

1930 - 1950

I have just finished reading a book entitled "A History of the City of St. Louis Park". If the accuracy of the whole text can be judged by the accuracy of the twenty year period from 1930 to 1950, then the book contains many omissions and represents a very prejudiced and misleading history of St. Louis Park. I consider the years 1930 through 1950 to be the most important years in the Park's history. During that time I played a vital role. Let me tell you about it.

The mentioning of the Better Government League will be referred to as B.G.L. as it will appear so often. It was the most powerful political organization that appeared in St. Louis Park and completely dominated the political life of the community for the most important years in this history. This is how it came into existence.

I bought a piece of property on the corner of Quenten Avenue and Excelsior Blvd. - about three acres. I built a house there for my wife, my boy and myself. We moved out from Minneapolis in 1929 to live there and to start my business in landscaping and nursery. We were very happy looking forward to the future. I had been connected with the Minneapolis Park System for seventeen years before that. We moved in sometime in May - and later towards the middle of the summer we found out it wasn't very pleasant.

On Excelsior Blvd. in those days there were about six or seven speak-easies open twenty four hours - worst type of noise and racket that any neighborhood can possibly have, all night long. There was one of those speak-easies right on the corner across the street from me. It was impossible for us to sleep nights. We knew that something had to be done - it could not continue. One particular very hot night the racket was worse than ever. They played three pieces on the banjo, one after another, and when they were through they started all over again. It was impossible for us to sleep. As a matter of fact we had to go to a friend's house at Deephaven to get a good night's rest.

I knew something had to be done so I went to the Council. I complained and said it was a violation of the state law that specified that the beer joints were supposed to be closed at midnight - and I sure got the cold shoulder. I was told straight out that if I knew what was good for me the best thing would be to leave St. Louis Park and move back into Minneapolis.

Gangsters or no gangsters, they were not going to scare me into leaving my home and business. However, it continued - no end to it. Then I called in the neighbors - they all came to my house. They were all as upset as I was and we talked it over to see what could be done. We had some outsiders there to give us advice.

Some talked about impeachment of the Mayor and other solutions - but we realized that to go to court would be impossible because we needed an immediate solution. So all of us went to the next Council meeting. There must have been about twenty of us all told objecting to it. Mayor Brown seemed to be very much disturbed and we even mentioned the fact that we might impeach him. But nothing came of it and we received the same answers as before - if we don't like it - move back to Minneapolis.

We called a third meeting because something had to be done. About fifteen people were present. Ed Montgomery, an attorney, was present and as soon as the B.G.L. got control, he was appointed the Village Attorney, a position he held with distinction for a great many years. We talked back and forth and came to the conclusion the best thing to do was to enter politics and capture the control of the Council. Right there and then the B.G.L. was organized. They elected me chairman, a position I held during its entire existence. Monthly meetings were held at Milo Clark's place on Wayzata Blvd. and Texas Ave. and once each year there was a social gathering and the wives were invited.

We then got busy lining up candidates. First the most important thing was to capture the office of Mayor and to fire Mr. Hager, who was then Chief of Police, and who's duty it was to protect the Kid Cann gang who were well established in St. Louis Park. To find a man to run for office was a difficult thing because it was a dangerous undertaking. I approached Roy Sewell, my neighbor, and begged him to run for Mayor. He agreed and was a very strong candidate. He was born and raised in St. Louis Park. The Sewell family was a very large one and highly respected. He was a deeply religious man and never drank or smoked. He had many friends in St. Louis Park and he was elected. How he stood up under that year - I will never know. They did almost everything possible to get him out of office. They went down to the Lumberman's Association - he was the secretary of the association - and tried to get his job. They called him up in the middle of the night and again in the morning - tried to make everything as unpleasant as possible to force him to resign. But Roy Sewell stuck it out. If there is any man that should be remembered in the History of St. Louis Park, he is the one.

And, of course, the first thing he did after being elected was to fire the Chief of Police. He appointed in his place a fellow named Andy Nelson, who everybody knew and was aware of the wonderful work he had done. I met Andy and I liked him very much and I talked to Roy Sewell about him. Roy said he knew him very well. I don't know if Andy Nelson was born and raised in St. Louis Park or not. But I will never forget the time when Roy told me that he was going to appoint him Chief of Police. I went over to Colorado Avenue where he lived and I told him, and his wife was present, that Roy had definitely made up his mind that he was going to be the next Chief of Police. I have never seen a man so happy in my life. As a matter of fact, he got so excited he even stuttered with some of his words. And, as everybody knows, he turned out to be one of the finest Chiefs of Police that any community ever had.

Well, Roy pulled through and, of course, he refused to run a second time. We could not get anybody to run so we had no candidate. A man named Cleve Flakne was elected and he took over and started the walk-a-thon. We then had two members on the Council, A Mr. Chapman and a Mr. Earl Shurson who was sent into St. Louis Park by the Walker interests to liquidate their holdings. Mr. Chapman quavered - he was so afraid of the Kid Cann gang that he asked his employer to move him out of St. Louis Park. He worked for the Rosholt Company and they sent him to Duluth. Well, Earl Shurson served one term as a clerk - and he didn't do a very good job. A couple years after that we had a real good strike.

At that time the B.G.L. had about fifteen members. We worked very hard for a candidate because we needed to keep the gangsters out of St. Louis Park. Then one of our members, Torval Jorvig, decided to run for the Council and another man, Joe Justad, came to us and asked our support. Torval Jorvig and Joe Justad then became our candidates. We put on a heavy campaign in their behalf and they were both elected. The wives of the members also helped campaign - and did those girls work! They walked the streets ringing door bells, called over the phone and attended neighborhood parties. For the next three or four elections we had to put tremendous pressure on to get them re-elected. From then and on, they had it absolutely their own way. They were so well liked and as well thought of as they could be. They were both deeply religious men. Both of them were very much against liquor, and I believe that during all the years that they served on the Council, they never once voted for a liquor license.

From then on we had - what you may say - control of the St. Louis Park Council. By that I don't mean we had control of the Council itself because as soon as the election was over and our man was elected, we left him entirely alone. We had a rule - as soon as a man was elected to office he had to resign from the B.G.L. This did not hold true of appointed office holders. He was no longer a member of the B.G.L. We asked for no favors, we didn't ask for any of our friends to be appointed to anything - we asked absolutely nothing. All we were interested in was that good men stayed on the Council to do the right thing for the Village of St. Louis Park. We also elected most of the members to the School Board. Any qualified candidate who asked for our support got it and was elected.

Well, as time went by, we were informed by the Council that the Planning Commission was not functioning and the burden of planning fell on the Council. As I recall, they had had one meeting in four years. We also found out that three of the appointments to the Planning Commission had run out and no replacements had been made. Upon finding this out we talked to the Council and they then appointed Mr. William Chapman, later to become President of the Midland National Bank of Minneapolis, myself, and, I believe, Mr. O. B. Erickson to take over. There was another carry-over, Mr. Shuster, who lived in Brookside. We could do nothing about that so for about one year we very quietly waited until his time was over so we could reorganize the Planning Commission and get to work.

I believe about that time O. B. Erickson had been elected Mayor because I met with him and he said, "Well, Morten, you are appointed to the Planning Commission and I believe you are going to be the next chairman". I said, "Well, I don't know about that, O.B., If I'm the next chairman, or not, it won't make any difference. If I'm going to serve on that Planning Commission I want to be on the Commission that consists of men that through their professional life contribute something to the sum total required of a Planning Commission. The idea of appointing a man because he is a good deacon in a church or a good friend to one of the councilmen - or that he has made some credit for himself in some other line of business doesn't mean a thing. They have to know something about what is required in planning."

So I sat down with O.B. Erickson and said, "We need one architect, we need a good business man, we need a good attorney, we need a good engineer. All of these men are required to operate a Planning Commission the way it should be." We had no City Manager, no Planning Engineer. The whole burden fell on the Commission itself. Ed. Ludwik, who was the only carry-over from the old commission to the new one, became our secretary for the entire period I was on the Planning Commission. He was an architect. William R. Chapman became the second man. He represented business. He was a man with very high intelligence, a keen mind, a member of the B.G.L. in all its existence. Later on he was also a member of the Charter Commission. He was a wonderful man in his own unheralded way - made a great contribution to St. Louis Park because of his keen mind and his quick decisions and his full understanding in grasping the problems that faced the city.

Another member was John M. Palmer, a very noted and wonderful attorney. He served in that capacity long after I left St. Louis Park. And the fourth member was Lawrence Peterson who was an engineer with the State Highway Department. Later he became head of the engineering department of the County - and I believe, the architect of the cross-town highway. And then myself, a landscape architect. I used to give many speeches on city planning in those days because it was a subject of great interest to me.

Those five men became the Planning Commission and I challenge any body to let me know that a finer group of men has ever existed on any Planning Commission that could compare to them. They were highly intelligent, professional men, and I think as a body, considerably above the average intelligence. They made quick decisions and they did lots of work. It's almost impossible to believe that just a couple of years before, the Planning Commission was nonexistent, had accomplished nothing, doing nothing. I believe Carol Hurd served a stretch on that earlier Planning Commission. From the very first monthly meeting we were packed full with applicants. All the permits for business, industry, apartment buildings and subdivisions had to be approved by us - and I had to preside at many protest meetings.

We worked to the middle of the night and sometimes we had from one to two special meetings each month because of either emergencies or because of unfinished business at the last meeting. Tremendous things were done. No one can conceive of the amount of work we did during those twenty years.

But we also began to realize that requests for zoning were very irksome and time consuming. We had so much strip zoning, so much spot zoning. Zoning ordinances in St. Louis Park were almost nonexistent. So, we set to work to rezone all of St. Louis Park - to shape its future physical growth. We had to be sure to establish residential districts where they would be needed, business, light industrial, multiple dwellings. As I said, it was a great undertaking but we accomplished it although it was thought by some people in those days, an idea to make St. Louis Park a city of homes. Well, of course, it was ridiculous. No community at that time could possibly exist being a city of homes. In residential districts 65% of the taxes go to schools alone. Police and fire and other services require taxes. As a result the cost to the community for the residential districts may run 80% of the operation of the community - and even beyond that. The contribution in taxes that the business, industry, and to a certain extent, the apartment buildings pay is an outright gift to the community. The taxes that they pay are absolutely necessary, otherwise, if it were only a community of homes the taxes would have to triple - and perhaps far beyond that. No one could possibly afford to live there.

But we accomplished it and from then on things became much easier. Another thing that captured our attention was the proposed bridge at France Ave. to be built across the railroad tracks into Lake St. We had many meetings with the County and the Railroads. The Village of St. Louis Park and the Railroads were ready to start but the County held back because they said they had no money. Mr. Zimmerman, at that time County Engineer, promised definitely it would be built in five years - but five years went by and no bridge. Another five years passed and still no bridge.

We were also interested in the proposal of the improvement of Minnehaha Creek. A plan had been made by the Minneapolis Park System and a model of this plan was located in the St. Louis Park Village Hall for many years. If it had been carried out it would have been one of the outstanding beauty spots in the country. We had meetings with representatives from every community bordering on the Creek - but the County did not cooperate.

We tried to get some parks developed. They were badly needed. A bond issue was requested to buy some land for parks. I spoke to many groups trying to get them to vote for it. They were under the delusion that to establish a park would raise the taxes. I told them it would lower the taxes. It is self-evident that the more people that live in a community the higher the taxes. I paid \$16.00 a year in taxes when I first bought my house on Excelsior Blvd. When I left, I paid thousands. I paid \$68.50 on my place here in Edina the first few years until the farmers sold their land to be sub-divided. My taxes in a few years rose to \$6,500 although the land was the same, the house was the same, and 70th Street the same, which was then a County Road. The only reason for this spectacular rise in taxes was due to the increase in the population of Edina. Take Braemar Golf Course - some misguided people voted against the bond issue but thankfully it passed.

Where now is a beautiful park and golf course, self sustained, if the bond issue had lost there would be 1,000 expensive houses, about 3,000 children to educate and it is estimated that over all, taxes would have increased about \$3,000,000 a year. Parks also give open space and beauty for the people to enjoy - and through recreational facilities build strong and healthy bodies for our youth and install in them a sense of sportmanship.

We also spent some time planning a Civic Center. Ed Ludwig, the architect on the Planning Commission, drew a plan for it, and so did I, without any cost to the City. The plans were framed and hung on the wall in the council chambers for many years. The Civic Center was to be located on the triangle bordered by Highway 100, Wooddale Avenue and 36th Street. I cannot remember Ed's layout, but I do remember my own. The plan called for an open center with a fountain in the center as the main object of interest. Around the center was located a number of public buildings such as the City Hall, Library, Municipal Auditorium and others. On my plan I had all one-way roads. It would be landscaped into a beautiful park. The Council, however, had different ideas. They sold the land and used the money to build the City Hall in Carpenter's Park - a somber, unattractive building. Torval Jorvig almost cried when he told me about this because he was so much for the Civic Center. If the plans had been carried out, it would have given alot of prestige to the City. St. Louis Park today would have been a far more beautiful city than it is now.

At that time St. Louis Park was growing very rapidly. We talked about this rapid growth at the B.G.L. meetings and we came to realize what was needed more than anything else - a home rule charter.

A committee was set up in the B.G.L. and I attended all those meetings with the committee because I was very much interested to study the various forms of government operation in the United States in those days. It didn't take us very long before we decided that the Council-Manager form of government was the only one for us to recommend. It is easy to understand why so much corruption was entering into so many of the municipalities operating under the Village Form of Government. We must stop to think that the Village was really established to take care of a community around four or five hundred people at the utmost. In such a community there was no need to have paid public officials. They were elected, not only to be the legislators, but elected to take over whatever administration that was necessary. But as a Village grows into thousands and thousands of people, this was a very dangerous set-up.

Experts in municipal government fully recognized what had happened and what could happen in other cities. They then set to work to find a remedy - and it was a very simple one. Take the administration out of the hands of the elected public officials. And this was the beginning of the Council-Manager form of government.

In those days there were very few of them in the country - very few. In Minnesota there were about ten cities operating under the Council-Manager form of government, and Albert Lea was the best example.

In 1935 there were about 300 in the United States - by 1950 there were about 1,000 - and today there are more than 2500. It is the most common form of government for cities over 10,000 population. At that time we had on the Council the Mayor, who, of course, was also the head of the police department; Herman Bolmgren, the head of the water department; Howard Perkins, head of the street department; Torvil Jorvig, head of the fire department; and Joe Justad, the clerk. Now remember that these men were elected, not only as council members, but also to supervise those departments. I'm not so sure that any of them knew anything about the departments they were supposed to supervise - at least not to begin with. But all of them had good department heads to take care of the administrative functions. They were good men, all of them, and all except one were elected through the support of the B.G.L.

As I said before, Albert Lea was the best example of Council-Manager form of government in Minnesota. So, one morning Byron Smith, Earl Shurson and myself jumped in the car and drove to Albert Lea to see what we could find out. We were very cordially received. We spent the day with them and learned alot. On our way back home we made up our minds, more than ever, that the government of St. Louis Park must be the Council-Manager form of government. It is, at this moment, very hazy for me to remember who approached the District Court for the purpose of selecting the men for the Charter Commission - to get it started. I have an idea, but not being sure I'm not going to put it down here because the record can be found at the City Hall.

At this first meeting I think there were thirteen men and two women. We elected an attorney, Milo Stevens, as our president, a very fine man. The other attorney on the board was Tony Yngve. He was a member of the B.G.L. We also elected him to the School Board and the Justice of the Peace, an office he served with distinction for many years. I realized from the start that we did not have enough attorneys on this board.

Not knowing anything about writing a charter, we obtained a model charter written by Professor William Anderson at the University of Minnesota. It was that charter, I believe, that Albert Lea had followed in writing their charter. We used it - we read it over page by page and followed it all the way through. After four years of hard work the charter was completed and up for election. We realized from the very beginning, since the B.G.L. was responsible for carrying out this campaign for its adoption, the burden fell on us. And we realized immediately the tremendous opposition that existed - not so much against the charter itself, I don't think. As the B.G.L. grew in power and strength, the opposition became more and more vigorous - particularly one single individual who seemed to think that anything the B.G.L. proposed was wrong, any candidate they supported was a misfit. The Council openly supported the Charter but secretly fought it with a viciousness such as you have never seen. Joe Justad, particularly, had a morbid opposition to the Charter. Of course the council members, I presume, still enjoyed their position as being administrators -

and Joe Justad knew, of course, that if the Charter passed, he would lose his job. But when the charter ultimately did pass, the first City Manager appointed Joe Justad to City Clerk, a job he held to his retirement. The final draft of the Charter specifically made a provision for a City Clerk so Joe Justad's services could be retained for our citizens.

The Charter lost - not overwhelmingly. It needed 60% of the vote and it could never carry that. After it was over the B.G.L. then got very busy in getting another Charter Commission appointed.

In a way it was a good thing the first Charter was defeated. Not that it was not a good Charter, it was practically a replica of the Albert Lea Charter, but the second Charter Commission was so far superior to the first, there was no comparison.

There were four attorneys instead of two as on the first Charter Commission. On the second one we had Ed. Montgomery, Everett Drake, Matt Levitt and Walter Wheeler. They were outstanding attorneys and they did, perhaps, more than anyone else in writing the Charter. At the first meeting of the entire Charter Commission, I was for some reason elected the chairman. It was not because I knew more about the Charter than anyone else - absolutely not. I think it was more because they all knew how persistently hard I had worked to get the Charter Commission established. It was self-evident that I didn't know anything about the Charter - I couldn't write it under any circumstances - it was not in my line of knowledge.

I called the meeting to order and Lydia Rogers read the minutes and I opened up for questions which were very brief, normally. Then I immediately turned over the meeting to Everett Drake, a very able attorney, who took over from then and on. For all practical purposes, he was the real chairman during the deliberation and the writing of the Charter itself. He was the actual chairman when the proposed Charter was submitted to the Council and ultimately approved by over 60% of the voters on December 7, 1954. The new Charter became effective January 7, 1955.

All of the members of the Charter Commission pitched in because we were all anxious to get the best Charter possible. After four years of hard work - remember this - hard work, the Charter was completed. And when the Charter was sent to municipal experts in the country to get their opinions of it, we were surprised, that unlike the first Charter that came back with so many recommended changes we almost had to write a new Charter, this one came back, if I remember correctly, with no recommended changes. They considered it one of the best charters ever written - and it is so regarded today.

Well, the election was set up, and the time came around. The B.G.L., for the first time in its history, didn't campaign as we were sure it was going to pass. The B.G.L. dissolved, not as some people said because I would be moving out of the Park and had been chairman all the time. That they couldn't get anyone to take my place is not true. They dissolved because its function had

ceased to be a necessity because in the passing of the Charter there would be no need for a watchdog. As long as the elected officials could not be administrators, the importance of the elected official was no longer as important as it was before.

So, while we supported the charter as much as we could, we did not put on a complete campaign in its behalf. Everything seemed all right. All of a sudden, at the very last minute, the evening before the election, a pamphlet was distributed to every home in St. Louis Park. It was absolutely uncalled for - it was almost unbelievable. Everybody was stunned. They couldn't understand what the purpose was in trying to defeat the instrument so necessary to the community when so much hard work and intelligence had been put into it. Nobody could - but still we thought that it would not turn the minds of the voters. The funny part was that this pamphlet was not attacking the charter as much as it was attacking me personally. It read "Morten Arneson" on top and underneath, "Little Joe Stalin - Wants Complete Control". "Morten Arneson, Chairman of the Better Government League, Chairman of the Charter Commission, Chairman of the Planning Commission, Chairman of the Zoning Commission". Well, it was true enough, I was chairman of those organizations - but it was three instead of four. The fourth was put in to make it more effective. The Planning and Zoning Commission is one.

The purpose, undoubtedly, was to make the people believe that I would set up a dictatorship and implied that I would select the City Manager and then I would be in complete control of the City. Of course, this was ridiculous - as ridiculous as it could be. I was dictator of nothing. The men of the B.G.L. elected me year after year to be the chairman. I did call for a secret ballot once to see how I stood - the same unanimous re-election. And if you think for a single moment that any one could push the Planning Commission around they ought to have their heads examined - and for fifteen years I had the pleasure to serve them as their chairman. At the first meeting of the Charter Commission, I had absolutely no idea I would be elected chairman. I can't remember the name of the temporary chairman. As he called the meeting to order and asked for nominations someone nominated me, the second followed, the vote cast and I was the chairman. The implication that I would select a City Manager, which would make me a complete dictator, is too silly to comment on.

And in this "so called" History of St. Louis Park they had two passing sentences - just think of that - two passing sentences regarding one of the greatest and important things that happened to St. Louis Park - the establishment of the St. Louis Park Medical Center. Eleven fine doctors, all of them just out of the army, started their clinic and established themselves on my land on Excelsior Blvd. They formed one of the finest Medical Centers to be found anywhere. They were then eleven doctors - today they are celebrating their 25th anniversary - and they are now closer to one hundred doctors. And they are still growing. This twenty five years is just a start. This Medical Center works very closely

with the Mayo Clinic. It is the second largest Medical Center in the State of Minnesota. Men who brought a great impact on St. Louis Park - gave it prestige. It is only a matter of time when they will have the same relationship to St. Louis Park that the Mayo Institute has to Rochester. The Medical Clinic also contributes over a couple hundred thousand dollars a year in taxes which is an outright contribution to the City.

Of course, I am very close to that institution, as everybody knows. I was instrumental in getting it located in St. Louis Park. After the first couple years they openly and publicly accepted me as the "God Father" - an honor that is so tremendous, it is almost impossible to believe. They wrote a bulletin about me outlining some of my life work. It was very, very widely distributed. They named one building the Arneson Building. They dedicated the Arneson Medical Library in my honor. They had a portrait painted of me that hangs in the lobby of the Arneson Building. This great honor bestowed on me, believe me, I appreciate very, very much. But, this institution, so important, the most important thing that ever happened to St. Louis Park in its entire history, received only two passing remarks in this "so called" History of St. Louis Park. The Mayo Clinic made the name Rochester known all over the country - and beyond - and so will the Medical Center make the name of St. Louis Park known all over the United States and beyond. Because of my close connection to the Medical Center, I am surprised the historian mentioned it at all.

My first draft of the History of St. Louis Park included only that part of the history to the time I left the City. I did not include the Methodist Hospital because it was built a number of years after I left. In rewriting this history to correct errors I decided to include it to emphasize to the reader how completely lacking in historical data the "so called" History of St. Louis Park is. This institution has made a great impact on the History of St. Louis Park and the historian did not know it existed.

Here is an institution that moved into St. Louis Park twenty years ago in the year 1959. To enumerate step by step the tremendous growth of the institution over the years will be impossible because of the lack of space. Interested readers can obtain a history of Methodist Hospital. From a modest beginning they now have 415 doctors on their staff and about 1700 employees. They have also been fortunate in the high caliber individuals who have guided it during those twenty years and to have doctors on their staff with national reputations. In August 1966 Earl Dresser was appointed as administrator. He is an outstanding hospital administrator with a national reputation.

The charter was defeated the second time by a narrow margin. I moved into Edina and had to resign. Fortunately, Everett Drake stayed on and was elected chairman and he guided the Charter to its successful adoption on December 7, 1954. Mr. Russell Fernstrom was Mayor at the time the charter was adopted.

But after the defeat of the second charter, the election of Mayor came up and two men ran for the office - one was well known and one practically unknown. The B.G.L. had dissolved. They had no candidate - if they had, he would have been elected. It is self-evident that without opposition, the well known man was elected. The Charter Commission members, after its adoption, became a stand-by organization. Its only duty was to meet if somebody requested an amendment to the charter, which hardly ever happens. Anybody appointed to the Charter Commission after its adoption becomes a stand-by. The charter was written and the foundation for its adoption had been established. Somebody may ask, "Where does Carol Hurd come in on this? After all, he is taking credit for the charter". Frankly speaking, he does not come in at all. He had no connection with it. He never served on the Charter Commission. His taking credit for the charter is very peculiar indeed. Here was a man who fought the charter from the very beginning to the bitter end. This last pamphlet and the two page ad in the St. Louis Park Dispatch published March 25, 1949, opposing the charter, speaks for itself. I will leave it to the reader to form his own judgment. I will state here that the charter was not a one man undertaking. It was the work of many people. If the B.G.L. had not started it, somebody else would. The fourteen men and one woman who wrote the charter deserve the full credit for it. For this they deserve to have their names written into the History of the Park.

In 1930 St. Louis Park was not an attractive place to live in. Thousands of lots with not a house on any of them. The Walker interest platted some sections into 25 and 40 foot lots and built some houses. I looked in one of those houses and I could not believe that any human being could live in them. The Walker interest did more harm than good to the Village. Also a creosote plant emitted odors that penetrated into every part of the Park - night and day. Sandpits, that in dry weather, blew sand, not only over the yards, but right into the houses themselves. There was very little industry and the gangsters had complete control.

The history then starts with the fifteen men who met and formed an organization called the B.G.L. They were instrumental in the appointment, through the first man that they elected, Roy Sewell, a Chief of Police upon whom we could completely depend. It was the first break-through eliminating the vicious control that these gangsters had on the city. The B.G.L. then started to work very earnestly to get good men on the Council. When I think of it I don't think any history has been written about the B.G.L. After all, it was not a part of the government - it had no legal authority. Never-the-less, it was a powerful factor in the history of St. Louis Park during those twenty years. It should definitely be written into its history.

We succeeded - those men put order into it. They administered all the various departments that was up to make a City, just splendidly. They also supported us in starting and reorganizing the Planning Commission, a Commission that would stabilize the City and shape its future. And, as I think of it now, I remember

that at my request two men were asked to serve on the Planning Commission representing the Council, one man from the School Board and one man from the Park Board. It really made a nine man board instead of five and we worked beautifully together. And the Planning Commission, as I have already outlined, did a tremendous amount of work. How we could possibly do it and also save our own business, is still almost impossible to believe.

But then we started also the charter - and at the event of the passing of the charter, St. Louis Park became a full fledged City. The foundation had been laid and the fundamental part of the history on which the future of St. Louis Park depended, had been established. From then on the Council and the City Manager took over. I don't know much about the personnel after that. I do know that Ken Wolfe's administration was an outstanding one. I know that Cam André, the City Manager, was one of the finest City Managers in the United States, and considered so by his fellow colleagues.

Well, this is only a short history of St. Louis Park. The day may come when I have time to dictate a real history. There are many things that have happened over those years that I can recall - some sordid - some constructive - but it needs verification and I have no inclination to attempt to verify it.

As I take a little rest from talking into the recorder, I cannot help but wonder how such a thing could happen. For a Service Club to honor a member they love and respect is very fine and it is done in hundreds of places every day. But to extol him as part of the history of a City, is another thing. He is then thrown into the limelight. The people will ask the Service Club and the Bicentennial Committee, "Why?" They will want to know what has he done to be placed as an immortal in the life of a City? To answer the reason why they hired and paid a historian to write the History of St. Louis Park.

History is a record of human activities and those factors that have influenced them. History is a hypothesis - an attempt to account for the existence of facts as they are. This was not done. To extol one man in the history of St. Louis Park - his impact on that history was very limited. Indeed, if he made any contribution at all, but to do this the historian deliberately wiped out the true history. The history that was made from 1930 to 1952 - and that is the history which is responsible for St. Louis Park as it exists today. No power in the world can take that truth away from its history.

Those years were hectic and dynamic. It was not the work of one man. It was many men and women, civic minded people, anxious to do something for the community where they had their homes.

They gave intently of their time and work. I knew them all, but I can assure the reader, that Carol Hurd was not among them.

St. Louis Park is going to exist for a long time. Many generations will be born - people proud of their community will want to know something of their community and I freeze to think they will be handed a piece of propaganda as its history. To do this will be a tragedy, indeed criminal. I cannot believe that the Council, consisting of seven intelligent men, will allow this to happen.

I want to state that I have no animosity towards Carol Hurd or anyone else. My purpose is to tell the history as I know it. I have no records, no papers, nothing. It is told directly from memory. But, in spite of my 84 years, I still have a very retentive memory and I was a participant in that history.

I know that many men and women who made the history of St. Louis Park are not here any more. All the members of the Council are gone - almost all the members of the B.G.L., one from the Planning Commission, and more than half of the Charter Commission. Twenty five years have elapsed since St. Louis Park became a City. I am happy to be here to write my memoirs, which upon investigation can be verified, and I salute those unknown men and women for what they did for their City.

There are many reasons I feel justified in writing this - but my salute to those departed men and women - I revere the most.

Morten Arneson
July, 1977