

WOMEN OF NORTHEAST WISCONSIN PROJECT
American Association of University Women
Green Bay Area Branch

To promote equity for women, education and
self-development over the life span, and
positive societal change.

NOMINEE APPLICATION FORM (PLEASE TYPE)

SECTION I - BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

A PLEASE CHECK ONE APPLICABLE TO YOUR NOMINEE:

- WOMAN OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE
 WOMAN OF UNIQUE CONTRIBUTION
 WOMAN WHO WAS FIRST IN HER FIELD OF ENDEAVOR
 WOMAN OF THE NEW DECADE, THE 90'S

B PERSON SUBMITTING BIOGRAPHICAL MATERIAL:

NAME Claire G. Brann (with Bev Njaa, Liberty Grove)
ADDRESS 7964 Hwy. 57
CITY Baileys Harbor STATE WI ZIP 54202
TELEPHONE (include Area Code) 414/839-2620

C NAME OF HONOREE:

Olivia Dorothy Traven Rottman
First Middle Last Maiden

D HONOREE'S VITAL STATISTICS:

BIRTHDATE Aug. 6, 1908 DATE OF DEATH (IF DECEASED) _____
PLACE OF BIRTH Baileys Harbor, WI
(IF STILL LIVING) CURRENT ADDRESS:
STREET 8103 Guy Street
CITY Baileys Harbor, WI 54202 STATE WI ZIP 54202
TELEPHONE (Include Area Code) 414/839-2529
(IF DECEASED) LIVING RESOURCE PERSON:
NAME _____
CITY _____

Please return by **November 30, 1990** to:
Women of Northeast Wisconsin
2410 Bittersweet Avenue
Green Bay, WI 54301

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E FAMILY INFORMATION:

(Include husband's and children's names)

Father: Mariner on the Great Lakes

Mother: spent summers in Baileys Harbor while her husband was away

Husband: Fred Traven (deceased); married in 1929; moved to
Baileys Harbor in 1935; Fred was scoutmaster in Baileys
Harbor for 28 years, meetings were held in their home

Son: Lee; born 1931; was a corporate librarian; now retired
and lives in Baileys Harbor

F EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND:

(Include degrees earned with dates and any honors received)

Elementary and high school (Washington High), Milwaukee, WI

G ORGANIZATIONS:

(List memberships, church, clubs, social committees or commissions and positions held)

Baileys Harbor Womans Club, 1936 to present, President
and Vice-Pres. numerous times

Door County Federation of Womans Clubs, President 1950

Ridges Sanctuary (wild flower and wild life sanctuary), 1937 to
present; charter member; appointed Secretary at the first
organizational meeting; elected Secretary when the Ridges was
incorporated in 1937, held the position from 1937 to 1953;
member 1937 to present; President of the Board of Directors
during the Ridges 50th anniversary year, 1987; now Director
Emeritus

Librarian: Baileys Harbor 1950-1973

con'd

Olivia Traven

G ORGANIZATIONS (con'd)

Member of Door-Kewaunee Regional Library Board, 1950-1953, which was established by the State Library Commission and funded by the state to study rural library services

Door County Library Board

Friends of the Library

Baileys Harbor School Board 1953 to early 1970's when the district was consolidated. President.

Northern Door Book Club

Baileys Harbor Bridge Club

Planning Board for Scandia Retirement Center, Sister Bay, WI, 1975

Hope Congregational Church, Sturgeon Bay, WI

The Clearing, Ellison Bay, WI

Gibraltar School Community Auditorium, Fish Creek, WI

Friends of Gibraltar Schools (FAWN)

SECTION II - CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

H SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO HER WORLD:

(Be specific. List relevant childhood experiences, and career choices, dates, names, and other pertinent data. We are looking for factual presentation of achievements here. Please make your personal evaluation under Section II, Part I)

(Must be completed in detail)

Olivia's world seems, at first glance, to be very narrow. Baileys Harbor is one of the smallest (population 200) of small towns, yet Olivia Traven's influence has been far reaching. Her association with The Ridges Sanctuary began with early walks through the area with her mother who was responsible for Olivia's interest and knowledge of the natural world. When Albert Fuller, Curator of the Milwaukee Public Museum, became interested in preserving the "bog" because of the rare plants growing there he contacted the Baileys Harbor Womans Club. Fuller was the catalyst and preserving the Ridges was his dream, but without Olivia's farsighted and firm commitment, The Ridges would not be world renowned - a sanctuary of over 1,000 acres with membership of more than 3,000 people from every state and a number of foreign countries.

When Olivia Traven assumed the presidency of the Ridges in its 50th anniversary year she revived dormant committees into constructive channels. The year was special - concerts were organized, other fund-raisers planned and the use of volunteer help expanded. Her special interest, the Nature Store, got off the ground and has been a vital part of the educational pursuits of the Ridges.

It is particularly interesting that she should have had such success organizing "the troops" because she herself had spent so many years "in the trenches". From being one of the Ridges' first naturalists (tourists would ring her doorbell and ask to be taken on tours) to volunteering at the Nature Center, Olivia did many of the nitty-gritty jobs that need to be done to keep any organization growing.

This daily hard work, always with a focus on the future, characterized Olivia Traven's many community activities.

con'd

Olivia Traven

H SPECIAL ACHIEVEMENTS AND CONTRIBUTIONS TO HER WORLD (con'd)

The Baileys Harbor library was endowed by a local philanthropist and Olivia was the first librarian. Her influence didn't stop there when, after three years of study Kewaunee county decided to discontinue their participation in rural library services, Olivia helped persuade the Door County Board to continue alone. It was one of the first county systems in the state to develop a network of rural libraries. Olivia is still an active member of the Friends of the Library and was one of the first to protest a proposed cut in the library budget just last week.

As a member of the Baileys Harbor School Board Olivia's interest in childrens' education was uppermost. These years saw many changes and none were easy for small town people. First was the end of the one-room school. The rising cost of keeping these schools up and finding good teachers necessitated closing such schools as Appleport, North Bay, Woodland, Pershing and Peninsula Center. In these difficult times the childrens' future was always her most important criterion in making decisions. At the end of her tenure the Baileys Harbor schools were consolidated with the Gibraltar system in Fish Creek. Throughout, Olivia stood up to much controversy and persisted in her drive for the children of northern Door County.

Olivia's leadership in education was not confined to local affairs. She traveled to Madison to testify before a legislative committee and argue for her educational principles. While Olivia's education ended with high school, she has never stopped reading, learning and "wanting to know". She continues to be well read, often suggesting and urging new works for the Book Club, Womans Club, Bridge Club and others.

When a study was made to evaluate the needs of the elderly in northern Door County, Olivia was at the forefront. The result is an extensive nursing home and retirement facility in Sister Bay. The Scandia Retirement Village is used, not only by natives, but by people who have come to Door County to retire. Olivia's regular visits with lively conversation are welcomed by all residents.

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I PERSONAL EVALUATION:

(Please share why you would like this woman recognized: Include any particular data not mentioned above that may help us make a choice.)

Olivia is 82 years old. When she was born women did not have the right to vote, yet Olivia has always "put into action her better impulses, straightforward and unafraid". She has been an outstanding role model. She leads without dictating and sees everything she undertakes to its conclusion without expectation of accolades. When encouraging someone to serve on a committee or take an office Olivia's comment is "you always receive more than you give".

Olivia Traven spent most of her life in a small town but her leadership, vision and devotion to principle are world class.

PLEASE RETURN BY **NOVEMBER 30, 1990** TO:

WOMEN OF NORTHEAST WISCONSIN
2410 Bittersweet Avenue
Green Bay, WI 54301

For more information:
Bev Njaa (414) 854-5465

Profile -- Olivia R. Traven
Written March, 1992 for
WOMEN OF NORTHEASTERN WISCONSIN

Olivia Rottman Traven
1908 -

(PHOTO CREDIT)

Photo by Mary Harrison Oct. 3, 1987

(PHOTO CAPTION)

OLIVIA ROTTMAN TRAVEN, President,
The Ridges Sanctuary, Baileys Harbor,
on its 50th Anniversary. Mrs. Traven
is a founder of the nature preserve.

Women had not yet won the right to vote when Olivia Rottman was born into the narrowest of worlds in the smallest (pop.200) of small Wisconsin towns. One of the deepest and widely shared pleasures among the women of Baileys Harbor were their walks along the ridges of the Baileys Harbor Bog in the fragile sunshine of the first warm days of spring. Sharing her mother's delight in the millions of rare and colorful wildflowers that carpeted the Bog awakened young Olivia's interest in the natural world, and proved to be the foundation of Olivia's later dedication to preserve the Bog from development and destruction.

Olivia's father was a mariner on the Great Lakes. The young family made their home in Milwaukee, but each summer, when the school year ended, they returned to Baileys Harbor to spend the warm months on the shore of Lake Michigan.

Olivia's formal education ended when she graduated from Milwaukee's Washington High School. In 1935, in the midst of the Depression, Olivia returned to Baileys Harbor with her husband, Fred Traven, and their four year old son, Lee.

Fred volunteered for the first of his 26 years as Scoutmaster of the local Boy Scout troop, and Olivia immediately joined the Baileys Harbor Woman's Club.

She was vice president of the Woman's Club in 1937 when Albert Fuller, curator of the Milwaukee Public Museum, appealed to the women to support his efforts to preserve the Bog and the rare plants in it. Local business interests hoped to develop the area as a trailer park. Because the small town desperately needed the jobs and income the development represented, Fuller's conservation proposal was highly controversial.

Olivia attended the first organization meeting of the conservationists, and was appointed their secretary. When their efforts to preserve the land as a nature sanctuary finally proved successful, the group incorporated in 1937 as The Ridges Sanctuary. Olivia was elected Secretary, and held that office until 1953. When tourists who had read about The Ridges began to ring her doorbell and ask for tours, Olivia became one of The Ridges' first Naturalists. It never occurred to Olivia to refuse to guide the curious through The Ridges, and besides, it presented an opportunity to gain new members.

This kind of farsighted and tenacious daily commitment eventually built The Ridges into a world renowned sanctuary of more than 1,000 acres and more than 3,000 members from every state and many foreign countries. In its 50th Anniversary year, Olivia Traven was elected President of The Ridges. Far from assuming the position was an honorary one, Olivia crafted the membership into effective committees who organized concerts, celebrations, created a nature store, and expanded the educational mission of The Ridges and its membership by exponential leaps that continue today.

It is not surprising that Olivia should have had such success in organizing "the troops," because so much of her own life had been spent "in the trenches."

Shortly after World War II, Door and Kewaunee counties were selected to take part in a demonstration of rural-urban library service. Olivia was appointed to the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library Board. Eventually Kewaunee County withdrew, and Door

Contemporary society appears to dismiss old-fashioned "women's groups" as the pastimes of the powerless. Yet, Olivia Traven has worked within the boundaries of these traditional women's forums for more than fifty years. Through them she empowered herself and the membership to affect the future course of her village, township, county, and even the biological diversity of the global environment.

Shortly after World War II, Door and Kewaunee counties were selected to take part in a demonstration of rural-urban library service. Olivia was appointed to the Door-Kewaunee Regional Library Board. When Kewaunee withdrew after three years, Door County formed its own library system. During the Regional Library era, the Baileys Harbor librarian resigned, and Olivia was appointed to the position where she served until her retirement in 1973. She participated in the drive to raise money to build a new county library building in Sturgeon Bay, and later served as President of the Friends of Door County Libraries.

As Baileys Harbor librarian, Olivia supervised the intellectual life and study habits of several generations, and she developed a deep and abiding concern for the quality of the children's education.

Shortly after serving as President of the Door County Federation of Woman's Clubs in 1950, Olivia was elected to serve on the Baileys Harbor School Board. The post-war period was difficult for the rural population of Baileys Harbor. Small town people hate change, and the era of the one-room school was rapidly coming to an end. As nearby schools closed one by one, Olivia found herself involved in a bitter struggle to consolidate the schools into one system. The rising costs of maintaining the small schools, and finding good teachers became formidable obstacles for small districts. Olivia persisted in standing up for the things she felt would benefit the children, and by the end of her tenure, the Baileys Harbor schools were consolidated with the Gibraltar system in Fish Creek.

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She did not regard her position on the school board as confined to local affairs, and traveled to Madison to lobby for educational reforms. She continues to be active in all local educationally related organizations including membership and participation in The Clearing, a folk school founded by Jens Jensen; Bjorklunden, a summer seminar series sponsored by Lawrence University at an estate in Baileys Harbor; Friends of Gibraltar, a community support group that funds arts and cultural activities in the schools; and is a staunch backer of the Door Community Auditorium, a new performing arts building on the school campus.

Although her formal education was limited to high school, Olivia never stopped reading, learning, and staying abreast of current events. She continues to suggest and urge new works on members of the local Book Club, Woman's Club (in which she has held office and maintained membership for more than fifty years), Bridge Club and elsewhere.

When a study was made to evaluate the needs of the elderly in Door County, Olivia was at the forefront of the drive to fund, build, and staff an extensive nursing home and retirement complex in nearby Sister Bay.

Olivia Traven's life shows that it is possible for one woman to stand up and speak out on matters of principle, to take up local challenges, and to act in ways that have a beneficial effect on the lives of ordinary people for generations to come.