



HOLDREGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS FOUNDATION

Giving Back to Education

HHS Alumni Recognition Feature!

Dear HHS Alumni and HPS Foundation Supporters,

Holdrege High School is fortunate to have many very successful graduates. We are excited to continue sharing the stories of some of those HHS Alums thanks to the journalistic talents of Kristine (Long) Jacobson, Class of 1990.

We also welcome your suggestions and comments and encourage you to join the Duster Alumni Association (*see form below*).

Sincerely,

*Matt Allmand, Chairman
HPS Foundation Committee*

Jaak Aulik - Class of 1959

By Kristine Jacobson

While many of his classmates spent their early childhood years running through the streets of Holdrege on their way to the park or swimming pool, Jaak Aulik spent his time running through trenches trying to avoid being shot and killed.

Jaak was born in Estonia, and his family spent years trying to escape the Communists who were taking over his country. His father died fighting for their freedom. Somehow, Jaak's family escaped the horrors of war and Communism and landed in Holdrege, Nebraska, where he graduated with the class of 1959 and gave the valedictorian speech.

Jaak and his wife, Bonne, attended his 55th high school reunion in Holdrege this summer. "I do like the group that I graduated with," Jaak said. "There's just something good about being back home with your friends."

He shared how his family escaped from Estonia to Germany and then eventually arrived in America, where he found success in the classroom, on the athletic field and in



Jaak Aulik

his career. But, when he first arrived in Holdrege at age 9, finding friends and fitting into a new culture were challenging. "I had been born into the Estonian language and culture, with a home and friends," Jaak said. "But at age four, I was uprooted from all I knew."

He recalls running through the trenches in Estonia that farmers had dug as shelter from gunfire and "playing" hide and seek in the winter forest to hide from Russian soldiers. "It became serious and deadly earnest when my mother clamped her hand over my mouth, to keep me from crying, until I passed out," Jaak said.

His mother and four siblings escaped to Germany, only to be welcomed by more war and hiding. In Germany, he had to learn a new language and culture and was told not to speak Estonian again. His family lived in bomb shelters and roadside hovels and finally in a displaced persons camp in Geislingen, where refugees started schools, music lessons and scout troops.

In 1949, his family was sponsored by the Lutheran World Federation to work in America. They survived their voyage across the Atlantic Ocean, landing in New York at Ellis Island. Their job with a farmer in Nebraska didn't work out, and the first job his mother could find was in the basement laundry of the Holdrege hospital. "She worked at minimal wages, received a bag of potatoes as her Christmas bonus," Jaak said. "But she kept us alive and together."

In America, he was told to forget everything German because Germany was the enemy. "So once again, I lost my culture and my friends, and was a child alone in an alien land," he said. "I felt like I had been tricked. In my marrow was the feeling, 'do not make friends, do not reach out.' It would only all be taken away again."

But, they were safe. They lived in a basement apartment on East Avenue and slowly learned the American culture and tried to find a sense of belonging. It helped that Jaak and his siblings were smart. He did well in school. His intelligence and athletic ability became noticeable in high school.

He recalls sneaking out of class to shoot hoops before practice started. He said coach Merle Bauer appreciated his dedication and "mentored me with all the skills that a real father would have lavished on his son."

"I grew up on the basketball court, and learned that in the drive to the basket, my will was the only thing that determined my success," he said. Jaak said being involved in sports changed his life. "On the team, you understood the culture," Jaak said. "There were rules. It gave me peace. They were my friends and I would have done anything for them."

Jaak played on the undefeated Duster football team, and his team earned second place in the basketball State Championship. He ran hurdles in track and missed the high school discuss record by half of an inch.

In the classroom, Jaak recalls learning valuable lessons from other coaches and teachers as well, including Jess Keifer, Jim Van Marter, English teacher Dorothy Larson, Latin teacher Ms. Boentje, and Mr. Jim Speece, who challenged him with extra assignments in algebra and trigonometry. "They taught me that life was rational and it could be understood, when everything around me seemed confused," Jaak said. "Through a thousand stumbling mistakes, I began to understand." He received two first places and a second place in the Nebraska wide Academic Competitions, which were won by Holdrege for 13 years in a row.

After high school, Jaak earned a scholarship to Nebraska Wesleyan University, earning a degree in math, physics and English composition. He then attended graduate school at the University of Maryland, where he taught physics. He left

graduate school to sign up for the Marines and help his new country fight in the Vietnam War. "Having received so much from my adoptive country, and having seen first-hand the horrors of Communism, I thought I had something to pay back," Jaak said.

He attended Officer Candidate School in Quantico, Maryland, excelling as the "Company Honor Man." As a First Lieutenant, he went through Camp Pendleton before shipping out to Vietnam, as the head of the Weapons Platoon for Lima Company, 3rd Battalion, 26th Marines. After voluntarily serving time in Vietnam for 13 months and enduring a battle wound, Jaak returned home with a changed view on the war. He marched in peace parades and became an advocate against the war in Vietnam.

In 1969, he accepted an engineering position with AT&T in San Francisco. That led to other positions with AT&T, each in different cities in the United States. His favorite job with AT&T was negotiating financial agreements between AT&T and other countries to settle payments made for telephone traffic sent back and forth but paid in many currencies. "I discovered that our agreements were years out of date, resulting in billions of dollars of bloated 'outpayments' to other countries while collections for calls from the U.S. had dropped dramatically," Jaak said. His reward for saving the company billions of dollars was a fully-paid assignment to Harvard University. While there, he wrote and published a book called "Financial Structures in Competitive Telecommunications."



Jaak & Bonne Aulik

During his time at AT&T, he also met his wife, Bonne, who was a Protocol Manager for foreign dignitaries with AT&T. They have two children and five grandchildren. Today, Jaak and Bonnie live in Bridgewater, Conn., where Jaak occasionally gives speeches on his Marine experiences for Memorial Day celebrations or school students. He also speaks on cultural issues that show differences between Americans and Arabs or Japanese or Chinese.

He is working on a book titled "Verbal Archaeology, and the Vocal Evolution of Human Communication," which draws on the cultural lessons and nuances of language that he has learned while living in nine states and traveling to nearly 70 countries.

One of his hobbies is designing homes. Before his mother died, she lived with Jaak and Bonne in a special

part of their home that Jaak designed just for her. This was a proud accomplishment for him to be able to help his mother after all she had been through for her children. Jaak also rebuilt their second home, which overlooks a lake in Pennsylvania. Its style is similar to the peaked roofs and steeples in his first country, Estonia.

Looking back on his successful career, Jaak said his most rewarding job was negotiating the telecommunications agreements with other countries. Most other country's telecommunications were government owned, so he was often received on a diplomatic level with ministers and princes in the other countries. Occasionally, he was met by guards and machine guns, but most of the time he was met ceremonially at airports, where they would whisk him through customs, while others watched and wondered who he was. "They did not know that I was only an immigrant boy, corn fed and grown up in Nebraska, now flying around the world, but no longer in flight."

About Us

The mission of the HPS Foundation is to support and enhance the educational efforts of students and teachers of Holdrege Public Schools by providing funding for innovative and challenging programs, learning experiences, and activities.

Holdrege Public Schools Foundation
505 14th Ave, PO Box 2002
Holdrege, Nebraska 68949
Holdrege Public Schools Foundation
(308) 995-8663
holdregedusters.org

Print & Send

Duster Alumni Association—Join Today!

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP—billed annually (couple rate—if both are HHS Alumni)
Please check appropriate category and submit with payment as directed below.

- | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Enthusiast—\$25 or \$35 per couple | <input type="checkbox"/> Fan Club—\$50 or \$75 per couple |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cheerleader—\$100 or \$150 per couple | <input type="checkbox"/> Purple & Gold Pride—\$250 or \$350 per couple |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Duster Lifetime Booster—\$1,500 or \$2,000 per couple—one-time only payment | |

NAME(S)

ADDRESS

EMAIL

YOUR GIFT IS TAX-DEDUCTIBLE

CHECKS PAYABLE TO: **HPS Foundation**

SEND TO: **Phelps County Community Foundation, 504 4th Avenue, Holdrege, NE 68949**

[Forward this email](#)

 **SafeUnsubscribe™**

This email was sent to hpsfoundation@hpsfoundation.org by hpsfoundation@hpsfoundation.org | [Update Profile/Email Address](#) | Rapid removal with [SafeUnsubscribe™](#) | [Privacy Policy](#).



Holdrege Public Schools Foundation | 505 14th Ave | PO Box 2002 | Holdrege | NE | 68949