

Janet Kernen

Janet “JB” Kernen grew up in Cross Plains, Wisconsin, on a small dairy farm with four brothers and one sister. Life was simple in the 50’s and early 60’s (at least it seemed that way to us), but she learned a very strict work ethic from her parents, both of German ancestry. That work ethic, as it turned out, carried over to her job at the DNR.

After grade school, Janet joined St. Joseph’s Convent in Milwaukee for one year. At that time, she thought her “calling” was to become a nun, but after one year the convent closed down.



October 1965

Many of her friends and family still believe that she was too much for the nuns to handle and that the best recourse was to close the convent! Obviously, that was not the case; it closed due to lack of money. Sound familiar? So Janet finished her high school career at Middleton High School and then went to UW-Whitewater for two years studying elementary education.

She had a great revelation during her two years in college...kids weren’t her thing. So she left college and started her DNR career. As some people have stated, she may not have been teaching young kids, but she still dealt with “big kids” when it came to education!

Janet began her DNR career in July of 1971 as a Typist 2 at the Central Office in Madison where she spent her entire career. After several promotions within the Bureau of Program Services, she landed in the Training Office in 1978 working

with Chuck Rieck and Rudy Teschan. This turned out to be her “real calling”.

Janet really enjoyed her work in the Training Office. She was responsible for organizing the Department’s New Employee Orientation program and coordinating all of the management and communication skills programs that were offered under various Training Directors’ initiatives. There’s no exact count of how many programs she coordinated, but it was well over 2,000. That’s a lot of setting up tables and chairs and making sure AV equipment was working...which wasn’t always the case. She was also instrumental in developing the Department’s first automated training record system which helped save everyone a lot of time. Janet loved her job, but since her husband had been retired since March of 1997, it was time to follow suit, so she retired from the DNR after 34-1/2 years.

Janet met her husband, Lee Kernan, while at the DNR which started a real adventure in her life.



Janet and Lee
1985

They will be celebrating their 28th wedding anniversary in April of 2013. Their passion has been traveling the world and learning about life outside of Wisconsin.

Travels have taken them to Europe, Africa, Australia, South America, Latin America, the Caribbean, Canada, and to every state in the union.





When Janet retired in 2005, they moved from Madison to rural Marquette County where they currently own 36 acres. They renovated their house, planted a prairie, dug a frog pond, erected an outbuilding and redid all of the landscaping around the home. Now they're exhausted and looking to move closer to family and friends in Dane County in 2013.

In her spare time, Janet very much enjoys quilting and flower gardening; she leaves the vegetable gardening to Lee. His garden is always full of weeds, but not her flower gardens!

And generally speaking about 5 or 6 times a week, she takes a 2-mile hike with Kassie, their English Setter, trying to keep she and the dog in relatively good shape. She loves to bake (but leaves the daily cooking to Lee). He claims he wouldn't be able to eat Janet's cooking...and he's right! The Christmas cookie output for 2012 was 136 dozen...a new all-time record!!

But her greatest and possibly most important role in life at the moment is spending time with her mother who lives in assisted living in Waunakee helping her deal with her dementia and macular degeneration. It can be a difficult task at times, but certainly no harder than the task her parents had in raising Janet and her siblings!



Janet and Kassie