



The Re-ECHO

St. Louis Park

A Newsletter for the Members of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

Herb Davis: Trustee- Councilman 1955-1959

Herbert C. Davis was a member of the St. Louis Park City Council from 1954 through 1959. He was first elected as a Village Trustee, and then automatically became a Councilman under the new Home Rule Charter. He reran as Councilman-at-large in 1956 and was elected to a new four year term. Davis graduated from St. Louis Park High School in 1942. He served as a Navy pilot during World War II. He attended the University of Minnesota under the GI Bill and graduated with a law degree in 1949. He and his wife moved into an home built by Adolph Fine in St. Louis Park and began his law practice.

Davis' first encounter in politics was an attempt by the village council to rezone a 75 acre former gravel pit, for industrial purposes, near his home. He organized the opposition of over 600 neighbors and succeeded in getting the plan rejected.

The Home Rule Charter was scheduled for a vote in the 1953 election. It had already been rejected twice in previous votes. It was not heavily supported by many of the "old guard" that were running St. Louis Park. Davis had his zoning issues but also a strong interest in this new innovative form of city government. He decided to run for village trustee against C. R. Middleton.

His issues were good, he campaigned hard and got his message out. Although only 30 years old, he won the election.

The Home Rule Charter also won. Davis now turned his support to very

aggressive action to see that the City Manager received the full authority given to this position under the new charter. The other former trustees found it difficult to give up their administrative control over the cities departments. They wanted to reinstate the old Village council committee system that gave each councilman control over one of the departments. It was their contention that the usefulness would overbalance the disadvantages. Davis and the new City Manager, Tom Chenoweth, were able to challenge this by limiting the duties of the committees to presenting written reports on legislative matters

Herb Davis' objection to the Council appointing two new Councilmen at the January 10, 1956 meeting, as reported in the January 13, 1955 St. Louis Park Dispatch:

I object most strenuously. This is not on the agenda and the matter should not be taken until full public notice has been given the people.

I am the youngest member of the Council and maybe your deliberations on the new Council have not reached my ears. This is not my business, but it is my business to see that these people have a fair opportunity to present the names of men they would like to have as their alderman.

I did not feel that the Council would attempt at some quarter to twelve midnight, to undertake such an important task without notice to the people.

The Re-ECHO is published quarterly by the St. Louis park Historical Society and is edited by Robert C. Reiss. Its purpose is to acquaint the members, volunteers and friends on how the activities, programs and resources of the Society are used to preserve the history of St. Louis Park.

The name was inspired by the ECHO newspaper published by and for the students of the St. Louis Park High School since 1917.

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Herb Davis

referred to them by the Council. Additionally, committees were designated in broad general terms such as finance, personnel, etc.

At a late hour of the first meeting of the new City Council, an attempt was made to appoint the two additional members allowed under the new Home Rule Charter. The new council was to complete the roster by appointing the two new members. Davis strongly opposed the timing of the action and managed to delay this until the second meeting (see insert).

At the second meeting, petitions were filed for the appointment of D. C. Messer and Robert Ehrenberg to these two openings. Davis made the nominations. When the vote was taken, former trustees Howard Perkins and C. L. Hurd were selected. After they were seated, Joe Justad resigned from his seat to become City Clerk. D.C. Messer was again nominated by Davis, but this seat was won by another former trustee, C. R. Middleton.

Adapting to the new Home Rule Charter was just one of the many challenges facing Davis and the council. They had to recruit and fill the new City Manager position. A City plan was needed and a planning commission was formed.

Contracts had to be let, building permits had to be issued and zoning had to be discussed. All council meetings ran long after midnight. The city was growing by leaps and bounds.

While all of this was happening, Davis took on the additional task of the

recodifying the city ordinances. Each ordinance had to be reviewed for its relevance and for its current status. Revisions had to be recommended and enacted. Things were changing. In the 1955 election all of the councilmen had to stand for reelection, half for two year terms and half for four year terms. Davis ran for one of the councilman-at-large seats and received the largest number of votes winning reelection to the four year term. Ken Wolfe, Robert Ehrenberg and Gene Schadow replaced Middleton, Hurd and Perkins. Liquor licenses were a particularly troublesome problem for the council. Under the new charter, the city was allowed to issue several new licenses due to the increased population and growing business centers. The Excelsior Blvd/Chicken Shack memory was difficult to overcome. Several members of the council were prohibitionists who did not see the need for any new licenses. Two new licenses were granted. In 1956, One license was granted to the Golden Steer, a restaurant in the office complex at Highway 100. A second license was granted to Art and Rudy Ruetlinger for a store at Knollwood Plaza. Based on the applicants long residence in the Park and their reputation, the vote was in favor. Future licenses became easier to issue. When Davis' term was up in 1959 the new charter was solidly in place and things were running well. Herb Lefler was the new Mayor and Tex Messer had won a seat on the council. Davis decided to devote his time to his law practice and did not run again.

"Something in the Water"

A history of St. Louis Park prior to 1945 written by Don Swenson. It makes a great gift.

Available from the St. Louis

Park Historical Society for

\$18.00 plus \$2.00 for handling.

Send your name and address to:

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The St. Louis Park Historical Society meets at 7:00 pm the second Tuesday of every month. The next meeting dates are:

May 13, at the Depot

June 10, at the Depot

July 8, at the Depot

You are invited to attend.

Mosquitos

There was no mosquito control in 1957 and the mosquitos ran rampant. At the suggestion of Herb Davis, the St. Louis Park Council began the battle against them. A contract was awarded to spray the city to control the pest. Mr. Davis said that if the project was worthwhile, neighboring communities would be asked to participate in "Operation Big Swat." (A coalition of these communities eventually became the Metropolitan Mosquito Control District.)

The road to success is never easy. After the first spraying, the St. Louis Park Dispatch reported the following comments at the next council meeting: Mr. Bolmgren said residents complained they were awaked by sprayers at 4:00 a.m. It sounded like they were spraying with a shotgun.

Mr. Davis said that someone got him of bed at 6:00 a.m to tell him they were spraying in the rain so he called Tom Cheoweth and got him out of bed.

Robert Ehrenberg said the complaint he heard was that it was the worst week of the year from a rain standpoint. *Mayor Fernstrom heard that the sprayers did not stand still in front of a house. They went by too fast.*

Mr. Bolmgren said he was standing in his front door and got a full blast of spray right in his face.

Mr. Wolfe said the complaints were that the truck announcements about the spraying did not coincide with the actual spraying.

Councilman Davis reported that his Dad did not have a mosquito for a week after they sprayed.

City Manager Tom Chenoweth reported a billion right after they sprayed.

During the discussion of the spraying problems, the Councilmen adjourned for 15 minutes while Mr. Jorvig and Chenoweth sprayed insecticide about the Council chambers.

This and That

Flame Queen

The 1955 Flame Queen has been identified as Arlene Mattson. She was "a red headed Park High Senior." Virginia Swenson was the 1956 Flame Queen.

Miss St. Louis Park

Kate Martin was a winner between 1950 and 1957. She later married David Youngdahl, son of the former Governor. The 1955 Miss St. Louis Park was Jane Helsby "from England." Patty Frank was selected in 1956.

Dr. John Watson

Before 1930 there were no practicing physicians in St. Louis Park. Dr. Watson lived on the corner of 38th and France in St. Louis Park and made house calls in the Park, as did a Dr. Tanner. Ben Brown reported that Dr. Watson signed his birth certificate in 1916.

Judy Middleton Jarosak

Wanted to work as a bartender but either there was a law or union regulation that prevented women from doing this. Judy was instrumental in getting this changed. She was the daughter of the former St. Louis Park Trustee. Does anyone remember the details?

Julius Steele

Who was she and where did she live? She was the nemesis of anyone who held public office in the Park. She owned a horse and never kept it tied up. She was very vocal at the Council meetings, but her big problem was over her horse.

Liquor Referendum

The vote was "Yes" to the referendum question "Shall we continue to License On and Off sale Liquor in the Village of St. Louis Park?" What year was this vote taken?

Know your ABC's?

Learning your ABC's used to mean learning twenty six letters. A star was a star and a pound was lb. Nobody knew what an ampersand was nor did they care. "At" was easier to write than @. The period was just a period. Now it is also a point and a dot. How do you tell

the difference? Why does history keep assigning new functions to the same symbols and ignore the semicolon? It has hardly any function at all. One was not needed in this whole newsletter. Seems such a waste.

Did you go to Lenox?

The St. Louis Park Historical Society is working with the Lenox Senior Center to provide exhibits for its walls. We need school pictures, class pictures, and teachers or your memories.

Does this jog your memory? The school was new in 1929. There were four rooms and six grades. Mrs. Hendricks was the principal and Mrs. Buxton was

my teacher for the third, fourth, fifth and sixth grades. Every year she read the class the same book, "The Little Knight of the X Bar B." In the fifth grade, I kissed my first girl on the stairway to the second floor.

The girl is in this picture, but I do not remember which one it was. And why was the school named Lenox? Can you help us?



Yes, I want to be a member of the St. Louis Park Historical Society for 2003.

Select the Membership Category below that is best suited for you:

<input type="checkbox"/> Individual - covers cost to sustain 1 member for a year	\$ 20.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Family - covers the cost to sustain 1 family for a year	\$ 25.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Senior's Individual & Family - fee reduced for those aged 60 & up	\$ 15.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Sustaining - helps defray day-to-day expenses of the society	\$ 40.00
<input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor - helps build the Society's strong foundation	\$100.00

Last Name: _____ First Name: _____

Street Address: _____ E-Mail Address: _____

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Home Phone: _____ - _____ During the winter months (_____ to _____) please mail to:

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Make checks to: St. Louis Park Historical Society and mail with membership application to
The St. Louis Park Historical Society 3700 Monterey Drive, St. Louis Park, MN 55416

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