

OFHS



WALL OF FAME

Inducted May 30, 2010



RICHARD (DICK) BELKE

Growing up on the "West Side" of Oconto Falls, Dick Belke spent a great deal of time as a youth playing basketball and other games with the many youngsters whose fathers, like Dick's father, Henry, worked at the paper mill. This experience formed the foundation for a lifetime of caring about people. That sports interest carried through at OFHS where he participated in football and track all four years and in basketball three years. The tall quiet guy was well liked and voted to homecoming and prom court before walking across the stage with the OFHS Class of '60.

Contrary to his yearbook quote, "I like work. It fascinates me. I can sit and look at it for hours," Dick was a very hard working individual. As a freshman at UW-Oshkosh he told a friend that he was studying 48 hours a week in addition to going to class. After two years at Oshkosh, he moved on to UW-Stout where he completed his BA and MA in Industrial Education, perhaps a bit of a tribute to his father's work at the mill.

He taught industrial arts first at Wisconsin Heights, and then on to 13 year career at New Holstein High School. His specialty was metal fabrication. A number of products of his own design were sold commercially.

After a successful career inspiring students in the classroom, Dick embarked on a new adventure, founding Richard Belke Associates, a firm providing services in financial and estate planning, insurance sales, managing stock and bond portfolios and tax preparation. It was in this work that his care for the concerns of others really came through. His style was to think of and treat his clients as friends and to improve their lives and financial status through his business and personal efforts. The reward for this style was remarkable success. He ranked in the top one percent in the insurance business. A colleague remarked, "To sum it up: I see Dick Belke as successful in every way; in business, in his personal life, as a teacher, in his spiritual life and as a good example to all he met."

In the summer of '62 he married his Bonduel sweetheart, Judy. They raised two daughters, Karen and Sue, who are active in the family business. In his sunset years, he deepened the connections to his family and to the clients he cared for on a personal level. His legacy includes a Sheboygan Marsh County Park colony of purple martins living in the martin houses he built. The bigger legacy is the warmth, fond memories and inspiration he created for all whose lives he touched.