

Memories of Marlin Klinger, Teacher and Coach

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Marlin Klinger was not a teacher to be trifled with. As a Marine combat veteran of WWII, awarded a purple heart, dealing with unruly, sometimes defiant, teenagers was not a big deal. All it took was “the look” and order was restored. When I chatted with him at a class breakfast a couple of years ago, I asked him if he ever had discipline problems. His answer was a simple “no.”

He was a superb teacher and chaired the WHS science department for many years. His classes were never boring. After our ninth grade year ended, I took a summer advanced biology course with him. The class included even some college bound, recent graduates. One of the assignments was to collect and identify about 20 insects. [Bragging ahead!] I got a 99, the highlight of my academic career.

Even more memorable was our field trip to the Belmar Estuary, somewhere on the New Jersey shore. The water was loaded with critters due to the discharge of nutrient loaded, treated wastewater from a sewage treatment plant. We waded in with our 5 gallon buckets to collect them, dozens of starfish, crabs and anything else we could get our hands on. Mr. Klinger (wisely) advised us to collect only one of each. But, what the heck – they were free!

When we arrived back at school, in the early evening, we carried our “catch” up to the biology lab and went home for the weekend. It was a Friday. This is important to the story. When we arrived for class on Monday, the stench in the lab was about the strongest I had ever experienced. John Apgar and I were given a shovel and assigned the task of burying our “specimens” under the bleachers. Our bad judgement was not repeated.

Thank you Mr. Klinger for your dedication, humor and patience.