



John Donahue Bendix, age 83, of Waseca passed away on January 18, 2019. A beloved teacher at Waseca High School for more than 50 years, he taught world history to thousands of students. His long service to education is probably a state record. John was known to be the first one to arrive in the school building every morning – super prepared and ready to give it his all. Teaching was the joy of his life.

John was born with a smile on his face – ready to comment on life's absurdities. He made his first appearance at Abbott Northwestern Hospital in Minneapolis on September 9, 1935. His father, Dr. L.H. Bendix, a physician and surgeon, was school board chair in Annandale for 30 years, and his mother, Molly Donahue, a nurse, was known for her sparkling wit. Both parents served as models for his teaching career which would be distinguished by great dedication and unfailing good humor.

In high school, John excelled in athletics winning 15 letters in basketball, baseball, football, and golf. He was basketball captain, kept the stats for the town baseball team, racked up trophies in golf, ran the summer rec program, was named to All-District and All-State Teams and acted as the tall, tanned lifeguard at the beach. When he graduated it was his dad who handed him his diploma.

At St. John's University he made the varsity basketball team as a freshman. He admired the faculty at SJU and graduated with a bachelor of science degree in political science – thereby becoming a loyal Johnnie for life. Subsequently, John volunteered for the U.S. Army. At Fort Leonard Wood, MO, he was involved with a school integration deployment to Little Rock, AK, and he had a chance to play basketball with K.C. Jones of the Boston Celtics and other NBA hot shots on the 5th Army Team.

It was in 1958, that John took a teaching position at Waseca High School fully expecting to return to graduate school in a year. After four years and WHS he did go back to the U of M for his Minnesota Counseling Certification. Later, he continued to pursue graduate work at Carleton College and Minnesota State University, and he taught for a year at Rush City. Then he returned to Waseca for good.

Ultimately, John was reluctant to stop teaching after 55 years. He continued to arrive at the high school early each morning to tutor students. To his little grandson it seemed “Bapa” had taught forever. He told his Sunday school teacher that Jesus had been a student in his grandfather’s class.

Above all, John was totally engrossed in every aspect of the Waseca Schools, teaching World History, Western Civilization, Minnesota History and Minority Groups. He was chair of the department, head of salary negotiations and directed endless extra-curricular events.

His coaching and officiating began in 1958. He started track and cross country meets, and for years he picked up kids and brought them to school for their 6 a.m. basketball practice. He coached 7,8,9, and 10th grade levels as well as coaching B – Team, and being assistant varsity coach. He was the official scorekeeper for the basketball team for 40 years. John’s enthusiasm for athletics and teaching never dimmed.

He was named WHS Teacher of the Year in 1994, and Walmart Teacher of the Year in 1998. Many awards came his way. He received a National endowment for the Humanities Grant, Local and International Rotary Club, Service Above Self, Friends of Education, Tennis Associating, Bluejay Booster Club, Fellowship of Christian Athletes Outstanding Service, Athletes Hall of Fame, FFA Honorary Farmer and National Exchange Club Golden

Deeds. His involvement with the community included the American Legion, United Fund, Maplewood Park Committee, Waseca Historical Society and Art Center. He spoke at Memorial Day celebrations, WHS homecomings, and was a parade marshal. With his wife Deanna he enjoyed lifetime membership to the Walker Art Center, the Minneapolis Institute of Arts and the Guthrie Theater.

John joined Lakeside Country Club in 1958 and was known to flirt with a par game in golf, and he also assisted at professional state golf tournaments. He affectionately cared for family pets who became his close buddies. He made many good friends and kept them for life.

John met Deanna Marohn one summer at a drive-in in Annandale where she was a carhop. They married in 1959. They traveled the world together, spending entire summers in Europe. During trips to Greece, Turkey, Italy and Spain as well as Germany, Switzerland, Ireland and France, they immersed themselves in history, art and fun. When Deanna was working on a Ph.D. in art History in Scotland and England, the family joined the adventure. They were intrepid explorers of the far corners of the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. John never hesitates for a minute to drive into downtown Manhattan, Paris, Milan or London.

John also had a special fondness for the natural wonders of Minnesota. Fly fishing at the family's north woods log cabin and then filleting the fish he caught with the precision of a surgeon was something he learned early in life. He sharpened his ability to look at both sides of political questions in conversations with his Republican father and his mother who was a Democrat, and he understood the significant issues in politics. He often had two or three books going – avidly reading mysteries and histories.

No teacher ever more faithfully supported his students than John whether in drama, music or sports. He was the No. 1 fan at WHS;

he was there to see the basketball players nail hoop balls, gymnasts flip, soccer goal keepers make amazing saves and students sing solos. He attended countless sporting events – particularly for his grandchildren.

The highlight of John's life was raising his beloved children Katie and Johnny. Each morning before leaving for school he wrote daily loving notes and drew silly cartoons on little cards and left them for Katie (Grace) and Johnny (Barney) to start their day. He delighted in Katherine and John; they were first in his heart and brought into his life five bright, beautiful grandchildren: Henry, Oliver, Anthony, Isaac, and Leah. John adored his family. He was a loving father and grandfather. His family in turn idolized him.

John lived a wonderful life and knew it. He took special joy in young people. He made the classroom a joyful place for learning. His students could count on some absurdly comic happenings in any class. For him the classroom became a stage of which he could share his wealth of knowledge and keen sense of humor. He told his students to “burn into their brains” what he was teaching them and remember it for life. Becoming a great teacher was John's destiny.

He is survived by his wife, Dr. Deanna Marohn Bendix; daughter, Katherine Youngberg of Waseca; son, John Bendix and daughter-in-law, Brenda of Byron; sisters-in-law: Mary Lou Carlson of Kerkoven and Kathleen Brown and husband William of Shoreview; brother-in-law, Dale Marohn and wife Carol of Annandale; grandchildren: Henry and Oliver Youngberg, Anthony, Isaac, and Leah Bendix; many nieces and nephews.

He was preceded in death by his baby daughter, Theresa Anne; his parents: Dr. L.H. Bendix and Molly Donahue Bendix; sister, Mary Joan Absolon; parents-in-law, Theresa Geisinger Marohn and Herbert W. Marohn; aunt, Norah Oliver; brother-in-law: Dr. Karel Absolon and Richard Carlson.

A celebration of John's life will be held in the spring on Sunday, April 7, at 2:00 PM, at Grace Lutheran Church in Waseca. Interment will be in Woodville Cemetery.

A Gathering of John's Family and Friends will be held from 3-6 PM on Saturday afternoon, April 6, at Starkson & Steffel Funeral Home ~ McRaith Chapel of Waseca.

Memorials are preferred to the John Bendix Memorial Scholarship.