1960s, a time when hardly any Americans went there. After we moved to California in 1955, she and I drove almost every summer back to Michigan on the old Route 66.



Nan (left) and a friend with one of her early cars



Mom and Dad in 1966, about to leave on a trip to Europe

Last I would like to mention that Nan really wanted to be a biologist instead of an English and Latin teacher. She started in college as a biology major, and she spent two summers at the University of Michigan Biological Station on Douglas Lake in Pellston, Michigan, in the northern part of the state. She loved it! I'm sure she would have stuck with the program, but working with microscopes bothered her eyes, and she switched to languages (which she also loved and was very good at). However, she never lost her love for plants and animals, and she passed that on to me, as well (along with travel). I'm grateful to her for teaching me the names, characteristics, and uses of many plants, both in Michigan and California.



Sycamore tree. Nan loved learning the names of the “new” trees and plants she encountered when she moved from Michigan to California.

Happy birthday to a very special person!

9/6/22, 5:29 PM

Happy birthday, Nan (yes, I mean THE “Nan” of News from Nan)! | News from Nan

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