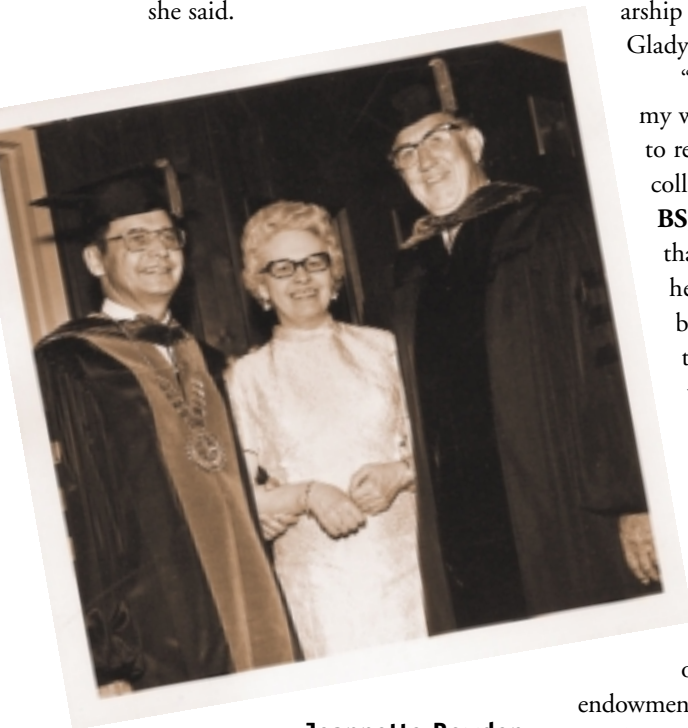


The 'perfect' gift

By CINDY PAAVOLA '84 BS

Jeannette (Skinnard) Bowden, '36 BA, LC, executive assistant emeritus to the president, is a big believer in destiny.

"I believe that things happen when and as they should," she said.



Jeannette Bowden with NMU Presidents John X. Jamrich (left) and Edgar L. Harden. When asked to compare the five presidents she served as secretary to, Mrs. Bowden is firm in her conviction that each was the perfect person for a particular growth period of the university.

Her story of destiny started when she was reading the winter 2001 issue of *Horizons* and came upon the note about former NMU staff member **Elizabeth (Hosking)**

Binda '37 BA endowing a scholarship in honor of Luther and Gladys Gant.

"I had made a provision in my will to create a scholarship to recognize my friend and colleague **Harry Rajala '56 BS, '64 MA** as a way of thanking him for all his help to me through my life, but as I read that article I thought to myself, 'Why wait until I die to do this? Why not do it now when I can enjoy it, too?'"

So Mrs. Bowden, who worked for 44 1/2 years as secretary to five NMU presidents, decided to make a gift of \$10,000 to start the

endowment process for the Harry A. Rajala Endowed Scholarship in Education. The scholarship will be awarded to a junior or senior who has financial need, with first preference going to education majors.

Mrs. Bowden supervised Rajala when he was a student employee in the NMU general office in the 1950s.

"We worked together for about 30 years," said Mrs. Bowden. "Since the day I met him in 1952 until the present, Harry has always been there for me when I needed help, especially since my husband Floyd died. He's a steadfast friend."

But Mrs. Bowden didn't stop with the scholarship endowment.

She has made an additional gift of \$50,000 to provide funds toward the FCC-required transition to digital technology at WNMU-TV/FM.

"For a long time I have hoped to do something special for Northern, but wondered as to what would be an appropriate gift. Having been a longtime supporter of PBS Channel 13, and hearing of the probable high cost of the required transition to digital technology at Northern, I called Scott Seaman, director of the Learning Resources Center, which houses the public broadcasting radio and television station, and asked if this might be an area where I could help."

In May, President Judi Bailey recommended to NMU's Board of Trustees that the public broadcasting facilities at Northern be named The Jeannette Bowden Studios at WNMU TV/FM. A dedication ceremony will take place this fall.

"I am honored that President Bailey would make and the Board approve that recommendation. For me, it is the perfect gift," said Mrs. Bowden.

A 1932 graduate of A.D. Johnston High School in Bessemer, Mrs. Bowden attended Ironwood Junior College (now Gogebic Community College) for two years before coming to Northern State Teachers College in 1934. She was an honors graduate, receiving her bachelor of arts degree and life certificate from Northern in 1936.

While attending Northern, Mrs. Bowden worked as a student employee in the General Office to help pay her college expenses. At the time, the General Office housed

In Harry's honor

both the president and the registrar.

A month before her graduation, she took over the duties as secretary to President Webster H. Pearce upon the recommendation of his outgoing secretary. After a few weeks, President Pearce persuaded her to take the position permanently.

Mrs. Bowden served as secretary to Pearce (1936-40), Henry A. Tape (1940-56), Edgar L. Harden (1956-67), Ogden E. Johnson (1967-68), and John X. Jamrich (1968-80). Her 44 1/2 years of service remains the longest in a full-time capacity at Northern than any other person's in the institution's history. She was also the recipient of the 1971 Distinguished Alumni Award.

President Jamrich noted upon accepting Mrs. Bowden's request to retire in 1980: "It didn't take me long after I arrived at Northern to become aware of the high esteem in which you were held at this institution. I learned of an expression that went something like this: 'Presidents may come and go, but Mrs. Bowden will always be there to maintain continuity and stability to the President's Office.' I have had the opportunity and the privilege of bearing witness to the truth of that statement. You will leave Northern, Jeannette, but you and I both know that part of you will always be here."

Destiny obviously thought so, too.

How does it feel to have someone endow a scholarship in your name? To NMU registrar emeritus Harry Rajala, "it feels great."

Rajala said Jeannette Bowden, his long-time friend, colleague, and former supervisor, told him some time ago that she had made plans in her will to establish a scholarship in his name at Northern. So he wasn't surprised when she started the process early and endowed the Harry A. Rajala Scholarship in Education.

The scholarship will help to continue Rajala's legacy of assistance to students. Rajala began working at NMU as a student under Mrs. Bowden in the office of President Henry A. Tape, and served five NMU presidents during his more than 30 years as a student and a full-time employee.

After his 1956 graduation, Rajala taught in Wisconsin and served in the U.S. Army before coming to work as the administrative assistant in NMU's office of Admissions and Graduate Studies in 1960. He became the registrar in 1967, a position he would hold until his retirement in 1988.

Rajala received a Distinguished Alumni Award in 1982 and was the recipient of the NMU Excellence in Service Award in 1984.

"When I started at Northern there were 545 students. It had grown to 2,000 by the time I returned in 1960. I watched it grow to 7,000

through the '60s into the '70s and then almost to 10,000 during Dr. Jamrich's presidency," Rajala said.

"Enrollment dropped after the Air Force base closed, but it's growing again, nearly back to 9,000 now. I've seen a lot of change over the years."

Retirement hasn't diminished Rajala's service to Northern. In fact, he still shows up at work every morning, now serving in the School of Education as a part-time adviser to students in the learning disabilities and master's education programs. He says he likes "being around students and keeping busy."

"This scholarship, like all scholarships, is important not because it has my name on it—although that's an honor—but because it will help students," said Rajala. "Northern is special because if students ask somebody for help, they'll get it.

The faculty, staff, alumni, and former NMU faculty and staff—like Jeannette and me—are ready to lend a hand in whatever way we can. This scholarship is an extension of that."



**Harry Rajala and
Jeannette Bowden.**