

Retired educator Lloyd Wells shares knowledge, experience with LPISD students

In observance of the 100th anniversary of La Porte ISD, The Leader will be featuring stories about some of the educators who had a significant impact on the history of the district. Long-time La Portian Lloyd Wells, a World War II veteran, is among those teachers who are fondly remembered by their former students.

Long after retirement, Lloyd Wells is still an educator. The World War II veteran and long-time La Porte ISD teacher is often called upon to speak at Veterans Day programs, where he mesmerizes students with the account of his plane being shot down on March 9, 1945, and patiently instructs them in the proper way to fold the American flag.

Wells first started making a difference in the lives of La Porte ISD students in 1963, when he took a job at then-Baker Elementary School, teaching sixth grade math, science and health. When the sixth grade was moved to the new junior high-side of the Baker facility in 1982, Wells joined the Jennie Reid Elementary School staff, teaching fifth grade math and science for a year before retiring in 1983.

He served in the U.S. Army Air Corps from 1943 to 1946 as a tail-gunner in a B-17 aircraft. While flying in the “Magnificent Obsession” over Frankfurt, Germany, he felt the plane being bounced around and initially thought they were dropping bombs.

Instead, the plane had been attacked and was going down in flames; although they were able to put out most of the fires, a crash landing was imminent. As they were trained to do, they gathered in the radio room, and at the last minute, assumed the position to prepare for the crash.

“When I woke up, sitting on the snow-covered ground, I was told that I was trying to put a tourniquet on someone’s leg—I don’t know who,” Wells said. “The next time I awoke, I was in a hospital bed in a German prison POW hospital.” The two men with whom he sat in “crash position” were mortally wounded.

Wells explained that when General Patton’s Army came into town, they knew that American prisoners were there, and Wells was among those who were evacuated to England, where he stayed in the hospital for 10 months. He came back to the United States on the Larkspur ship, and his father met him at Charleston, South Carolina. They took the train to Chicago and then California, where he was in the hospital for several more months having plastic surgery to rebuild his face.

After he recovered, Wells went to the University of Southern California and



Retired La Porte ISD teacher Lloyd Wells, a World War II veteran, speaks to James H. Baker Sixth Grade Campus students at the 2014 Memorial Day program at the school.

Fresno State University to earn his teaching degree. He taught band in Delano, California, public schools until 1956. Then he spent a few years working as a professional photographer and serving as captain of a shrimp boat before moving to La Porte.

When Wells was hired by Jack Jackson, the new principal at Baker, his wife, Mary Pat, joined the La Porte ISD staff at La Porte Primary, and his children were enrolled in LPISD schools. They built a house in La Porte on South Shady Lane, south of Shoreacres, and quickly became involved in the community they have called home for over 50 years.

One of his favorite memories of teaching at Baker was playing outside with the students after class time.

“I spent a lot of time with the kids on their recesses out there, playing basketball or baseball,” he said.



Lloyd Wells, right, attends the Veterans Day ceremony at La Porte High School in May 2016. With him, from left, are Debbie Seibert, career and technical education coordinator at La Porte High School; his wife, Mary Pat Wells, also a retired La Porte ISD teacher; and his daughter, Marilyn Neumann, who works in the La Porte ISD Visual and Performing Arts office.

When son Bob was in Wells’ class, he never called him “Dad,” so many people didn’t realize that he was Wells’ son. When daughter Marilyn Wells Neumann was in his class a year later, she refused to call him “Mr. Wells,” so she called him “Dad” all year long.

“No one ever knew (Bob) was my son until way late in the year,” Wells said. “He would never tell.”

“And I told everybody!” Neumann added. “I was a talker!”

Neumann recalls Wells’ classroom as a fun place where they created volcanoes that actually erupted and had the chance to actually try out the old telegraph system and crank telephones he had as teaching tools. He enjoyed making science come to life by conducting a variety of hands-on experiments.

“You name it and we did it in his classroom,” she said. “There was hardly a textbook!”

When Wells retired in 1983, he enjoyed time sailing and boating, but that didn’t mean that his time as a teacher was over. Instead, he organized and led the La Porte Community Band that performed at a wide variety of functions at locations such as the San Jacinto Battleground, Sylvan Beach Pavilion and the Houston Yacht Club.

The group later downsized to become the La Porte Dixieland Jazz Band, and he led this group until 2011.

“We were invited every week to go somewhere to play,” he said. “And we went everywhere they invited us—dinners, parties, whatever.”

From the 1960s to the 1990s, Wells was also involved in the La Porte High School musicals, playing string bass or banjo in the orchestra pit alongside LPHS students and other adult musicians. He continued to demonstrate his commitment to helping students get an education by serving as scholarship chairperson for the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) until just this year; his daughter has now assumed this role.

Last September, Wells visited Washington, D.C., as part of Honor Flight Houston, which sends World War II veterans to the nation’s capital to visit locations such as the World War II Memorial, the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier, the Vietnam Memorial and more. Neumann accompanied him on the two-day, all-expenses-paid trip in a group of 30 veterans honored for their service to their country.

At 90, Wells enjoys reading and spending time with his children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. He is also a huge fan of the Houston Astros and has followed the team since they were the Colt .45s in the early 1960s. During a recent hospitalization, Astros pitcher Chris Devenski and two members of the Shooting Stars squad visited Wells—and made his day!

Wells also enjoys seeing his former students around town. Whether they knew him as their math and science teacher, musician and band leader, or veteran speaker who brings history to life, there is no doubt that he is as memorable as the stories and wisdom he has shared with them.