

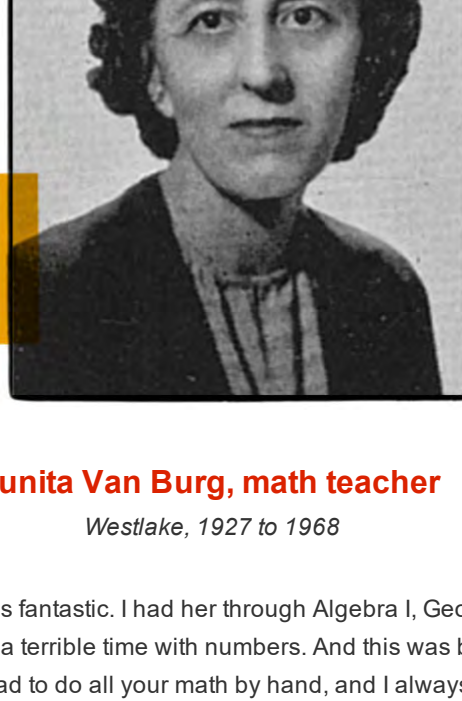
# Life

## HARVARD-WESTLAKE

*Thanksgiving offers an opportunity to give thanks for all the people who have made a real difference in our lives. For many, that includes a special teacher or coach. Today, we're honored to share reflections from alumni about these faculty and staff members who made a lasting impact on so many. Happy Thanksgiving!*

*Cheers, Ed Hu | Head of External Relations | [ehu@hw.com](mailto:ehu@hw.com)*

### Remembering your favorite faculty and staff members

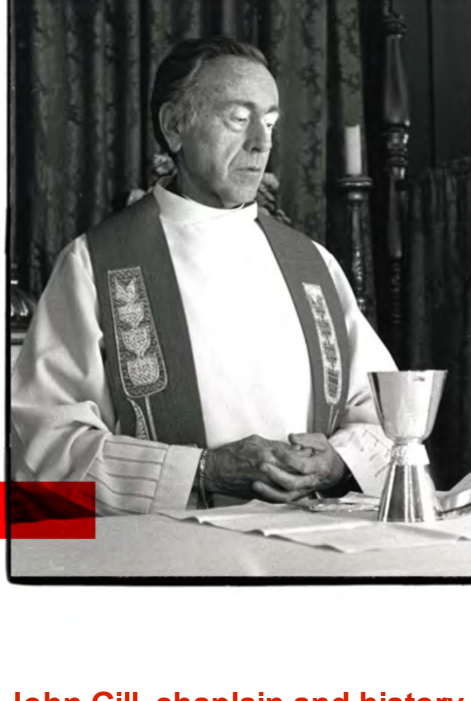


**Junita Van Burg, math teacher**  
*Westlake, 1927 to 1968*



"Miss Van Burg was fantastic. I had her through Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II. I am a little dyslexic, so I have a terrible time with numbers. And this was before computers or Texas Instruments. You had to do all your math by hand, and I always made mistakes, but she was excellent—very patient."

Nancy Hulbert Olsen '50



**Father John Gill, chaplain and history teacher**  
*Harvard, 1942 to 1986*

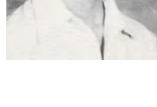


"Fr. Gill sat behind a huge wooden desk on a dais. I don't think I've ever been in a class with a teacher who had such quiet authority. He never had to raise his voice, and everybody listened. What he said was absolutely fascinating. One of the reasons Fr. Gill was so good is that he never taught down to us, ever. He talked to us and asked us questions. There is something wonderful about being engaged by having your intellect challenged without even knowing you're being challenged."

Geoff Koziol '69



**John Clark, physics teacher**  
*Harvard, 1960 to 1990*



"Mr. Clark was our AP Physics teacher in 1982-83, senior year. On his birthday, January 21, there was a tradition of his class arranging some physics-related activity. Well, our year, 12 of us drove him out to Perris, California, and chartered a hot-air balloon. Somehow I was chosen to accompany him on the flight, which included dropping various objects from the basket to see if gravity did, in fact, work as expected. His class was one of the most difficult I ever took in high school—yet also one of the most enjoyable. Mr. Clark's love of physics was infectious, and he was excellent at teaching. A highlight of my high school experience and an early lesson in work hard, play hard."

Ken Hayes '83



**Suzanne Sokol, French teacher**  
*Westlake, 1980 to 1985*



"Madame Suzanne Sokol, my seventh grade French teacher, had such a passion for teaching and for all things French. She made learning French seem fun and exciting. She brought puppets to class to teach us French children's songs like 'Ainsi font, font, font.' She let us sample French cheeses. She encouraged us, if we wanted, to take French names. She took us out to eat at a French restaurant. She was almost breathless in her enthusiasm for all things French. Because of her, I became a lifelong Francophile."

Jackie Hershkowitz Hoffenberg '89



**Jim O'Connor, math teacher and football coach**  
*Harvard and Harvard-Westlake, 1986-2006*



"Coach Jim O'Connor back then was almost like a father figure to me. He was my football coach for many years, as well as my math teacher. When I look back at that time, Coach O'Connor's one of my more fond memories and relationships. He was very tough, but I kind of needed that. My father was traveling a lot, and I didn't have much of a relationship with him. Coach O'Connor really had a huge impact on me and my development as a young man."

Tony Kim '91



**Darlene Bible, swimming coach, athletic director, and director of summer school sports programs**  
*Westlake and Harvard-Westlake, 1978 to present*



"Coach Bible, who's still at Harvard-Westlake today, is amazing. She was my coach from seventh grade through twelfth grade and was always there for us. We had so much fun going to CIF and swim meets around Southern California. I spent so much time in the pool, so Coach Bible was super important for me. And I love that even today, she still comments on all of our Facebook pages, like Happy Birthday or how are you? It's amazing that she remembers all these people. Her career is remarkable."

Shana Levin Zarcufsky '91



**Joannie Parker, English and women's studies teacher**  
*Westlake and Harvard-Westlake, 1979 to 1998*



"Mrs. Parker was my favorite teacher. I was in her English class and women's studies class, and she meant the world to me. I can remember Mrs. Parker reading a poem and seeing the words almost jump off the page. Her passion! Also, I was a closeted kid back then searching for teachers who would look for LGBTQ authors. That was Joannie Parker. She introduced me to a world of authors that I didn't know existed. I think that's what we should all strive for, to have that positive effect on someone else's life. And that's what Joannie Parker did for me and so many others."

Jason Collins '97

**Do you have your own favorite teacher, coach, or staff member you'd like to thank?**

We'd love to hear your memories about a Harvard, Westlake, or Harvard-Westlake faculty or staff member who had a positive impact on you as a student.

[Add your favorite](#)

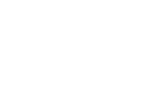
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