

# Bill Bergstrom's dreams coming true for Lake Region State College



Former college President Merrill Berg once wrote, "I often think of Bill Bergstrom's leadership and our friendship through the exciting years when we made a dream of a college in Devils Lake come true."

Bergstrom was one of the five college board executive committee members. They were responsible for not only making the important decisions regarding the college's future, but because the college was governed by the Devils Lake School Board, they also rallied to get the school board's support on projects. One important example was convincing the school district to authorize a campaign increase the district's mill levy tax to generate the local funding needed to leverage federal and private funding for the new campus. Bergstrom also saw to it that the community college offered more than just vocational careers. He felt it was important to also offer, academic courses, placing great emphasis on the arts, and encouraged the development of Fort Totten Little Theatre and the offering award winning art courses.

"I can only tell you how passionately Bill felt about the importance of the college for this community," remembers his wife, Anne-Marit. "Certainly he was not alone in that. He had good company. It was wonderful how so many individuals inspired one another."

Anne-Marit is a great supporter of the arts, and has also dedicated a lot of her time to the college over the years. From the very beginning when Lake Region was known as just a junior college, Anne-Marit was either bringing talent in from across the country or performing alongside her mother, Alma Studness. She even helped give the school an audio center, which used audio aids for instructional purposes. At the time it was state of the art technology, allowing the college to keep up with what was being offered at highly state-funded state institutions. The project was completed in the fall of 1966.

"Merril Berg was always open to new ideas about making the college better, so when I went to him about the possibility of creating an audio center he instantly thought it was a great idea." Thanks to the efforts of people like Bill and Anne-Marit, the ground breaking for the Lake Region Junior College took place in 1965, and was considered one of the greatest events in the town's history, along with the coming of the railroad in 1883.

"Oh, those were the great days of national priorities on community and college development, and how I miss them," wrote Merrill Berg. "How I miss them, and leaders and visionaries like Bill." The impact and influence the late Bill Bergstrom had in the Devils Lake community and his role in the development of Lake Region State College is immeasurable.

*Bergstrom served on the board of Trustees of Lake Region Community College and was president of the College Corporation Board during the building of the present facilities.*