

**P1 / FEATURE ARTICLE**

Learn about the controversy surrounding Minnesota's second McDonald's

**P2 / FAST FOOD, LOVE & PHILANTHROPY**

*Ray & Joan: The Man Who Made the McDonald's Fortune and the Woman Who Gave It All Away*

**P3 / FRIEDMAN EVENT RECAP**

A spectacular evening filled with generosity kicks off our capital campaign for a permanent building.

**P7 / MEMBERSHIP & GIVING**

Your support helps us collect, preserve and share our history. Become a member, donate or volunteer now!



# REeCHO

PARK HISTORY TODAY

Collect. Preserve. Share.

Volume 16.2

Spring 2017



## THE STARTLING STORY OF SIXTY STORY-FILLED YEARS: McDONALD'S IN ST. LOUIS PARK

BY JEANNE ANDERSEN

Sitting at the corner of Lake and Dakota, St. Louis Park's McDonald's is at the intersection of many important stories. It's a key location in Lisa Napoli's biography of Joan Kroc, *Ray and Joan*, and also mentioned in the recent film, *The Founder*, starring Michael Keaton. Getting Minnesota's second McDonald's up and running involved much controversy and raises some interesting questions. Let's start with the mystery of Wallace T. Bruce's Westwood shopping center and the interests of a St. Paul restaurateur.

### WESTWOOD McDONALD'S?

Lake Street was not the first choice for the franchise that belonged to Jim Zien. Zien was the owner of the Criterion Restaurant at 739 University Ave. in St. Paul – a fine dining establishment serving steak and lobster with an organ playing in the dining room and a piano in the lounge. In 1957, Zien took note of the phenomenal success of the first McDonald's in Minnesota, located five miles away on Snelling Ave. in Roseville. Although a hamburger joint was to the Criterion as a paper hat was to a

# LISA NAPOLI'S *RAY & JOAN*: A VIEW FROM ST. LOUIS PARK

BY INGRID MOE

Lisa Napoli was inspired to write *Ray & Joan* by an artwork with a mysterious provenance: Paul Conrad's *Chain Reaction*. While covering the story of the sculpture's future for National Public Radio, she met a famous activist who told her that it may have been a major NPR donor (Joan Kroc) who originally commissioned the work. Going in search of one story led to another; since she could not find a biography of Joan Kroc, she decided to write one.

Much the same could be said for the debate surrounding the construction of the St. Louis Park McDonald's. Locally, we may be concerned with why Jim Zien's initial plans to build at the northern edge of town were shelved for a different, more central location. Or why the initial round of permitting passed without a fuss, but as construction began, there was a tremendous outpouring of concern and dismay. We may remember how much original opposition the location faced and now how integral the restaurant seems in our community.

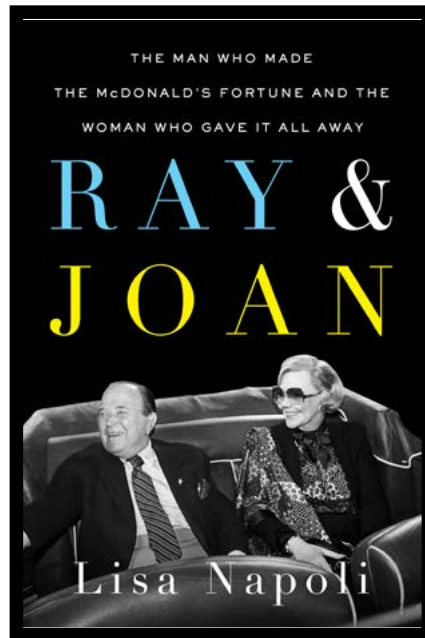
Yet this moment in the history of St. Louis Park's business development is part of another, bigger story. As Napoli notes,

the delay in construction "had proven to be a life-changing diversion personally for the Smiths and for Ray [Kroc]." Joan Smith played piano in Jim Zien's Criterion Restaurant in St. Paul.

Early in his career representing McDonald's, Ray Kroc met Zien to sell him the second McDonald's franchise in Minnesota. Zien decided to deputize Joan's husband to manage the franchise and Kroc decided that an absentee owner might work for this location. Meanwhile, the protests in St. Louis Park meant concluding the sale of the franchise took longer than expected. So Kroc made many trips from Chicago to dine at the Criterion until the deal closed.

You'll have to find further details in *Ray & Joan*. As with Napoli's book *Radio Shangri-La*, the meaning of happiness and purpose underlie her investigation of Ray and Joan's romance, life together and Joan's distribution of Ray's fortune. Joan's zeal for life and belief in causes she found important come through so vividly, you may

be inspired to seize the day and advocate for your passions with the same intensity.



## SAVE THE DATE! A Conversation with Lisa Napoli

As part of our Capital Campaign Fundraiser series, please join us for "Where Billions Began: Joan Kroc and the Battle for McDonald's in St. Louis Park."



Photo credit: Preston Wiles

Lisa Napoli, author of the recent book, *Ray & Joan*, will be traveling from California to share the real story of the McDonald's founder and the connection to the St. Louis Park franchise.

Napoli's book will be for sale at the event, and she will be signing books following her talk.



**Tuesday, July 18, 2017 | 6:30 p.m.**

**St. Louis Park High School Auditorium**

**Tickets: \$20.** Tickets will soon be available for purchase! Visit our website or Facebook page for additional details and ticket purchase information.

## LETTER FROM OUR PRESIDENT

Spring greetings! Much like spring promises growth and renewal, so do we make promises of great things! We are actively working on several big things as I write this letter and I am excited to share more as they come to fruition in the coming months. Let me give you a taste of spring and summer at the Historical Society.

It starts with the *ReEcho*. You may have noticed that we only published two editions last year. This year we are committed to returning to our quarterly schedule, and this edition is our second — so we are on track! A return to regular and quarterly publication could not be done without our designer, Joanna McPeck, who is responsible for the new design we debuted last year, nor without Ingrid Moe, our new editor, who is doing a fantastic job establishing and managing a more structured process. We continue to tweak the format, so please let us know what you like or don't like.

And then we are hosting a variety of events where we hope to see you. You'll be reading this after our April 30 fundraiser event with Tom Friedman. If you could not attend, please visit our website to find a link to the video of the event. On June 17, you can find us all day at Parktacular, where we will be sharing some fun facts about our favorite city. On July 18, we will host an evening event with Lisa Napoli, author of *Ray & Joan: The Man Who Made McDonald's Fortune and the Woman Who Gave It All Away*. If you haven't read it yet, wait until our event where you can pick up a signed copy while raising money for our building fund. You can also expect to have more opportunities to visit the Depot this summer — we're open every third Saturday from 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. through September.

Lastly, we continue to devote much time to figuring out a path to a permanent home. Jeanne Andersen has been leading this charge by meeting with city staff and City Council to share our vision and get their advice on how we can realize it. There is at least one very intriguing opportunity in front of us that we are exploring. It's too early to share at this point, but please reach out to Jeanne Andersen if you are interested in being more involved.

We would love to share more of our city's history through programs, office hours, and articles. Additionally, I have received several great ideas from community members about connecting with schools, neighborhoods, reunion classes, and more. But we don't have enough volunteers to meet all those needs. So as always, we welcome any interest in joining us. We will find a way to match your interests and available time with a project.

See you in the Park,  
Ted



## CONNECT WITH US

**Stop by:** 3546 Dakota Ave. S., Suite C  
St. Louis Park  
Saturdays, 1-4 p.m.,  
and by appointment

**Call:** 952-583-9893

**Email:** [history@slphis.org](mailto:history@slphis.org)

**Visit online:** [www.slphistory.org](http://www.slphistory.org)

**Follow on social media:**  



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.

### Editor

INGRID MOE

### Writers

JEANNE ANDERSEN

TED EKKERS

INGRID MOE

### Designer

JOANNA McPEEK

© 2017 St. Louis Park Historical Society. All rights reserved.

## CAPITAL CAMPAIGN KICKOFF A SUCCESS

Thank you to all who attended and supported our capital campaign kickoff with Tom Friedman and Susan Linnee at the Sabes Jewish Community Center on April 30.



Tom Friedman concluded his remarks by reading a moving passage from the end of his latest book, which described how his childhood neighborhood gave him the roots to achieve great heights in his career. President Ted Ekkers then presented Friedman with a street sign from his block to thank him for such a successful kickoff. As you can see in the photo, Friedman was very pleased to receive this memento!

We, in turn, were extremely surprised and pleased to receive a generous, personal donation from Tom Friedman of \$10,000. Ticket sales raised an additional \$11,885 for our building fund. We're on our way now, and your support can keep us rolling. Consider a contribution to the building fund and see you at our next fundraiser!

Thanks to Park TV, you can watch the video of the event with Tom Friedman. Visit our website to find a link to the video.

chef's toque, Zien sprung for a franchise and went looking for a location.

In August 1957, Zien appeared before the St. Louis Park Planning Commission for a special permit to build his hamburger stand on the southeast corner of Cedar Lake Road and Nevada Ave. This property was owned by Wallace T. Bruce who had built the portion of the Westwood Shopping Center east of Louisiana Ave. in 1954. Bruce also owned the property from Louisiana to Nevada Avenues and explained his plans to expand the shopping center. Just how Zien had met Bruce is unknown. It's likely Bruce recruited Zien and his franchise to bring commercial activity to the area. "The location of a traffic generating business such as the proposed drive-in is just what is needed," Bruce said. "Some estimates have indicated 300,000 cars per year for such a drive-in business."



The Planning Commission was not as enthusiastic. Since Bruce had no actual plan for the expanded shopping center and no indication of how the stand would fit into the plan, the request was deferred until that was figured out. It must have been clear to Zien that this was not going to happen soon, so the whole idea was dropped. The portion of Westwood Shopping Center west of Louisiana was not built until 1964, and the apartment complex that was built on the southeast corner of Cedar Lake Road and Nevada was built in 1967.

### TAKE TWO: LAKE STREET

The Westwood plan fizzled, but Zien was now acquainted with the possibilities of St. Louis Park and looked next to the bustling commercial hub at West Lake Street and Dakota Ave. In the immediate area were commercial establishments:

Ed Christy's gas station and sporting goods store, the Post Office, Park Drug, Home Hardware and Palm's Bakery. In addition, there was a Standard gas station and a two-business storefront that housed a variety of hobby and convenience stores. (That building was later razed to expand the McDonald's parking lot.) Besides businesses, there was the St. Louis Park Community Center, a beehive of activity for young people before the Rec Center was built. And, of course, St. Louis Park High School.

On October 23, 1957, Zien again went before the Planning Commission for a special permit to build the drive-in. The special permit was required because it would be within 200 feet of a residential district and within 300 feet of a public



school. Although Superintendent of Schools Harold Enestvedt was "concerned about attracting students away from the building," the point was made that "the land is commercially zoned and any use made of it would have some attraction."

It was determined that the proposed use "will not create an unacceptable condition" and the request was approved. Based on this report, the City Council approved the special permit five days later, and the item was buried on Page 15 of the October 31 issue of the *St. Louis Park Dispatch*. The building permit was approved on November 4, 1957. Now with permits in hand, Zien arranged to purchase the land from Mrs. Christy for \$25,000 and to ready the site for construction.

### NOT SO FAST!

Although nobody apparently read page 15 of the *Dispatch*, activity at the site got the neighbors' attention. On November 18, 1957, a delegation of critics descended on the City Council to protest the approval of the special permit. Their spokesman was Leo J. Schultz, who cited "safety, litter, traffic hazard and proximity to the senior high school" as reasons to rescind the permit. He presented petitions of residents and businessmen in opposition to the drive-in, which was planned for a corner where students already congregated. The most common fear was that students would pass up school lunches that were "much better for them." The Council deferred the issue, but approved Zien's request to erect a sign measuring 26 feet by 17 feet. Councilman Ken Wolfe opposed the "towering, blinking" sign. "That's a monstrosity of a sign and it dwarfs the building," he said. "It's something I would not want to live with." Zien promised that he would eliminate the blinking lights "if they prove obnoxious." (Unfortunately, no photos of the sign currently exist in our records.)

By far the biggest opponent of the drive-in was Arthur Meyers, President of the Chamber of Commerce. Meyers was apparently livid, accusing fellow Councilman Herbert Davis of some unclear violation of ethics, claiming that there was some double dealing about an office building that would bring in more tax income and even offering to "give \$5,000 for a library in St. Louis Park if something else can be done on that corner."

The December 5, 1957, issue of the *Dispatch* reported that Meyers continued his "bitter attack" on the City Council. This deal smells to high heaven," he charged. "Not one deal in an entire year has been shoved through the planning commission

and council like this one was. It was engineered so beautifully and all the loopholes were blocked so nicely that the people didn't have a chance in the world to know what was going on." He said he was acting on behalf of the Chamber of Commerce because he had "numerous calls from Chamber members wondering what is going on." Though he stated, "I'm not trying to implicate anyone on the council but just trying to get to the bottom of this thing," even the *Dispatch* suspected that something more was going on with Meyers.

One exchange during this controversy has become famous. Zien stated that he expected to serve 1,000 meals per day averaging 60 cents each, with a net profit of \$200,000 per year. "If he serves 1,000 meals a day I'll eat the whole building," Councilman Kenneth Wolfe commented later. "If he does that much business we ought to open a municipal drive-in," said Councilman Schadow. "Or else there will be another request for a similar permit in here, and it will be mine!" he added.

### **AN UNPRECEDENTED RE-REVIEW BY THE PLANNING COMMISSION**

Although the move was questionable, the Council asked the Planning Commission to revisit the special permit. At the Commission meeting of December 4, 1957, Zien stated that a contract for deed to purchase the property was complete, contracts to start construction were signed and some work was already underway. Superintendent Enestvedt said that local businessmen often called the school or police to complain about students hanging around in the area, and opined that the drive-in would "tend to aggravate this problem." The



president of the Senior High PTA stated that the business would provide a new meeting place or hang out, not only for the high school students but other young people. This was not considered to be in the best interest of the "general welfare, health or morals" of the community, and the PTA voted to oppose the drive-in.

Art Meyers presented a large diagram of the intersection, showing traffic volume counts taken on December 3 and 4 during the after school hours. The data was taken by "interested persons." Meyers suggested that the drive-in would generate traffic that would make the already-busy corner unacceptable.

Since the drive-in would create a traffic hazard based on the traffic count information provided by Meyers, the commission recommended to the Council that the permit be revoked,

provided that the City Council had a traffic survey made to substantiate Meyers' data.

At the Council meeting of December 9, 1957, Councilman Torval Jorvig moved to rescind the permit, but the motion died for lack of a second. The Council then voted to defer action until its meeting of December 23, pending analysis of a traffic study of the intersection. Zien's attorney, Hyman Edelman, got to the crux of the matter when he said, "it would be a tragic thing for every citizen of the Park if the idea was disseminated that permits are issued to businessmen who then find that they are subject to being recalled." Zien agreed to suspend building until a final decision was reached.

### **MORE VEHEMENCE AND A FINAL VOTE**

A new City Council was sworn in on January 13, 1958, and immediately met with angry residents. These included Mrs. Howard George, who said that not one of the parents of high school students favored the location of the drive-in. She also said, "Sgt. Clyde Sorenson [not yet Chief of Police] said the drive-in would bring increased police activity to the area." Mrs. George then cited the denial of the permit for the Cedar Lake Road site. "We have a first class citizenry and a second class citizenry," she said. "Those with money get consideration — those without — do not."

A representative of McDonald's Corporate from Chicago pointed out that the drive-in would not "employ women, would have no car hops, no outside facilities conducive to loitering, no alcohol, cigarettes or pin ball machines and generally — just sell hamburgers."

Another vote was taken. New Mayor Herbert Lefler had to break the tie, voting not to rescind the permit, even though the Planning Commission recommended revocation. Lefler qualified his decision. "I'm not in sympathy with drive-ins but this one has been duly processed," he said. "The issue is no longer the drive-in, but the seriousness of revoking permits which would leave a precedent for more trouble in the future."

Soon the war of words in the *Dispatch* went silent, with nary a sound about the impending doom going up on the corner of Lake and Dakota.



## LYFMAP: NEW WEBSITE TO SAVE YOUR PARK MEMORIES

Lyfmap.com is a new, locally-based website that allows users to save their St. Louis Park memories at the place where they actually happened. Lyfmap uses Google Maps to allow you to save text, photos, oral history and video to any St. Louis Park location. Save your photos of your childhood home at your home address.



Save your old film or video of your greatest football moment at your school's stadium. When anyone else posts a memory at that location, you'll get a notification, allowing you to connect with other people who share the great locations of your life.

This website offers another way for St. Louis Park residents to contribute to saving and sharing the history of this great city.

## MYSTERY PHOTO SOLVED



The building at 6530 Cambridge was built in 1959 by Allen Garrison, who built many of the buildings in the Cambridge Industrial Park, affectionately known as "Skunk Hollow." In February 1960 one half of it opened as the Cambridge Café. It had a brief life in the late 1960s as a teen club, first as the Hullabaloo Teen Scene and then the Purple Cigar. More information about the clubs can be found at [TwinCitiesMusicHighlights.net/HullabalooTeenScene](http://TwinCitiesMusicHighlights.net/HullabalooTeenScene).

**Tom Olson** was the first to identify last issue's Mystery Photo, so he is our winner. Congratulations, Tom! Other early guessers were **Faith Schway**, **Cindy Ring**, and **Tom Seim**.

Remember the unsolved donut shop turned dry cleaner mystery photo from our Winter 2017 issue? **Steve Brown** identified this one, but we didn't receive his response by press time. He even sent us another picture of the crazy donut sign when the building was a dry cleaner. Thanks, Steve!

## SOLVE THE SPRING MYSTERY PHOTO



This was once the tallest building in St. Louis Park. Originally known by name, now it is primarily known by a number. Where is this?

Solve this mystery and you can win a Target® GiftCard.

## HISTORICAL SOCIETY BOARD

### OFFICERS

PRESIDENT — TED EKKERS

VICE PRESIDENT — OPEN

SECRETARY — JEANNE ANDERSEN

TREASURER — HENRY SOLMER

### TRUSTEES

JANE HAGSTROM

DALE LAPAKKO

PAUL LINNEE

JOHN OLSON

JIM ROBBINS

OPENINGS

Are you interested in becoming more involved at the Historical Society? We looking for members who want to contribute time as a Society board member. For information about time commitment, expectations and community, visit [slphistory.org/volunteer](http://slphistory.org/volunteer).



# St. Louis Park Historical Society

## MEMBERSHIP & GIVING FORM

HELP US COLLECT, PRESERVE & SHARE.

Annual membership benefits include:

- Members-only special events
- Discounts on certain events and merchandise
- Newsletter and Society mailings

Send me the *ReEcho* newsletter by mail -or-  Send the *ReEcho* via email

Please contact me about volunteering with the St. Louis Park Historical Society

I have items to donate to the St. Louis Park Historical Society

### MEMBERSHIP LEVELS

Individual Membership \$25     Family Membership \$35     Building Fund

Individual Benefactor \$50     Business Benefactor \$100    \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Amount Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

New Member     Renewing Member

Today's Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Send this form with your check to:

St. Louis Park Historical Society  
3700 Monterey Drive  
St. Louis Park, MN 55416-2671

-OR-

Become a member or renew your membership online via credit card or PayPal. Visit [slphistory.org/shop](http://slphistory.org/shop).

Founded in 1971, the St. Louis Park Historical Society's mission is to collect, preserve and share St. Louis Park's rich and unique history. The St. Louis Park Historical Society is a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization. Your dues and donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.

Questions? Contact us at 952.583.9893 or [history@slphis.org](mailto:history@slphis.org).



**REeCHO**  
PARK HISTORY TODAY

An official publication of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

NONPROFIT ORG  
U.S. POSTAGE  
**PAID**  
TWIN CITIES, MN  
PERMIT NO. 30308

3700 Monterey Drive, St. Louis Park, MN 55416

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

## WELCOME NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS

Sue Ainsworth  
Victoria Beyer  
Karen Christenson  
Judith Davis  
Patty Diamond  
Ray Eckers  
Elaine & Roger Friauf  
Alison Fuller  
Marla Gamble  
Nancy Gertner &  
Paul Maggitti  
Carol B. Hartvigsen  
Pearl Heitke  
Laura Steen & Ron Hillman  
Diane Hinderlie & John Olson  
Julie Hose & Norm Russo

Laura Izurieta  
Mark Lapakko  
Nancy & Dale Lapakko  
Gloria Linnell  
Jan Loftus  
John Luhman  
Verna Mae & Bob Martin  
G. Mark McHenry  
Phyllis McQuaid  
Ingrid Moe  
David Moscoe  
Michael P. Mullen  
Denise Nix  
Carol Olson  
Tom Olson  
Thomas Pirsch

Janet R. Rapp  
Patti Richardson  
Judith Rys  
Linda Sandbo  
Don Schimmel  
Francis Schmit  
Sue & Ron Schwartz  
Scott Smith  
Steven Steuck  
Ruth Steuck & Ron Weilage  
Sue & Ron Strittmater  
Mark Toretzky  
Marilyn & Ernest Tursich  
Donald Voss  
Donald Wray