

When **Dennis Duffy '64** was inducted into the Brother Rice Alumni Hall of Fame in 2004 the *Rice Review* featured an article that linked him to Joe Bergmann by opening with the following:

“Sometimes one example, among many, of a man’s actions reflects his heart and soul. **Dennis Duffy '64** showed up at Joe Bergmann’s house unexpectedly the day Mary Bergmann, Joe’s first wife, died in February of 1999. Joe had not yet called Brother Rice, but Dennis knew something was wrong, so when he noticed his friend and colleague missing, he asked Jim Antos for the rest of the day off. He had a hunch that Joe needed him. Dennis has been making Joe’s lunch for him ever since Mary died.

“I had Dennis in class here at Rice and now he’s my boss, and he’s making my lunch,” Joe said. “You never know how things are going to work out.”

Little did Dennis or Joe know in 2004, that in 2009 they would retire together. Dennis stopped making his friend’s lunch after Joe married Christine in 2006, an announcement made public in November, the night Mr. Bergmann became only the third Honorary Alumnus in Brother Rice history.

Things began working themselves out for Dennis and Brother Rice when he entered as a freshman in 1960 and graduated in 1964. After two years at Wilson Jr. College, two years in the Army (including 13 months in Korea), graduating from Lewis College in 1972, and then teaching at Sherman public school at 52nd and Morgan, Dennis came back to Rice for good in 1974, at the behest of his longtime friend, the late **Tony Hanrahan '61**.

Thirty five years later, Dennis looks back on it as the best decision he could have made, one shared by his wife, Nancy, who supported him all the way. “I couldn’t have done it without Nancy’s support,” Dennis said, especially considering the many hours of coaching football from 1974-1988, and then intermittently from 1992-99, on the freshmen and sophomore levels, and most notably as longtime assistant varsity coach for the legendary Tom Mitchell.

As an illustration of support for her husband, Nancy Duffy said, “Dennis is a man to whom others look for leadership. In his many roles, he provides encouragement, support, guidance, and understanding. As teacher, coach, community leader, husband, father, sibling, friend -- he commands great respect from those around him. He avoids the spotlight, preferring to highlight the accomplishments of others.”

Teaching and coaching at Brother Rice is something that Dennis has done because he loves it, and it is apparent that the feeling is mutual among his former students and players. In fact, it is the feedback he receives from alumni who surround him at the many reunions and golf outings he attends, that rewards Coach Duffy beyond the paycheck he earns. Known for his no-nonsense style, Mr. Duffy believes that education still comes down to the 3 R’s, no matter whether the latest trend is to tear down walls or to have the students learn together in groups. Mr. Duffy’s philosophical preference for stressing the basics is reflected in his personal definition of “cooperative learning,” when he tells his students “if you cooperate, you’ll learn something.”

Dennis holds a special kinship with his teaching colleagues at Brother Rice, not only by serving as a leader in the Brother Rice Lay Teacher’s Association, but also in how he appreciates what he has learned from his mentors and friends, **Bob Baader, Joe Bergmann, George Sedlacek, Rich Marfise, Tom Mitchell, Ed Staron, Ed Barra, Jack Hackett '61, Tony Hanrahan '61, Bob Twardy '65**, and the late **Joe Johnston**, a list which includes nine former Alumni Association Men of the Year. And he is quick to point out how much he enjoys the established success of one of his former defensive backs, **Steve Nye '81**, as the head varsity football coach, along with his assistant, **Mark Klutcharch '82**, a member of one of Coach Duffy’s most memorable teams, the 1981 State Champions.

Coach Duffy is at the heart of a close connection between the communities of Brother Rice and the Village of Evergreen Park. While he is the current Evergreen Park Commissioner and Director of Recreational Services, Dennis began serving the village in 1970 as an assistant to his dad, the legendary Marty Duffy, after whom the park at 91st and Ridgeway is named. Following his father's death, Commissioner Duffy assumed the leadership role of the Recreation Department in 1981.

Dennis proves that there is a world of fulfillment out there without having to travel far from home. Whether he is coaching at Rice side-by-side with son, **Dennis '95** (as he once coached Holy Redeemer with his own dad, Marty), attending Jimmy Buffet concerts with Nancy and daughter Erin, organizing a July 4th parade, golfing at Evergreen with his pals (most notably the Cowboys), or making lunch for a colleague and former teacher, Dennis is at the center of family, friends, and neighbors enjoying life.

At this point in their life, most guys would feel like they put in a full day, teaching four classes and serving as the chairman of the Brother Rice Social Studies Department. But after years of teaching five or six classes, coaching at night and on weekends, and beginning his day as Commissioner Duffy, Dennis habitually operates in a tireless mode of building, revitalizing, and connecting an expansive community of people who love to learn, work, and play together.

Thanks to his dedication to the heart and soul of what brings people together, it's hard to imagine anyone living in a bigger, closer, friendlier or more vibrant neighborhood than "Dennis/Husband/Dad/Mr./Chairman/Coach/Commissioner/Duffy '64."

"Joe Bergmann epitomizes the essence of the Brother Rice High School experience, now and for the last 47 years. Ever since he joined the staff in 1962 after graduating from Loyola University, Joe has inspired more Brother Rice students than perhaps any other classroom teacher, a symbol of what alumni remember most.

During these years, Joe has been a member of the English, social studies, business and counseling departments. He also served as the freshman football coach from 1962-1968, as assistant track coach in 1963 and head track coach from 1964-1969.

Joe, in addition to being recognized as a teacher, counselor and coach, was honored as one of the first Alumni Men of the Year in 1987 appreciation of his work in the early 1980s, creating, organizing, and establishing the Brother Rice High School Alumni Association.

"Who knows where the Alumni Association would be today if Joe did not get it going 25 years ago," said **Jim Casey '70**, Alumni Director. "People from other schools still call me about how to get started, and I cannot imagine how Joe built a mailing list from scratch, using index cards. We are probably the most active alumni association of any high school in the area, because Joe gave us a running start," Casey added.

As a result of his dedication, compassion, and hard work throughout the years, Joe has remained a favorite teacher to generations of Brother Rice alumni. Respected and admired by current students and remembered by almost all graduating classes, Joe's enduring style of storytelling continues to inspire students how to think. Joe's cross-generational appeal was recently demonstrated when recent Man of the Year, **Bill Dunne '65**, mentioned Mr. Bergmann as one of his favorites, and basketball standout **Bobby Frasor '05**, pointed to Mr. Bergmann when a reporter asked Bobby at a basketball game to single out his favorite teacher.

Jim Antos describes Joe Bergmann as a ‘consummate gentleman.’ In Mr. Antos’ many years of knowing Joe, he says that Joe “has always exuded class, professionalism and friendship. He is such a talented man who is so well-respected and so well-liked that whatever he says, you know his words are important and true. The kids love him, learn from him and, in turn, Joe reciprocates...the crux of any successful educator.”

Dennis Duffy ’64, chairman of the Department of Social Studies, describes Joe’s approach to education as that of a ‘traditionalist’ in that Joe believes successful education revolves around the three ‘Rs’: **R**eading, **W**riting, and **A**rithmetic.” Mr. Duffy refers to Joe as the “Counselor”—not just because of the time that Mr. Bergmann dedicated to being a counselor to so many students, but also because Joe went to law school. Dennis also brought up a little known fact—Joe Bergmann in 47 years, has only missed 10 days of school, due to the passing of his wife, Mary, and the passing of his mother.

Brian Berkley ’90, is one of many who hold Joe Bergmann in the highest regard as his favorite teacher at Brother Rice. Brian recalls how much respect he had for how Mr. Bergmann ran his classroom: “Mr. Bergmann made the subject matter (U.S. History) interesting, he was always very well-organized and well-prepared, and it had an impact on his ability to teach and our ability to learn. Mr. Bergmann combined great teaching methods with an equally great sense of humor.”

Casey added, “Joe is one of two teachers who inspired me to become a teacher, even though early on I had to completely abandon any thoughts of emulating his style. I doubt that anyone can do what he does as well, or for as long.”

Much is written about the accomplishments of Brother Rice athletes and scholars, but it is for the classroom teacher that most alumni have the most enduring memories, and none more so than Joe Bergmann. For this reason, Joe Bergmann becomes only the third man in Brother Rice history to be installed in the Alumni Hall of Fame as an Honorary Alumnus.

Things won’t be the same around here without Joe and Dennis making and teaching history at Brother Rice High School. And as it has been observed by all who know them, they leave Brother Rice in the same way that they lived and worked here, thinking of others more than themselves. No one can write a single tribute that comes close to measuring the impact these two men have had on thousands of students and hundreds of colleagues, but we can take comfort in knowing that neither was in it for the adulation. The absence of these kind, considerate, and devoted men also leaves a vast void of good cheer. Each in his own distinctive way, shared and created many laughs every day they came to work, lightening the atmosphere for everyone around them.

Here’s a classic understatement: Joe and Dennis will be missed.