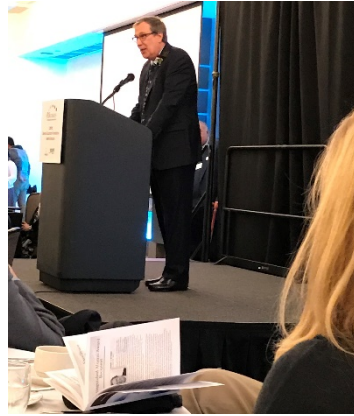


Dr. Kerry Byrnes, Class of 1963 accepts the

## 2018 Distinguished Alumni Award

November 15, 2018 • Kellogg Center, East Lansing

### Okemos Education Foundation Awards Banquet



*Kerry Byrnes with OEF  
Chairman, Ron Styka*



*Tom '75 and Cathy (Owens) '79 Rubendunst*



*Jill Slocum Tribell '68 and Sky  
Tribell '69 OAA Vice President*

*Special Guests of the Alumni Association*



*Brynn Hawks and Whitney Duffield,  
OHS Economics Teachers*

*Dr. Byrnes gives OHS Economics Class Lecture,  
Whitney Duffield, Econ Teacher*



## Remarks of Dr. Kerry J. Byrnes (OHS Class of '63)

### Accepting OEF's 2018 Distinguished Alumni Award

Good evening and thanks to each of you for being here tonight to support the students of Okemos and the Okemos Education Foundation. This evening could only have been better had our dinner menu included those blueberry pancakes that were so tasty over 60 years ago when my parents brought me to the Kellogg Center for Sunday morning breakfast!



On a serious note, thank you for selecting me as this year's recipient of the OEF Distinguished Alumni Award. Also thanks to the Okemos Alumni Association for nominating me for this award.

This year's banquet again honors Okemos Public Schools teachers for their excellence in education. Tonight, as I look back on my years at OHS and a 40+ year career working on agricultural development issues in the developing world, I recall with fondness three Okemos High teachers who taught me skills that proved highly useful in my career. While I can't personally thank each of those three teachers this evening, I would like to briefly honor their memory.

- The first teacher, **Bertha Mosher**, was my Spanish teacher. She set me on the road to becoming fluent in Spanish. This proved a real asset five years after graduating from OHS, when MSU hired me to work on a study of the agricultural marketing system in Colombia's Cauca Valley.



**Bertha Mosher (Spanish)**

- The second teacher, **Joy Moore**, was my typing teacher. She set me on the road to becoming a very fast touch typist which has proved to be a really practical on-the-job skill.



**Joy Moore (Typing)**

The third teacher, **Dale Brubaker**, taught American Government during the fall of my senior year at OHS. While Brubaker probably complied with the requisite curriculum, he otherwise “threw out the textbook” and had his students reading issue-oriented books such as John Griffin’s *Black Like Me* and JFK’s *Profiles in Courage*. How could reading these books not make one more aware of and interested in social issues?



**Dale Brubaker (American Government)**

In 2011, I began to write vignettes about celebrities (the famous) I had encountered during my travels. Just to drop a few names, the famous included MSU President John Hannah, Secretary of State John Kerry, Nobel Prize Laureate Norman Borlaug, Pope John Paul II, Spartan and Lakers great Magic Johnson, Oscar-winning composer Ennio Morricone, Exotica musician Martin Denny, and so many more.

I also wrote about the not-so-famous people who had influenced the course of my professional career. One of those “not-so-famous” was former OHS teacher **Dale Brubaker**. While I hadn’t been in touch with Brubaker since taking his American Government class in 1963, a Google search in 2011 turned up his email address. Replying to my first email, Dale wrote:

“Your letter is precisely the kind of thing that a teacher lives for and I thank you for it. Your kind words captured what I tried to do at OHS in my three years there. I was well into my Ph.D. program at MSU and wanted to involve students in the kind of inquiry that social scientists and persons in the humanities did rather than simply ingesting their results in texts.”

Following those initial emails, we struck up an email exchange over the next two years. I shared with Dale draft vignettes I had written about the famous and the not-so-famous. He quickly again became a mentor, commented on my drafts, offered ideas to improve my writing, and encouraged me to write an autobiography. He motivated me to crank out a near final memoir that I titled “Giants in Their Realms.” In mid-2013, I tried to email Dale to share a draft of “Giants” with him but he didn’t reply. I tried to phone and leave a message but received no reply. Then, one Saturday, I again phoned and Dale’s wife, Barbara, answered. On identifying my name, Barbara said Dale had told her about me. I replied that I was calling to get a mailing address to send the “Giants” draft to Dale. She replied that Dale had died just two days before after a long battle with cancer.

I owe a debt of gratitude to those three OHS teachers – **Dale Brubaker, Joy Moore, and Bertha Mosher** – from whom I acquired knowledge and skills that would become so helpful to me in my career. Thanks also this evening to all Okemos teachers, the OEF, and the OAA for all that you do to improve educational opportunities for the students of Okemos who, all too soon, will be the future alumni of Okemos Public Schools.

Hopefully, each OHS teacher here tonight will also inspire your students to go out into the world, do great things, and make you proud that they were once your student. Indeed, I hope that one day a former OHS student will be standing here to tell the audience that you were the OHS teacher who most inspired him or her.

Finally – and you know that when a speaker say “finally,” that’s probably not going to be the only “finally!” But, finally, let me acknowledge the OHS alumni and teachers who were with me this evening at the OAA-sponsored table:

- Sky Tribell (Class of '68 and OAA Vice President)
- Jill (Slocum) Tribbel (Cass of '68)
- Tom Rubendunst (Class of '75)
- Cathy (Owens) Rubendunst (Class of '79)
- Whitney Duffield (OHS Economics Teacher)
- Brynn Hawks (OHS Economics Teacher)
- Rod Ellis (Class of '65 and OAA President)

In closing, permit me to mention that my autobiography – “[Giants](#)” – is now available in the Alumni Library on the Okemos Alumni Association web site and that the OAA is in the process of donating the printed version of “Giants” to the OHS Library.

Thank you and good evening to all! Go Chiefs!!



**Dr. Kerry J. Byrnes**



**Special Tribute from The State of Michigan**