



# RE-ECHO

*Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society*

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## ECHOES OF THE *ECHO*

Sometimes the best things come right out of the blue, and that's what happened when we got a donation of Park High *Echo* newspapers from Sue Damm Hill. They covered the years 1951-54, and were chock full of articles and ads that really contributed to our knowledge of life in the '50s. This is especially important because we only have two St. Louis Park phone directories from that decade (1956 and 1958). They were so much fun to look at that we revisited the *Echos* we already had. There was very little overlap, with several issues from the 1960s and '70s. Here are some fun items we culled from the efforts of those student reporters and community business people.

Dramatic Arts was added to the high school curriculum in the 1951-52 school year. The *Echo* reported on September 25, 1951: "Formerly the speech coach had not only to rehearse actors in their parts for the school plays but to teach many phases of drama in the short time to be found after school hours. Now, however, Park is to have three plays a year and there will be no restrictions concerning classes. As a result the school will see better plays, and those who are really interested in acting will have a chance to develop their talents."

Issues of the *Echo* from 1951-54 indicate that the high school was overwhelmingly Christian. The Glee Club sang at churches, the Brush and Palette Club decorated school windows to look like stained glass at Christmas, holidays were for Christmas and Easter, and there were very overt Biblical references to articles. It is possible that the reason for this is that the Jewish families were younger and their children were still in the elementary schools.

The *Echo* of December 16, 1953 reports on the recent organization of safe-driving clubs in Minneapolis and the suburbs. "Our main purpose is to sponsor safe-driving and good sportsmanship. In doing so we become safer drivers ourselves," explained Allen Olson, member of the St. Louis Park Royales. Whenever a Royale member sees another motorist in trouble, he is supposed to stop to help him. The driver is then given a card showing that he has been assisted by a member of the St. Louis Park Royales, a club for automobile enthusiasts with safety in mind. Another car club that formed in the mid 1950s was the El Dracos. One member was Fred Fortier, whose jacket was recently donated to the St. Louis Park Historical Society by his brother Ed. For a photo of this great jacket, see our web page at <http://slphistory.org/history/carclubs.asp>

In 1954 school enrollment was 7,383. Conditions were so crowded that in the 1954-55 and 1955-56 school years students attended school in double shifts. 1331 junior high students attending class in the morning and the 881 high school students attending class in the afternoon. During those years there were almost 2,500 students in the (later Central) building, which at the time included the old 1914 building on the west end.

## ECHOES OF THE ECHO, Continued

"Looie, St. Louis Park's Spirit, Need Not Die" ran the editorial on January 27, 1954 in the face of a humiliating defeat on the basketball court to Hopkins the previous Friday. Looie was created in February 1953 and stood for "scholastic achievement, extra-curricular activities, team support, and all-round school spirit." Looie played a part in Parkticipation Week, where the class with the fewest yellow slips won the yellow jug and the status of Looie. Apparently yellow slips were bad. Looie morphed into Sparky, and was immortalized in tile in the new High School, but had gone by the wayside by the '70s.

In 1955-56 (and probably other years), married women were not hired as new teachers, no doubt because of the pregnancy epidemic.

The new St. Louis Park Senior High School opened in the fall of 1956. Things got off to a rough start, as the *Minneapolis Star* reported on a crisis at the new high school: "It all started...when an early-morning disk jockey [probably WDGY's Herb Oscar Anderson] plugging 'Oscar Socks' urged students to don knee-highs of one design left leg, contrasting design right leg. Girls responded in droves...But Principal Edward Foltmer...suppressed the fad promptly. 'We'd be opposed to any distracting influence at school,' he explained with a cautious smile. 'We can't allow bizarre clothing.' A bag lunch protest last Friday, with many girls wearing black and spurning the school's hot lunch, followed. Boys at St. Louis Park High came to the girls' rescue. 'The boys wore their shirt tails out in protest after we weren't allowed to wear Oscar Socks,' student Elaine Smedberg said. 'But the administration made 'em pull the shirt tails in. So the boys hiked up their pants, wore them around their ribs. Then a week ago, about 15 boys peroxidized their hair.' Next morning, 'the kids hissed the principal and started singing "Chain Gang" in school,' other girls reported." The school's student council came to the rescue and calmed the situation down. The PTA put a teenage dress code on its next agenda. The dress code was finally abandoned in April 1969.

The proprietors at the Miracle Mile Barber Shop were so appalled at the poor sportsmanship of Park's spectators at the Park-Edina hockey game of January 25, 1958 that they took out an ad in the *Echo* to chastise them.

An interesting addition to the curriculum during major Cold War years (1962-64) was Russian.

December 1965 saw the advent of the Granny Dress, which was basically kind of a long calico print nightgown. As with any fad, the school district promptly banned them – except for school dances. ("The [Central] School handbook definitely states that students must clear any new fads through our office.") They were selling big in local stores such as Haugland's for the Young in Miracle Mile, and Powers at Knollwood, which advertised "Mother and Daughter Granny Look A Likes" with matching head scarves. The buyer at Haugland's pitched the dresses as dual purpose: "They can also be used for robes or nightgowns." But even as the fad reached its zenith, most were reporting that it was already on its way out.

Swimming, with its dreadful suits (or lack thereof), was added at the junior high level in 1967 as pools were built at both Central and Westwood.

Room 3 at the high school was designated as a resource room for Park's blind students in 1967. Mrs. Rosamond Olmscheid served as the advisor. The program started when Phil Kitchen came to Central Jr. High in 1963 after attending a school specifically for the blind in Minneapolis. The resource room was equipped with books in Braille or on tape, a tape recorder, Braille writers, typewriters, maps with raised features and other special equipment.

The high school had a Fencing Club in 1967-68, captained by Teresa Zarembo. Problems arose when they had to compete with the Parkettes for use of the foyer for practice, and "they were not allowed to use their foils in this quest for rights," reported the *Echo*. Finding adult sponsors was another problem.

## WESTMAN'S FLORAL

On a tip from the "Flashbacks" Facebook page we found and interviewed Mr. and Mrs. John Westman of Westman's Floral. Mr. Westman told about how he would spend his summers on his mother's family's farm in Cambridge, Minnesota, and learned to love farming and horticulture. After serving as a medic in World War II, he attended the U of M where he studied horticulture for one year, but was advised that the best way to learn was to work for a florist. He was fortunate to have a friend who knew the Bachmans, and ended up working for them for five years, getting his real education in design and buying. He was offered a position as manager of a new Bachman's store, but decided that he wanted a shop of his own.

John chose the West Metro primarily because he knew the area - his uncle had property on Lake Minnetonka. He chose the corner of Minnetonka Blvd. and Texas Ave., which had been the 15-acre Holasek Farm. A vegetable stand had stood on the corner. John and his wife Norma designed the building based on a shop they had seen in California. There were no other businesses around - cows grazed on the land that would become the Texa-Tonka Shopping Center, and across Texas Ave. there were tons of sand that Adolph Fine had taken out. The Westmans set their building at the side of the lot, using the other side to grow gladiolas and vegetables. In the early days they had to haul in their own water.

Westman says that Adolph Fine very much wanted to own all four corners of the intersection, and was frustrated when Westman wouldn't sell. Although Fine had gas stations on the northeast and southwest corners, he wanted to put another one on the southeast corner. Westman finally did relent and sell, but not to Fine - he sold the western portion of his property to Pure Oil in 1948.

Westman's Floral Shop opened on April 4, 1952; total sales: \$7.25. Westman still has his hand-written account book. Texa-Tonka opened soon afterwards, and it proved to be a great location, especially with the ever-growing population in the area.

For more information, stories, and photos from the Westmans' collection, see our web page at <http://www.slphistory.org/history/mtka7915.asp>

## MEMBERSHIP TIME

It's January and that means that all memberships to the St. Louis Park Historical Society are up for renewal. We are on a calendar year basis, and unless you joined in November or December of 2012, your membership year has ended. We appreciate every single dollar we receive, as we are not funded by any grants for operating expenses such as postage, paper, ink, etc. This year we were able to purchase a digital audio recorder, which has been very useful when conducting interviews. The membership form is included in this issue of the *Re-Echo* and can also be found online at <http://www.slphistory.org/about/default.asp> under Become a Member. Thanks so much for your support!

## THAT OLD TIME ROCK 'N' ROLL

Reading those *Echoes* from the '50s made me wonder - When would kids in the Twin Cities first have heard rock 'n' roll? It was in full swing on WDGY in early 1956, but how about 1954 and '55? Steve Cannon and Leigh Kamman might have played some on WLOL. Augie Garcia had a show on KEYD radio in about 1955. The movie "Blackboard Jungle" with "(We're Gonna) Rock Around the Clock" on the soundtrack came out in mid-'55. Do you remember your first exposure to rock 'n' roll? This is my second hobby, complete with a "Twin Cities Music Highlights" web site. Check it out at <http://www.jeanneandersen.net/musichighlights.html> and let me know what you think!

## THIS 'N' THAT

ATTENTION LINCOLN DEL FANS (and who isn't?): Wendi Rosenstein, Morrie Berenberg's eldest grandchild, is working on a Lincoln Del Cookbook! When it's ready we'll let you know how to get one. To request recipes to be included or provide Wendi with other items, you can contact her at [wendi66@hotmail.com](mailto:wendi66@hotmail.com) or 612-868-6882.

SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL THEATER: The Harmony Theatre Company and School is in session and working toward its spring performance. This St. Louis Park-based acting school for children does wonderful work and has been a great supporter of the Park. They have not received any grants this year, so any financial help you can give them would be appreciated. See their web site at <http://harmonytheatre.org/>

ROLLER GARDEN VIDEO: Awhile ago the Pavek Museum of Broadcasting had given us a disk with a segment from the "Moore on Sunday" TV show about the Roller Garden. It had been broadcast in the 70s, and was mostly footage of kids skating, interspersed with comments by the owner, Russell Johnston. We finally got around to posting it to our web site, and you can see it (and the story of the dinosaur) at <http://slphistory.org/history/pastime.asp>

LEGACY GRANT: The SLP Historical Society was awarded a grant from the Minnesota Historical Society for an evaluation of our collection. The evaluation will be conducted by the Midwest Art Conservation Center, with site visits scheduled for early January. This evaluation will help us prioritize our needs, streamline our procedures, and better care for our collection.

SHELARD PARK: After some questions that came up on the "Flashbacks of St. Louis Park" Facebook page, we delved into the history of Shelard Park, and were lucky to find Mr. Sheldon Wert, the original developer of the complex. There are four buildings that make up Shelard Park Business Center, built between 1971 and 1982. At one time the complex included a movie theater, the Hippogriff Restaurant, and the Shelard National Bank. The name Shelard comes from a combination of the names of Sheldon Wert and Richard Leary. Leary went on to other projects, but Wert decided to keep the name. For more information and photos of the four buildings, see our web page at <http://slphistory.org/history/shelardpark.asp> There is also information about the restaurant that has been variously known as the Amalgamated, Jose's, Naegele's, and Santorini Taverna.

THE COTTON CLUB: We've covered the history of the building that now houses Bunny's in past issues, but recently beefed up our knowledge of the years (approximately 1934 to 1940) when the El Patio restaurant concurrently housed the Cotton Club. How a little roadhouse on Excelsior Blvd., built before Highway 7 or Highway 100, became a hot spot for hot jazz played by a black orchestra is delightfully mysterious. More information on the place is now available from the book *Joined at the Hip: A History of Jazz in the Twin Cities*, by Jay Goetting. The book was published in 2011 by the Minnesota Historical Society Press, which very generously allowed us to post a picture from the book on our web page. One of the things we knew was that the words "Cotton Club" were painted in huge letters on the roof of the building. There's a photo somewhere of this, but it hasn't surfaced. Rick Sewall found another photo in our collection of four men from the neighborhood standing in front of the building, and you can kind of see the letters. All of this information is on our web page at <http://slphistory.org/history/eb5916.asp> It also covers all the other restaurants that have been located in that building, including Culbertson's, Duggan's, and the Anchor Inn. Check it out!

## THIS 'N' THAT, Continued

**PARK PHOTOS:** In our last *Re-Echo* we advertised a volunteer opportunity for someone to take 2012 photos of our City's parks. These would be added to the photo album that we received from Parks and Rec with photos going back as many as 50 years. We are happy to report that Joanne Bongaarts took up the challenge and sent in multiple pictures of each park (in alphabetical order!) along with a thumb drive with all the pictures in digital format. This is a tremendous contribution and we thank Joanne for her beautiful photos. They were taken in the fall, so the views aren't blocked by foliage or covered in snow.

**MONKEY ISLAND:** Some residents of St. Louis Park are motivated to save a historic rock garden/pond known as "Monkey Island" that was part of a roadside park built at Minnetonka Blvd. on Highway 100. This diamond-in-the-rough has been hidden since the park was changed just before 1970. Descending flagstone steps to a limestone walkway around a reflecting pool, one could sit on a built-in stone bench with a two-foot high back, next to a now inactive waterfall-wall. A stone bridge crosses to a once willow tree-adorned island. Landscape architect Arthur Nichols was hired to build about a half dozen parks at the time Highway 100 was built in the late 1930s. With the upcoming reconstruction of Highway 100 at Minnetonka Blvd., the park has been mostly dismantled, with the "Beehive" barbecue grill moved to another such park at Highway 7. Diane Steen-Hinderlie (952-929-6156) and Phillip Smith (612-791-3131) are working to try to save Monkey Island, and individuals who are interested may contact them for more information. If you have personal memories or photos of Monkey Island or the other roadside parks, we invite you to send them to the Society's address on the back of this newsletter.

**INK:** Our printers keep dying here at *Re-Echo* headquarters, and every time we get a new one it takes a different kind of ink. If you use HP ink numbers 920, 27, or 28, please contact Jeanne Andersen (info on back).

**PARKDALE BLVD.?** In the November 6, 1951, *Echo* it was reported that Lydia Rogers had sent cards to 195 companies and residents on Excelsior Blvd. asking their opinion about changing the name of the street to something more suitable, such as Parkdale Blvd. The move was unsuccessful, but in years to come the city would have several streets with the word "Park" in them.

## MORE ECHOES

April 27 was the date of the 31-mile 1969 Walk for Development. Estimates from 3 - 7,000 participants made their way from Parade Stadium up Glenwood Ave. and down Plymouth Ave. to get to Macalester Student Union. *Echo* student reporter Gayle Dorfman reported miserable conditions in the drizzle. The event was organized by Twin City youth in cooperation with the American Freedom from Hunger Foundation, which represents the United Nation's campaign against hunger in the United States. \$60,000 was raised.

October 15, 1969, was Moratorium Day, when the Student Mobilization Committee demanded "Peace Now" and gathered at Northrop Auditorium for speeches. Numbers of St. Louis Park High School students walked out carrying candles. Those at Central Jr. High were told to get away from the windows.

1969 grad Gary Samsky and five other Park alumni started the Acme Film Society, located at 7 1/2 E. 26th Street. It was a place for amateur filmmakers to present their films free of charge. Feature films were shown along with student films. The screen was a make-shift cloth. One of the participants was future Hollywood editor Steve Rivkin.

# LEROY DEBOOM

This remarkable student was often seen in the pages of the *Echo*. In the summer of 1950 LeRoy was awarded a trip to the Boy Scout Jamboree in Valley Forge, free of charge from the *Minneapolis Star*. In his Junior year he was the third page editor of the *Echo*, which was rated All-American by the National Scholastic Press Association, the first time in Park history. One of LeRoy's most memorable moments was when a bunch of Park kids were in Anoka for a football game. Somehow their signals got crossed as to where to catch the bus back. LeRoy ran four blocks trying to catch the bus, but it took off and he had to run the four blocks back. The kids camped out at the police station and did the Hokey Pokey until their parents could come and rescue them.

In October 1951 LeRoy was chosen a Junior Rotarian for the month and elected to Park High's delegation to the Minnesota State High School convention in Duluth. LeRoy was the editor of the *Echo* his senior year of 1951-52, and the paper won All-American for a second year. In May 1952 he placed in the *Star and Tribune* World Affairs test.

For all his achievements, LeRoy was offered a full scholarship to Harvard, which he accepted. He had also been offered a scholarship to Yale, but he declined because it would have required him to work in the cafeteria.

And then LeRoy's world turned upside down when he contracted polio in the summer of 1952. He was confined to an iron lung at General Hospital (now HCMC) and then a six-bed ward at the Sister Kenney Institute. In March 1954, Park High showed they had not forgotten LeRoy by including an update in the *Echo*. He held dreams of studying at the U of M, then graduate work at Harvard. Student reporter Georgiana Christman paid tribute to LeRoy's spirit when she wrote:

Far more than a polio case, LeRoy deBoom is an individual ... perhaps a finer person today than ever before. His pluck, determination, humor and personality might well serve as an example to many of us who may be more fortunate in a physical sense, but who would be hard pressed to match his courageous record.

When he was discharged from the hospital after 22 months he was unable to walk, and had use of only three fingers. But his mind was clear and he was determined to go on with his life, starting with those classes at the U. These were days long before the campus was accessible to wheel chairs, and often LeRoy would have to recruit strong students to give him a lift up a flight of stairs. Our own SLP HS Board member Don Schimmel was in LeRoy's English class and was often one of the boys who came to his assistance. (He recalls that the instructor was also in a wheelchair and he often did double duty.) Logistics became too daunting after two quarters, though, and he started going to night school, chauffeured by his father. He had learned to type at Sister Kenney, and his father had rigged up steel weights on pulleys to facilitate his typing. He studied accounting, and it took him several years, but he took every accounting class he could, and he indeed worked as an accountant for two companies until his health deteriorated in 1973.

Update: LeRoy was able to stay in his St. Louis Park home until 2004, when he moved to the Benedictine Health Center of Minneapolis, a facility that can more closely monitor his health needs. He's still sharp, still reads the paper, and still writes many letters to the editor (even if some of them are only in his head). In 2012 he and his brother made it to his 60th Class Reunion, where he met up with his former classmates (including the Homecoming Queen, he points out). He makes use of technology, both in his health care needs and in entertainment, using the building's wifi, subscribing to Netflix, and skyping with his brother's children and grandchildren out in California. He also helps staff members with computer issues. He welcomes phone calls in the early afternoon.

LeRoy deBoom is an inspiration to those of us who complain of minor aches and pains. He's living proof that one's will and determination are stronger than even the most severe physical limitations. And he has certainly lived up to his surname, which is Dutch for "The Tree."

## DONATIONS

Earl Ames donated a scrapbook he'd been keeping since the 1930s, full of articles about events and people in the Park. Our Secretary, Kathy Spence Johnson, scanned all of the items and the information from the articles has been added to our web pages.

In addition to the *Echoes* mentioned on Page 1, Sue Hill also donated some newsletters from her days in Blue Tri. This was an organization for girls at Park High, and goes back to the earliest days of the school. We would love to hear from others who were in Blue Tri or Y-Teens (what is their relationship?) about their experiences in the group.

Gary Hanson came to office hours one day and gave us the most amazing map of the Park (or at least the part between the Boulevards) that dates back to about 1898. It's in great condition, and can be studied for hours for information about the earliest days of our city.

Jerry Timian came by with a box full of great artifacts, including *Echowans*, menus from the Lincoln Del, a class mug from 1965, and a wonderful cookbook put out by the Holy Family Altar and Rosary Society in 1974. The cookbook contained ads, which we love. One that stood out was for Duff's in the Park, which promoted its lunchtime lingerie fashion shows – in a Church Ladies cookbook! Jerry recommended we interview his uncle, Clayton Timian, who was born in St. Louis Park 90 years ago. Clayton and his wife

Phyllis agreed to an interview, and not only did they verify that "Hinkle's Hotel" was actually the St. Louis Park Hotel, but they had a photo of the saloon inside! Turns out that John Hinkle was Clayton's grandfather. It was an important connection to make, and we thank the Timians for sharing the photo, which can be seen at <http://slphistory.org/history/hinklehotel.asp>

Mark Toretzky continues to do research, this time on bus service to St. Louis Park. The fruits of his efforts can be seen on our mass transit web page at <http://slphistory.org/history/masstransit.asp> and in our files at Lenox.

Laura Hanks, recent widow of former Mayor Lyle Hanks, gave us a variety of materials from Lyle's career at St. Louis Park schools, including 13 yearbooks from Central Jr. High. This completes our collection! There were also some athletic programs from the '70s that delighted our Board member Don Schimmel, who is documenting Park's basketball history.

Vern Wigfield, a Minneapolis & St. Louis Railroad aficionado, gave us a series of interesting maps and photographs, some going back to the 1880s.

Diane Brown sent us a button that the Class of 1961 had made for their reunion in 2011. It was a replica of a button from '61 that said "Super Silledgical PARK" and had a picture of Sparky (formerly called Looie), Park's "spirit" mascot.

## EVEN MORE ECHOES

The Astrology Club had its first meeting at the High School on February 20, 1970. The guest speaker demonstrated Tarot cards. The group started when Marsha Zeeman and Julie Meyerson bought a Ouija Board. The group branched out into astrology, palmistry, numerology, psychic phenomena, and divination. In a February 25, 1970 issue of the *Echo*, Marsha said "As we became more involved, the board began to 'threaten' us. In order to 'protect' ourselves we wore the Seal of Solomon."

In 1971, for the first time, teachers in the public schools were issued guidelines as to how to celebrate the holidays. With 30 to 40 percent of the school population Jewish, it was finally acknowledged that the celebration of Christmas was treading the line between church and state. Teachers were told no cards, no gifts, no evergreens, no Christmas carols (in non-elective courses) – and parties were to be designated "before the winter holiday."

## Who We Are

The St. Louis Park Historical Society was founded in 1971 to collect, preserve, and disseminate the history of the City of St. Louis Park, Minnesota. The archives of the Society are located in the Historic Depot in Jorvig Park (37<sup>th</sup> and Brunswick) and at the Lenox Community Center (6715 Minnetonka Blvd.). Office hours at the Lenox site are Thursdays from 10 to noon, and by appointment. Our mailing address is:  
3700 Monterey Drive  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

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## About the *Re-Echo*

The *Re-Echo* is published quarterly by the St. Louis Park Historical Society. Its purpose is to share information about the City's history and the Society's activities. The *Re-Echo* was started by Robert C. Reiss. The name was inspired by the *Echo* newspaper, which has been published by and for the students of St. Louis Park High School since 1916.

## About This Issue

The *Re-Echo* cycle has been reset a bit, with only three issues in 2012 and the first one of 2013 starting in January. For some reason we have an enormous mailing list, which puts a strain on our all-volunteer resources. On the membership insert enclosed, please let us know if you would like to receive the *Re-Echo* by email, or – if you have no idea how you ended up on the list in the first place – you'd like to be taken off. Thanks!

## Join Us!

The St. Louis Park Historical Society is a nonprofit organization and is wholly dependent on membership dues and donations for its operating costs, including the cost of mailing the *Re-Echo*. Dues are \$20 per calendar year, tax deductible. You don't have to be a member to receive the *Re-Echo*, but we need new members, especially active ones. Meetings are at 7 pm on the first Tuesday of the month, and are open to all. They are held at Lenox Community Center October-May and at the Historic Depot June-September.

**ST. LOUIS PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
ONE-STOP-SHOPPING FORM**

**Annual Individual/Family Membership: \$20**

**Business and Individual Benefactor Member Donation:  
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**Check all that apply:**

\_\_\_\_\_ **I wish to join/renew my membership;** enclosed is \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
(membership is on a calendar year basis)

**All membership donations are tax-deductible.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **I wish to purchase a copy of *Something in the Water*; enclosed is \$20.**

**Total amount enclosed: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

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