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Ads for local businesses, fashion trends, and citizens' opinions take us back.



REeCHO

PARK HISTORY TODAY

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Volume 20.2 / Summer 2021

EDITOR'S NOTE:

Don't know where you were fifty years ago, but I was in my third year of architecture school at UM, and spent three lovely months of the year studying and traveling in Europe. A lot has changed in half a century, as one would expect. We take a spin around the pivotal events of the year the St. Louis Park Historical Society was born, viewed mostly through comments and photos from the St, Louis Park Sun.
– Bill Beyer, FAIA

REMEMBERING 1971

The St. Louis Park Historical Society was chartered on April 21, 1971. The local newspaper, the *St. Louis Park Sun*, barely noticed, publishing a photo of the historic Milwaukee Road Depot Museum dedication, but not mentioning the new Society.



DEPOT DEDICATION — Mrs. Torval Jorvig spoke to about 200 people during the dedication Sunday of the St. Louis Park Historical Depot Museum. The depot is located in Jorvig Park, named after Mrs. Jorvig's late husband. (See more photos page 8.)

Other events of 1971 included:

- Archie Bunker was introduced to America on CBS's "All in the Family"
- Federal law banned cigarette ads on tv and radio
- The Weather Underground exploded a bomb in a Men's room at the U.S. Capitol
- Army Lieutenant William Calley was found guilty of murdering 22 Vietnamese civilians at the village of My Lai
- The New York Times published the Pentagon Papers, exposing years of U.S. lies about the war in Vietnam
- Police and military units arrested 12,000 Vietnam War protesters in Washington, DC, the largest mass arrest in U.S. history;
- The U.S. Supreme Court ruled unanimously that busing of students could be used to enforce racial integration
- The 26th Amendment to the U.S. constitution was adopted, changing the voting age from 21 to 18
- President Nixon announced that the U.S. would stop converting U.S. dollars to gold at a fixed rate
- The first Starbucks opened at Pike Place Market in Seattle
- Walt Disney World opened in Orlando, Florida
- Rock opera, "Jesus Christ, Superstar," opened on Broadway
- Amtrak began intercity rail service
- D.B. Cooper parachuted from a hijacked Northwest Orient Airlines plane over Washington state with \$200,000 ransom and disappeared forever

In 1971, U.S. inflation was running at 4.3%; average U.S. income was \$10,500; the Dow Industrials closed at 890 for the year; an average house cost \$25,250; a gallon of gas cost 40 cents; a first-class postage stamp cost 8 cents; you could buy Malibu Barbie for \$1.94 or an Etch-a-Sketch for \$2.83.

In Minnesota, Jack Baker and Michael McConnell tried but failed to wed in Hennepin County, launching the first public battle in the war over same-sex marriage. New Governor Wendy Anderson unveiled the Minnesota Miracle, the result of a ten-year debate, shifting the burden for funding public education away from property taxes. Among the top ten local news items reported by the Sun for the year were:

- Frank Pucci scored upset mayoral victory over Frank Howard due to city's "excessive" street paving
- School board stirred controversy trying to make Jewish students feel more welcome by making Christmas holiday recognition more secular
- SLP firefighters Arnie Johnson and Bob McElmurry died in a fire at the Pizza House, 4532 Excelsior Boulevard
- Options for routing I-394 through town generated loud public debates
- City council approved a "ban-the-can" ordinance
- Republic Creosote/Reilly Tar & Chemical Company, the Park's largest employer since 1929, announced it would close after 55 years of operation
- Opening of the new Rec Center and its 50-meter pool



2 die fighting restaurant fire

Related pictures: Page 13A
By BOB SCHMIDT and AL WOODRUFF
Minneapolis Star-Tribune

Two St. Louis Park firemen, one of them a volunteer, were killed early today when the ceiling of the Pizza House, Inc. restaurant, 4532 Excelsior Blvd., collapsed on them during a fire which gutted the one-story building. Dead are Arnie Johnson, 32, 1114 Brookside Ave., professional firefighter employed by the city, and Robert McElmurry, 29, 5724 Goodrich Ave., a volunteer fireman.

About one-fourth of the 31-member department are volunteers. The fire was discovered in a back of the restaurant about 1:20 a.m. by the cook and waitress who had noticed smoke and were looking for its source.



THE WAR IN VIETNAM

The national news of the prosecution and conviction of U.S. Army Lt. William Calley for murdering 22 Vietnamese civilians along with the New York Times' publication of the "Pentagon Papers" were both indicative of the accelerating disapproval of the Vietnam War in public opinion. Editorial pages of the Sun ran frequent letters and opinion pieces reflecting the change opposing Nixon's handling of the war.

A syndicated opinion column by Gene O'Brien cited the results of a Gallup Poll showing that 73% of the American people favoring the McGovern-Hatfield proposal to end military involvement in Vietnam by the end of the year. "In our judgment the most disastrous part of the present policy is that it continues this immoral, senseless, barbaric war."

A letter to the Editors from U.S. Navy submariner Mark R. Hutchinson in San Diego questioned the justification for convicting Lt. William Calley of murder. "How can we say that one soldier is guilty for killing Vietnam civilians when Air Force bombers carry out their impersonal murder of life and property on a daily basis? Those missions are no less appalling or brutal...If Calley is guilty then who is to be prosecuted for sending him to Vietnam?"

Closer to home, the Sun reported that U.S. Army Private First Class Steven Plath, a 1968 graduate of Park High, was killed on March 28th while serving in Vietnam.

LOCAL POLITICS

St. Louis Park Mayor Frank Howard was declared the Sun's "Man of the Year" in February when it also honored the city's three state legislators – Senator Ken Wolfe and Freshmen Representatives Julian Hook and Pete Petrafeso.

Howard was bounced out of office in November by political upstart Frank Pucci, due to Howard's failure to listen to constituents' complaints about taxes and spending – on street work and for funding new recreation center, both of which had been rejected in citizen referenda.

IN MEMORIAM

The St. Louis Park Historical Society has received gifts in remembrance of loved ones from the following persons:

- From **Nancy Christiansen** in memory of **Julie Renner** on 23 March 2021.
- From **Nancy Thomas** in memory of **Caroline Motzko Gabor** on 25 March 2021.
- From **Kenneth Crews** in memory of **Betty Jo Crews** on 12 April 2021.



LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

We're back!

After over twelve months laying dormant, the Historical Society is back to hosting our Saturday office hours and planning for ways to bring the history of our great city to more community members. Like many things in post-covid life, we are re-learning how to operate "normally." But we have our volunteers lined up for Saturdays through the summer, and we have had our first Board meeting in person - although I forgot to bring our regular paper handouts after twelve meetings via zoom. We will get there!

As Bill reminds us in this edition of the Re-Echo, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of the founding of the Historical Society! One project that will help us celebrate our anniversary is the installation of some rail track from 1912 outside the Depot building. Our Railroad Special Interest Group (RSIG) has spearheaded this project in partnership with the City. When finished this summer, the track will be located on the north side of the Depot in the same position it would have been at the original station.

As many of you know, after 52 years, the Roller Garden closed last month. I am sure all our readers have some memory of the Roller Garden, from birthday parties to family skates or first dates or maybe even seeing the dinosaur statue on the roof. There was a lively week of online auction activity for the various equipment and decorations left over after the closure. We were lucky to secure a pair of antique three-wheeled skates, a commemorative plaque for the Pastime Free Rollers, and a skating book. We left the nacho cheese machine for someone else!

In addition to our Saturday office hours, we field questions over email. Every week there is something new that comes across the wire that sets us off researching the files or driving around town. We welcome your questions, so keep them coming! For example, we just realized that Lenox elementary school only took school photographs in even years back in the 1960s. And while anyone today might know this, we were reminded that the bench in Wolfe Park dedicated to mayor Ken Wolfe is located on the south side of the lake.

Our Society has been active for 50 years, and it is due to the weekly work of many volunteers, specifically our Board of Trustees, over the years who have dedicated their time to research, catalog, administer, write, speak, and staff the office. We still have an open spot we would love to fill with someone who can join us to keep us going into the next 50-year stretch - reach out if you are interested to learn more. Thank you to everyone on the Board for your continued dedication!

With gratitude,

Ted

CONNECT WITH US

Stop by: 3546 Dakota Ave. S., Suite C
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and by appointment

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Founded in 1971, the St. Louis Park Historical Society collects, preserves and shares the history of St. Louis Park. The *ReEcho: Park History Today* is an official publication of the Society.

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THE REC CENTER

Featuring a 50-meter outdoor pool with a separate diving well and kiddies' wading pool, plus indoor hockey, the new Rec Center provided children with a safe and clean place to swim and cool off in the hot summer months, replacing the old swimming hole at Wolfe Lake, a few hundred feet away.



Happy Swimmers
Sara Enger, Donna and Diane Friaut



A Popular Place
Youngsters enjoy the wading pool



PARK POOL NOW OPEN
The new St. Louis Park Municipal pool was the site of a AAU swimming meet Saturday. The event was the first held at the pool.

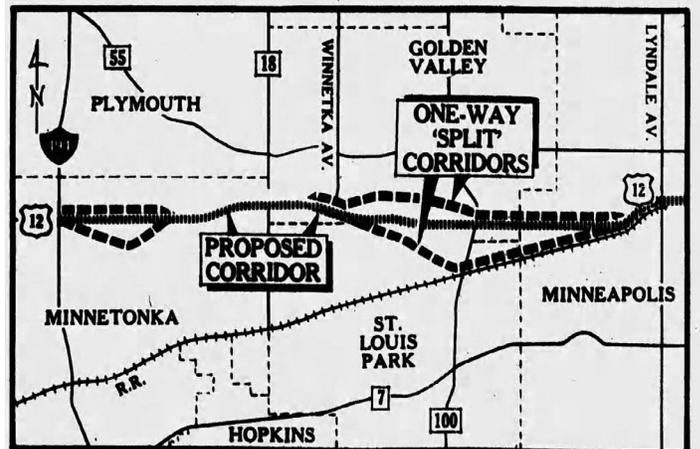
REPUBLIC CREOSOTE/ REILLY TAR INDUSTRIAL ERA ENDS

Occupying eighty acres at the heart of Thomas B. Walker's industrial sector of the Park, the firm which had served as the city's largest employer through the Great Depression and WWII, announced its closing.



I-394 CONTROVERSIES: A BULLET DODGED

The demon road engineers at the Minnesota Department of Transportation came up with a doozy of an idea for the design of I-394 through the north edge of town. The "Split" concept won no citizen or politician votes but imagine the damage it could have done. The *Minneapolis Star* provided a useful graphic:



FREWAY ROUTES—This map shows the major remaining proposed routes for Interstate Hwy. 394, currently being considered by a consultant to the Minnesota Highway Department. The first travels directly along what is now Hwy. 12, from the Hawthorne interchange in Minneapolis to Interstate 494 in Minnetonka.

The "split corridor" proposal would create two separate one-way highways from Hawthorne interchange approximately to Winnetka Av. in Golden Valley. A similar split, shown at the intersection of 12 and 494, no longer is being seriously considered.

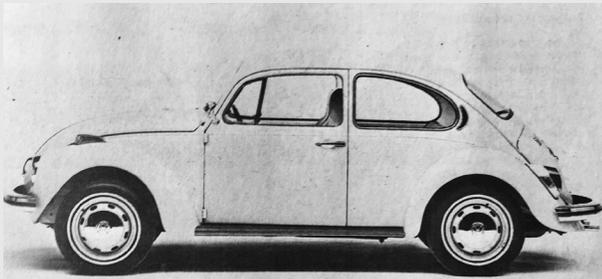
ODDS AND ENDS



CARNIVAL TIME
Fun and Games at Bell Line Park



Robin Hood days, an ambitious week-long celebration of all things St. Louis Park was first held in 1967, but shortened to four days in 1971, then abruptly discontinued. Volunteer burnout was cited as a significant factor.



The Volkswagen Super Beetle



The Buick Riviera Sport Coupe

If you were car shopping, you could find ads for a VW Super Beetle or a futuristic Buick Riviera.

As we watch the current Minnesota legislature consider legalizing the recreational use of marijuana, imagine how different things were in 1971. When, in 1968, police discovered 1/2,800th of



an ounce of marijuana in the pocket of an eighteen-year-old man, he had been convicted of possession and sentenced to 20 years in prison. The State Supreme Court ruling upheld the conviction and sentencing of the first-time offender in February, and the editors of the Sun were outraged, calling the court's ruling "barbaric:"

We feel the court has upheld a savage judgment, affirmed a vengeful and primitive piece of legislation, and committed on the person of Robert Siirla a crime of far greater enormity than he was ever accused of committing on the society that approves such mindless legislation and judicature.



Rally for Soviet Jews Barricades were erected Friday Lake Rd., St. Louis Park, will be closed Sunday morning during a rally at Beth-El Synagogue, 5224 W. 26th St., St. Louis Park. The rally, featuring several speakers, begins at 10 a.m.

The year 1971 saw the alleged mistreatment of Soviet Jews become a nationwide cause celebre. The Park had become home to many Jewish families after WWII, and several events were held in the city to express citizens' concerns.

REMEMBERING ROSE-MARY

We celebrate the first woman elected to the St. Louis Park City Council, Rose-Mary (Griak) Utne, who passed away a year ago, (copy excerpted and cribbed from her StarTribune obituary of July 3, 2020 and other sources).

Rose-Mary served on the council from 1971-1979, after cutting her political teeth as president of the Park's League of Women Voters from 1969-71.

She was unusually busy in 1973, elected in October to the board of directors of the League of Minnesota Municipalities, (now the Minnesota League of Cities). In October she was the only vote against a council resolution condemning the Meadowbrook Women's Clinic for performing abortions; all five males voted for it. She organized the first St. Louis Park High School's girls track and field team and coached it for the next two years.

Former Minnesota State High School League associate director Dorothy McIntyre wrote:

"In the 1970s, one strong pioneer coach could make all the difference to her high school girls and beyond. Rose-Mary was the spark and driving force...Her efforts would open doors and become part of a movement that would change the face of the world."

Rose-Mary graduated from Hibbing High School, the Chicago Academy of Fine Arts and the University of Minnesota Duluth in 1950. She and first husband, Roy Griak, were teachers in Nicollet, MN before moving to the Park in the 1950s to start a family. Son Seth Griak added, "She was a painter, singer and writer, and very involved in community theater. She had roles in musicals and she played the piano."

After a divorce from Roy Griak, Rose-Mary eventually married LeRoy Utne, founder of the Park's General Office Products, Inc; both were members of Westwood Lutheran Church. They lived in Edina, where Rose-Mary continued her public service for the next 27 years on the Edina Zoning Board of Appeals.

At her direction, her tombstone reads, "She never wanted to be late, but she was." She had an amazing spirit, smart wit, and made an impression on everyone she met.

"She was tough as nails," said son Jason; "a tough old [Iron] Ranger," said son Seth. "Her zest for life was unmatched."

We found a photo in the Sun of a city council meeting where the heat was not on for a change. The Echowan provided a look at her girls' track team. Her sons Seth and Jason Griak shared a few of their own photos of her life in politics, often as the only woman in the room.



GIRLS' TRACK TEAM. BOTTOM ROW: A. Bruheim, C. Lindquist, Captain D. Strickland, D. Sewall, C. Schwartz, D. Nelson, N. Haring, R. Barthel, S. Swanson, Captain C. Pope, D. Dashi, R. Bray, C. Dahlke. ROW 2: J. Nypan, L. Stevens, W. Tronberg, L. Hollender, T. Nelson, K. Cannon, R. Smith, S. LeMire, S. Gabor, J. Haase, S. Dahlgren, D. Johnson, B. Johnson. ROW 3: Coach K. Hart, B. Korenchen, K. Benson, K. Curran, D. Frouf, S. Bell, M. Biltman, V. Hoffer, M. McDonald, J. Christensen, C. Nelson, Coach R. Griak.

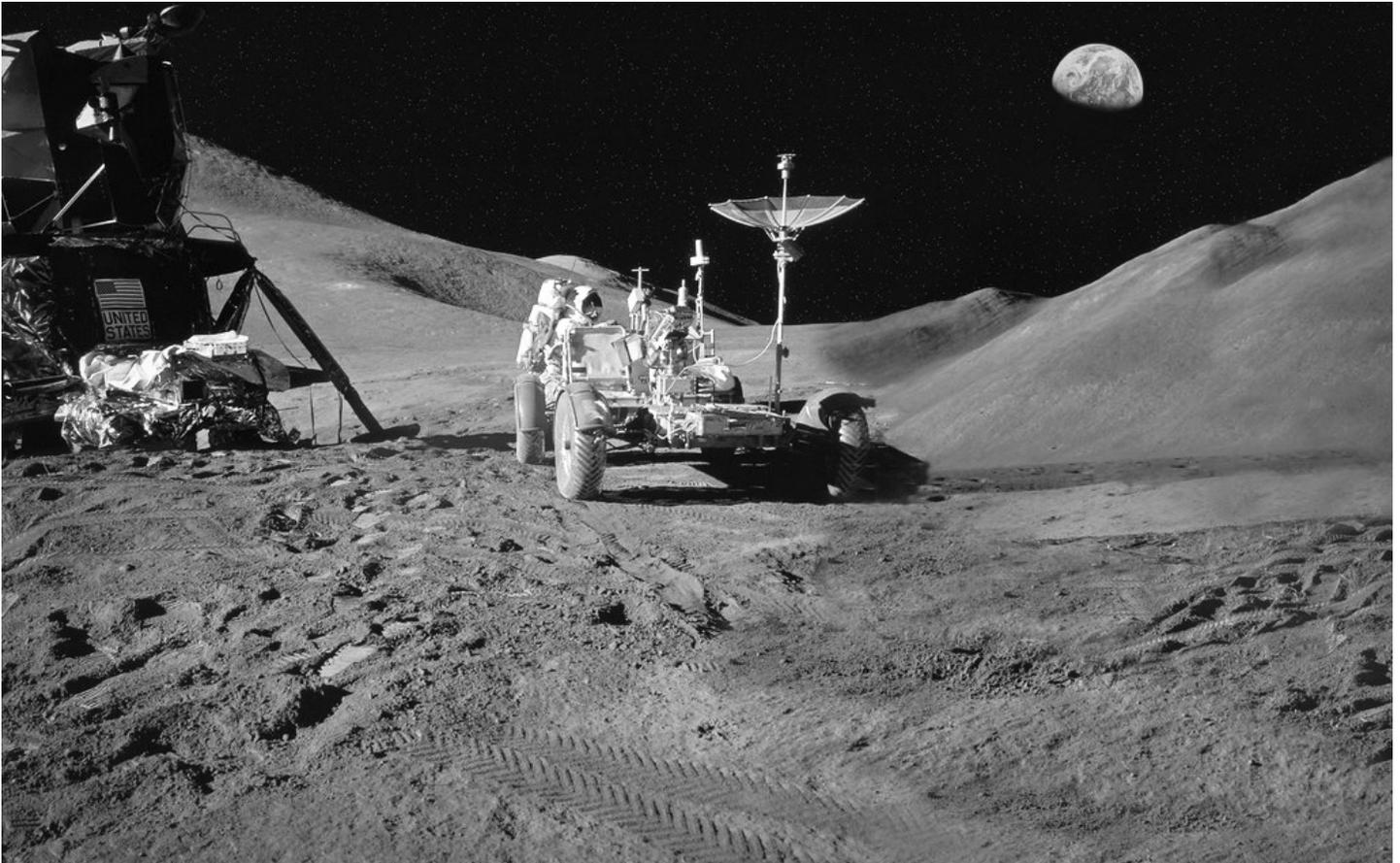
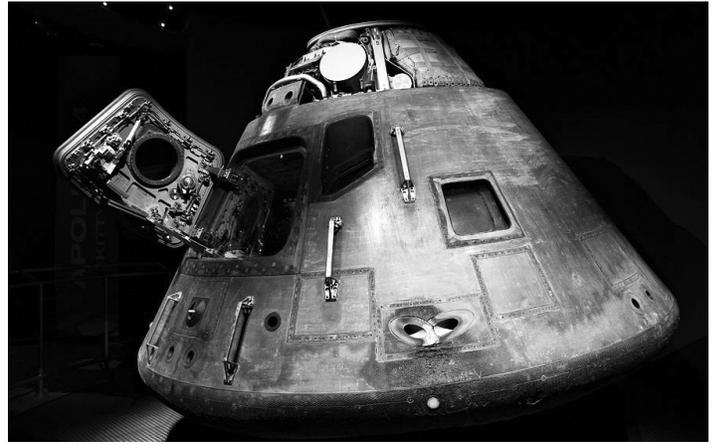


OVERCOATED COUNCILMEN
James Heltzer made a point as Rose-Mary Griak listened.

TO THE MOON, TWICE!

Two years after Americans first landed on the moon, NASA achieved its third (Apollo 14) and fourth (Apollo 15) manned moon landings in 1971. During the nine days of Apollo 14, astronaut Alan Shepard had time to hit a couple of golf balls he had brought along.

Apollo 15 featured the first use of the Lunar Rover, a sort of moon-dune buggy. On the return to Earth, astronaut Alfred Worden performed the first deep-space space-walk.





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 PARK HISTORY TODAY

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DISPATCH / SUN LOOKBACK

The *St. Louis Park Sun* supplanted the *Dispatch* after 1965. It had a broader distribution and readership, reporting on the western suburbs and beyond. It published an irregular column polling everyday citizens on topics of interest, "THE SUN ASKS." Among the 1971 questions and answers:

Should Minnesota's Abortion Laws be Changed?

Charles Slocum, St. Louis Park: "I think there should be some liberalization of the abortion law, it's been too strict. think the decision should be left up to the woman and her doctor."



What is your opinion of Ralph Nader and consumerism? Should he run for president?

Duane Hookum, Eden Prairie: "I think he's really on the ball. He knows what he's talking about...He shouldn't run for president. He's not too good a politician: he says what he thinks."

What Do You Think of Hot Pants?

Jeff Gustafson, Edina: "The secretaries in the office don't think they look good on me, so I don't wear them very often."

The paper ran very few ads for local businesses, but one marked a Minnesota first. Real New York style bagels, boiled, not baked, were introduced to the state that year at Texa-Tonka's Bagelville. And, along the hot pants and miniskirts lines, the fashion pages of the *Sun* were showing a lot of leg. And PDQ on Excelsior Boulevard helped Parkites avoid running out of anything at midnight.