

# There Is A Ringer on Woodhill Drive.

By Dolores Ullstrom

At LSIA's 2019 picnic, someone suggested I might enjoy interviewing another local national champion. Marlys Timm. Marlys and husband Marv have lived on the south shore of Lake Sarah for 34 years. I was interested of course, but it was not until we were all under stay-at-home orders during the COVID-19 pandemic that it happened. Marlys was Postmaster in Loretto for twenty years (1986 -2006). After our several extended phone conversations, I can say she has become a real hero in my eyes.

Marlys grew up on a farm near Echo, a small town in southwest Minnesota.

The farmhouse had no indoor plumbing and electricity came when she was five.

Loving the outdoors, she started driving tractor at age six.



Marlys married at sixteen years of age. She and Marv moved a few times before settling with their young family in Fulda.

They commuted 16 miles to Worthington where both had jobs. Marv started on the second day after the opening of the Armour plant. Marlys worked at Campbell soup.

They alternated shifts so one of them was home to take care of their two young children, Mike and Michelle. During the one hour job transition, a neighbor couple cared for the children.

Marlys' job at Campbell was deboning chicken on the dark meat line. Difficult as it is to understand today, workers on the line did not wear gloves. After a few months, Marlys developed what was called "chicken itch," a rash that slowly progressed up her arms. For health reasons she quit her job. To this day she cannot eat chicken without getting an allergic response.

The St. Patrick's Day blizzard of 1965 is the source of a truly memorable event in her life. Southwest MN is famous for killing blizzards that blow across miles of flat, open prairie. On this day, blinding, blowing snow made it impossible to see the highway.

Marlys called the children's caregiver to say she and her three traveling companions were leaving work early because severe weather was brewing. She was told that Marv had left for work early for the same reason. The car Marlys was in rammed the car in front of it. That car was stopped because it had hit the car in front of it which was also stopped. All in all they were part of a 20 car pileup. Many of the vehicles were food and beverage trucks traveling to and from Worthington. The occupants of all the damaged vehicles made their way to a small two bedroom house located near the scene. The house was soon packed with worried, cold but safe individuals.



It was obvious to everyone that that night no one was going anywhere. A close neighbor was called and agreed to have Marlys and her three female companions come to her house for the night.

First, they had to get there. About 50 inches of snow had fallen and 60 mph winds had created huge drifts.

The trip between houses was not far but it was hazardous. Marlys remembers trudging over clothes lines with just the tops of clothes poles sticking up through the snow. She had to physically help one of the ladies who was having great difficulty.

Once safely inside, Marlys got to worrying about Marv. Where was he? She knew he probably didn't make it to Worthington. After several calls between houses, she was relieved to learn that while she was on the east end of the pileup, Marvin's car was on the west end. He was staying overnight at a third house close to the scene.

The blizzard occurred on a Wednesday. It was Saturday before the road was cleared of snow and cars.

Contents of the food and beverage trucks provided much needed nourishment for the stranded motorists.

The couple caring for the Timm children did a great job with the kids during the four days.



*Photo from Christmas 1964*

After the Armour plant was up and running for three months, Marv and all second day hires were laid off. A friend in St. Louis Park told the Timms about openings at Reuter Inc. The family up and moved to the cities. Marlys eventually got a job working on a candy line at Preferred Products. She liked her job and enjoyed the candy.

In 1976 the Timms bought a home in Victoria. A friend and coworker told Marlys she had potential to improve her job skills and encouraged her to get her GED. When the candy factory went on strike, she became aware of a soon to open position in the Victoria post office. She was interested.

First of course, she had to take classes and pass the GED exams. She then took and passed the Civil Service exam with a score of 94.5. She got the job at the Victoria post office. To get more hours she was borrowed out to other post offices as needs arose. In addition to working and caring for her family, Marlys continued taking post office classes in supervision and management as well as bulk mail training.



When the Loretto Postmaster went out on medical leave, she filled in for about three months as the officer in charge (OIC). When the postmaster position became vacant, she and many others applied for the job.

Marlys was informed that her application was taken out of consideration. PO policy stated that anyone who had temporarily held the OIC position is ineligible because of possible interviewer bias.

Marlys, normally a very mild person, did not think this fair. She made an appointment with the Mpls Postmaster and explained her rationale. She was successful and her name was again added to the mix. She got the job, and the post office soon changed the offending policy.

In 1986 the Loretto post office was closed over the noon hour. Invariably, when I went there, it was around noon, and doors were locked. Frustrated, I uttered unkind words under my breath. I was not alone apparently. Realizing this, Marlys gathered revenue and volume numbers and again went to Mpls. She made her point successfully to the Postal Operations Manager and the Loretto PO was allowed to stay open through the day. Marlys also extended daily hours and added Saturday hours.

After years of dealing with many post offices in the seven county metro area, I can report that postmasters were not known for their customer service skills. What was worse, they didn't seem to care. When I entered the building, I was treated like an unwanted interruption. Postmasters were, I may add, almost always grumpy men (Sorry guys but its true). I am guessing that Marlys and many like her effectively change this mind-set because it's not true today.

In order to get the Loretto job, it was policy that she had to live within the delivery area. With their kids grown and out of the house, the Timms heard about a nice two BR home on Woodhill Drive. Ann Osier, a widow who had, with her husband built the house, and lived there 24 years, was selling. One look was all the Timms needed. They have enjoyed their Lake Sarah home to this day.

Eventually, during our many conversations, I got around to asking Marlys about her horseshoe pitching skills which I had heard about over the years and again at the LSIA picnic. She did not participate in high school sports because, prior to Title IX, there were no sport teams for girls. Imagine that.



Before horseshoes and while living in Victoria, a lot of Marlys' time was taken up chauffeuring children to their sporting events. She became aware of the Chaska A&W girls softball team. She decided time had come for her to try sports. The team was good, playing in several state tourneys, and friendships were rewarding. Marlys eventually became president of the District 112 Women's Softball League. Her organizational skills, attention to detail and strong work ethic were lost on no one.

After moving to Lake Sarah at age forty she did not want to travel to Chaska several times a week. She dropped out of softball.

While calling bingo at the 1988 Loretto Sports Bonanza, she learned that women horseshoe players were needed right now. She left the bingo table and never looked back. Horseshoe pitching became her next challenge.

Marlys and Marvin joined the Rockford Ringers Horseshoe League. It was a very active group with about 40 members. There are two twelve week sessions per year, May through September. One night a week is for doubles play and the other night is for singles.

Marlys and Marv have pitched in 13 World Tourneys and all 30 MN State Tourneys. In world events, Marlys has finished in the money nine times. In 2000 she came in first in Class E averaging 53% ringers, going 12-3 over three days of play. In 2017 with 40% ringers and going 12-1, she also came in first in Class F.

In MN sanctioned tournaments, pitchers are placed in either 6 or 8 person classes according to ringer percentage. Percentages are determined by the three highest averages over the past 12 months. Tournament and league play generally consist of 40 shoes pitched per game.

At picnics and other informal settings, games are usually won by achieving twenty-one points.

After playing for many years, Marlys learned from a 90 year old uncle that her deceased mother loved horseshoes. At a time when most women were in the kitchen, men pitched horseshoes during lunch breaks on the farm. Her mother often joined the men. She was reportedly very good. Marlys regrets she didn't know this about her mom while she was still alive.

Like so many activities, horseshoe pitching is attracting fewer followers these days. Beanbag tossing is gaining in popularity and seems to pull people away. Currently there are 600 horseshoe leagues in the US. Minnesota has the largest number with 30. Age 70 plus is the largest age group. There were twelve kids 18 and under participating in the MN State Tournament last fall.

The Timms have promoted participation in the sport of pitching at the Loretto Fun Fest, Heritage Fest in Independence and the Hamel Rodeo. They donate time, horseshoes, and portable pits.

Horseshoes is a family friendly sport. Marlys and Marv's son and grandson have also pitched with them over the years.

Since 2007 Marvin and Marlys have spent a month each winter in McAllen, Texas. They participate in the Golden Age Olympic Games.

In 2007 Marlys took first place in the women's Class A horseshoe event. She has done so every year since. In 2011, she entered 12 different events. She wound up with three first place finishes and was named overall top female Olympian (see photo at right) winning tickets for two to Las Vegas.



Marlys and Marv, like me, are members of the silent generation. We were young during a time when hard work paid off. Jobs, for those who wanted them, were always available. Because of that, we have few complaints. Thus we remain silent.



Are you convinced? Marlys is one successfully competitive woman. Thanks for telling us your stories Marlys, may the best woman win!