



## Wisconsin Singers Alumni Spotlight

# Dennis Laufenberg

*Written by Austin Gent, 2<sup>nd</sup> year WS drummer*



*Dennis and his wife, Linda*

While we usually interview student alumni for this column, we're breaking that trend this month to highlight a very important person who has contributed a staggering amount of time and service to the Wisconsin Singers, and recently crossed over into Singers alumni-hood. Many of you who have followed Singers for some time will likely already know him well, but for all of our new families and fans, allow me to introduce you to Dennis Laufenberg, the Wisconsin Singers' reliable and kind-hearted bus driver for the past 30 years!

Originally from Muscoda, Wisconsin, Dennis first found himself behind the wheel of a bus in 1974 driving for Greyhound and continued doing so for the next 17 years. In 1990, when Greyhound underwent a change in ownership, Dennis started driving part-time for Badger Coaches and was assigned his first couple trips with the Wisconsin Singers. Not long after he began working full-time for Badger, he became the exclusive bus driver for almost every Singers show on the program's tour schedule.

In his decades as our driver, Dennis met many, many Singers and their families—probably more than just about any alumni or parent. He said he felt the love from everyone he got to know through the years, and that he was fully respected by each new troupe. So when I asked what drew him to the group and why he kept with Singers as long as he did, he had a simple answer:

“The students were well-behaved, respectful, and well-mannered. In my 30 years, I don't I think I ever had any problems.”

As a second-year member of the troupe, it was humbling to speak to someone with such an enduring Singers experience and a strong notion of what makes Singers special. He recalled,

“It felt good. It felt good to pull up to these schools where the kids would be waiting, and to see the effect the Singers had on them.”

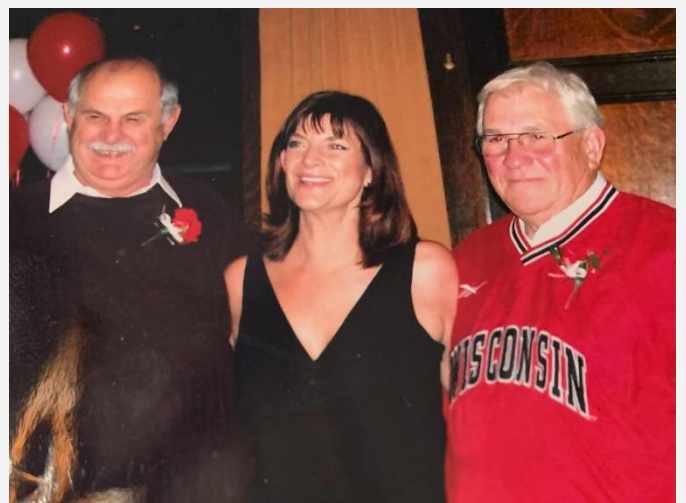
Through the years, Dennis made many fond memories with the troupe. He particularly remembered a Spring Break trip to Austin, Texas, for which they also got to stop in New Orleans. Though this involved lots of long night-driving, Dennis seemed unbothered.

“I liked driving nights for Singers. They were quiet, and I valued taking care of the students. Parents would drop them off and say, ‘Take good care of my kids; and I would!’”

For 30 years, Dennis provided this high level of care and service to the Singers and other university groups like the Badger hockey and basketball teams. Towards the end of his career, Dennis exclusively drove for Singers before he transitioned into a well-earned retirement at the start of 2020, having logged an astounding 3 *million miles* (about 6 round trips to the moon!).

Since retirement, Dennis has enjoyed getting back into woodworking, and making flag cases that he donates to veterans. He's also been traveling to try and see every national park he can with his wife, Linda.

While it's sad to say goodbye to Dennis as our beloved bus driver for the past 30 years, he leaves the troupe with an enduring legacy that none will forget. We can't thank Dennis enough for the truly outstanding service and devotion he's provided the group for so long. In return, we know he too cherishes the memories he formed with Wisconsin Singers program and students, which he declared the “very best ambassadors for the University.”



*(Left to Right) Dennis, Director Emerita Robin Whitty-Novotny, and the previous long-time Singers bus driver, Eldon Himsel*