



RE-ECHO

Volume 6 No. 4

Newsletter of the St. Louis Park Historical Society

Issue No. 27

1934 "WALKATHON"

In 1934, in the depths of the Great Depression, the phenomenon of dance marathons sprang up around the country. The concept was that dancers would dance continually, with only a five minute break each hour, until they dropped out, leaving one couple to collect fabulous prizes. Bleachers were set up for the audience, which was entertained with live music and stunts. A prominent movie about dance marathons is "They Shoot Horses, Don't They?" starring Jane Fonda.

Incredibly such a marathon, called a "walkathon," came to St. Louis Park in 1934, when a company set up a tent on Wayzata Blvd., close to McCarthy's restaurant. Thanks to Earl Ames, whose father worked as a security guard at the event, we have two pictures, one showing five seriously fatigued couples, and one of a large wedding party posing in the tent. The latter shows that there were 18 couples left, and that they had completed 598 hours. You can view the wedding picture on our website at www.slphistory.org/history/walkathon1934.asp

And we have a newspaper article that should be quoted in full (probably from the *Minneapolis Journal*):

WALKATHON HIT BY GRAND JURY

Retiring Body Says "Cheap, Contemptible Spectacle" Should Be Stopped

Denouncing the walkathon now in the last stages in a huge tent on Wayzata boulevard as a "cheap, contemptible spectacle," the retiring grand jury Saturday called for a legislative act prohibiting similar contests.

Laws now on the statute books governing itinerant carnivals should be invoked to stop the walkathon on the grounds that it is injurious to the health of participants and detrimental to public morals, the report held.

The next legislature should pass an act specifically prohibiting "any such ridiculous endurance contests being established anywhere in the state."

In addition to the walkathon now nearing its close in St. Louis Park, another similar contest is being held near Shakopee, while several others are attracting crowds at other points in the state.

TEEN SCENE AND THE PURPLE CIGAR

Here's a subject we hope someone will set us straight on. It involves two dance clubs that existed for a short time in 1967 and 1968. The problem is that we don't know exactly where they were and they seem to have overlapped.

A groovy place in 1967 was the **Hullabaloo Scene**. In 1967, a woman named Mrs. Barbara Jacoby of Wayzata asked the City Council for a dance hall permit to operate a teenage night club. She said she held a \$17,000 franchise from Teen Clubs International, and was negotiating a lease at 6520 Cambridge Ave. (in the heart of Skunk Hollow) to open a club called "TV's Hullabaloo Teen Scene," one of 70 such clubs across the country. It was a tight vote, but the Park Council is always pretty ready to say yes, and it was approved. She said her goal was to be open on May 12, 1967. It must have happened, as the July 2, 1967 TMC Insider announced that "Bob Goffstein of Marsh Productions reports The Sparklers were voted by the Hullabaloo Scene as the Twin Cities most promising band, and that the group will act as a house band for the new St. Louis Park Club." She was approved to operate on a month-to-month basis, at least through October 1967.

Other evidence: there is an ad for a place with just such a name at 6514 Cambridge in the Robin Hood Days Program in August 1967. Still more evidence is in a tape of the day the Monkees took over KDWB for four hours the day of their concert at the St. Paul Auditorium, August 4, 1967. During the show it was announced that on the following day, admission

to the Hullabaloo Scene in St. Louis Park was only 97 cents (plus tax) - and an empty carton of Fresca. City Council minutes don't mention the place in 1968 except to say that Mrs. Jacoby owed them money.

And then there was the **Purple Cigar**, which was apparently at the same location as the Teen Scene (6514 Cambridge). The club was owned by Arnie Sagarski, hence the name. We know that a teen dance (ages 16-20) was held at the "purple playground" as a part of Robin Hood Days in August 1967. For \$1.50 you could dance to the Stillroven, and free records were offered for "the first 200 swingers." In January 1968, the club had to get a permit to hold "dances" from the City Council, which granted them on a month-to-month basis. Neighbors from along Cambridge came to protest. In March they were approved through June, but they had to have at least five Hennepin County Sheriffs on duty. Sagarski was looking for an alternate site. Renewal of the permit may have been due to the testimony of Victor Olson, Youth Director of Westwood Hills Lutheran Church, who said that Sagarski was doing a good job of operating the club. Today, the closest thing to 6520 or 6514 Cambridge is 6530 Cambridge, an industrial and commercial building at the end of the street at Edgewood.

If anyone has any additional information about these two St. Louis Park teen clubs or the people who ran them, please let us know.

ST. LOUIS PARK MUSICIANS

By the way, St. Louis Park has produced its fair share of musicians through the years. Perhaps the biggest "rock star" is Bobby Rivken, aka Bobby Z, who served as Prince's drummer from 1978-1987. Brother David played in three major bands in the 1960s, and is now a songwriter, session musician, record promoter, producer and engineer. Other musicians and groups include Sussman Lawrence with Peter Himmelman, Dan Israel, and of course the High Spirits, who are in the Minnesota Rock/Country Hall of Fame. There's also Sharon Isbin, a world-renowned classical guitarist. And now we have another connection to rock as "Blood on the Tracks" musician Kevin Odegard now lives here. Learn more on our web site at www.slphistory.org/history/tcmusic.asp

The St. Louis Park Historical Society Invites You



To renew or become a member now....

Membership in the St. Louis Park Historical Society is on a calendar year basis, so it's time for everyone to send in their membership for 2008. Membership dues has dropped from \$25 to \$20 in the hopes that more people will join. We do not get any kind of financial support from the City, County, or State, and we rely on memberships for operating expenses, including things like binders for our photographs, our website and email, and now we are planning to get WiFi so that we can access the internet at Lenox. All these things cost money, so won't you help us out and sign up today?

Your financial support is not the only way to contribute - we want your stories! We encourage you to write down some of the experiences you've had along the way. Younger generations can't imagine what life was like before Miracle Mile and Texa Tonka. Were you there? Tell us about it!

You can also share your time as a volunteer:

- **Planning special events**
- **Fundraising for the preservation of the beehive**
- **Video interviews**
- **Cataloging the collection**
- **Historical research**

And, of course, we need active members to attend our meetings and pursue projects of your choosing. Our board members study such topics as railroads, old houses, and the history of the St. Louis Park basketball team! We encourage you to come to our meetings and find your niche.

We invite you to sign up or renew your membership now!

ST. LOUIS PARK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

GOALS FOR 2008

- Raise \$30,000 for the preservation of the historic Highway 100 beehive and other stone structures
- Continue to make the *Re-Echo* newsletter available to all interested persons
- Enhance the Historic Depot with a model train display
- Assist Jr. High students with the 7th grade SLP history component
- Continue to enter data about the collection into PastPerfect program
- Continue to add information and pictures to the Society's web site: www.slphistory.org
- Tape interviews with longtime and notable Parkites, to be shown on Community TV
- Obtain funding through public or private grants
- Increase membership by 25 percent

2008 MEMBERSHIP FORM

Annual Individual/Family Membership: _____ \$20

Business and Individual Benefactor Member Donation:

_____ \$50 _____ \$75 _____ \$100 \$ _____ Other

Name(s): _____

Address _____

Email address: _____

During winter months from _____ to _____:

Address _____

Email address: _____

Mail membership dues to:

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

Phone: 952-924-2550

Donations are 100% tax deductible

DONATIONS RECEIVED

Than you to everyone who brought us donations since the last Re-Echo. We greatly appreciate it that you think of us, especially when you move and clean out your house. One man's trash is another man's valuable artifact!

Beverley M. Johnson donated several articles related to Union Congregational Church. Also included were historical newspaper articles, an antique picture of the SLP baseball team, patches, and a pencil from Swenson Grocery.

Frank Motzko found some old newspapers with great articles that he shared with us.

Jim Halvorsen gave us a copy of a picture of a Christmas program at First Lutheran Church @1933 and a wonderful thermometer that came from Hermstad Service Station, 5600 W. Lake.

An anonymous donor left us a Palm Bakery magnet and a Lincoln Del matchbook.

Rick Sewall shared pictures of the Docken property at 44th and Brookside. Not in St. Louis Park, but the Docken's Community Store served the Brookside area going back to the 1920s.

Earl Ames allowed us to make copies of pictures and news articles, including those concerning our cover story.

Ed Dietz found us a 1930-31 Orange and Black High School Handbook, rescued from the recycling bin.

Bunny Hartman left two of her son's Echowans at Lenox for us. They are from 1982 and 1984, which are certainly years we didn't have.

We also received, from Dr. Robert Green, a copy of the history of the St. Louis Park Medical Center and Park Nicollet (*Managing Change, Changing Medicine*). Dr. Green was one of the original 11 doctors that founded the clinic.

We apologize if we left anyone out. Thank you again for your generous donations!

BEEHIVE UPDATE

The effort to move the so-called "beehive" barbeque structure from one Highway 100 Roadside Park to another is continuing. Rick Birno and his staff at the City Parks and Recreation Department have been working these many months on a presentation for the City Council. They shared a draft of the proposal to the Beehive Advisory Committee on October 25. The Committee consists of representatives from the City, the SLP Historical Society, Mn/Dot, and Northland Aluminum Corp aka Nordic Ware. The work will involve moving the Beehive cooker from the Minnetonka Blvd. Roadside Park ("Lilac Park") to the Highway 100 Roadside Park at Highway 7 ("St. Louis Park Roadside Park"). Other stone remnants of a place called "Monkey Island" will be salvaged as well. At the Highway 7 park, stone picnic tables and other features will be restored, the path that goes through it will be paved, and more parking spaces will be added.

This is an ambitious project and will take significant financial commitments to see it through to reality. The draft proposal called for the Historical Society to raise \$30,000! This is a huge challenge, as we currently have about \$4,000 in our Beehive account. Once the City approves the proposal, we will be counting on residents and businesses to contribute to the effort, even if just a token amount. All donations will be tax deductible. If you wish to contribute, see the membership flier inside this Re-Echo for our address. Thanks in advance to everyone who wishes to contribute to save this important historical landmark. To read more about the Beehive, see our website at www.slphistory.org. There are links to three pages about the Beehive on the home page.

THIS 'N' THAT

The Hull Family

We had a guest from Denver at our October meeting, who is requesting any info on Robert "Bob" Hull, Elizabeth "Betty" Hull, and their parents, George Hull and Elsie (Booth) Hull. Bob Hull was born on 31 May 1918; his sister 26 Apr 1920, Minneapolis. From at least 1930 the family lived in St. Louis Park at 2941 Webster Avenue (previously Summit Avenue), built in 1920. Bob graduated from St. Louis Park High in 1936, Betty in 1938. George died on 11 Aug 1937. Bob and Elsie left Webster Ave. about 1948. He also requests access to any copies of the high school newspaper, the *Echo*, for the years 1932-36. Please contact David Hughes at david@qualityofmercy.com or 303.229.5554. Visit <http://www.qualityofmercy.com/hull/> for a list of the Class of 1936.

More on the Fox Farm

In response to our story about the Silver Fox Farm in the last Re-Echo, we received a wonderful letter from Shirley Anderson Wanchena, who is the daughter of the caretaker of the farm back in the 1930s. She provided us with tremendously valuable and interesting details on what the farm was like and what it was like to live there. Her comments are too important to be condensed here: please read her story on our website: www.slphistory.org/history/foxfarmshirley.asp. You will find out how the foxes were killed, Shirley's relationship to the old horses, and whatever happened to the farm.

Shirley also described the old WDGY building at Wayzata Blvd. and Louisiana. It had both a control facility and living quarters. It was probably removed in about 1950.

Jewish Migration

Another researcher from California is studying the migration of North Minneapolis's Jewish population to St. Louis Park. David Norman is from St. Louis Park, and paid us a visit last month in his search for information. He interviewed our own Bob Jorvig on camera about the redevelopment of the North Side, which Bob knew well, as he was the head of the Minneapolis HRA at that time. What we know on the subject is posted to our website at www.slphistory.org/history/jewishmigration.asp

7th Grade Geography Project

Once again this year, the SLP Historical Society participated in a 7th Grade geography project that instructed each student to find out the past, present, and future of his or her assigned site. Virtually all of the students made use of our website and *Something in the Water*, in addition to conducting interviews with business owners and others. Students were referred to the City's planning department for future plans. Some visited the Historical Society at Lenox to look at files and photo albums – the Society set up special office hours during the two weeks of the project. We were happy to help our 7th Graders discover the past, present, and future of St. Louis Park

Infrastructure Improvements

We are pleased to report that our bound copies of the *Dispatch* and *Sun* newspapers have been successfully moved from the unheated baggage room to the station agent's office, which stays at about 50° during the winter. The books are probably too heavy for the shelves, but we've had no crashes yet.

Even better news is that we have begun beefing up the security of the cabinets at Lenox. Some of our items seem to be walking off, but thanks to Steve Raymer and his handyman skills, the collection is more secure. Further beefing up will follow.

OUR FAMOUS INTERSECTION

The SLP street intersection of Princeton and Vallacher will never gain the infamy of Hollywood and Vine or even Hennepin and Lake. Yet, few people realize the fame we could attach to it.

Within 100 feet south on Princeton, and about the same distance east on Vallacher lived two Park folks in the 1950s and '60s, both eventually achieving national interest.

In a well-preserved farm house on Princeton Avenue lived the Brown family. Son Charlie Brown attended an art school in Minneapolis. One of his fellow students was Charles Schulz, later to gain fame as the creator of the venerable comic strip Peanuts. As the story goes, one look at his school mate, Charlie, and Schultz knew that he had found the ideal model for the character in his mind. Charlie lived for many years with the identity of Schulz's Peanuts character. And those who knew him right up to the end of his life recognized the unmistakable likeness - round face and curlique top hair. While both Schulz and Charlie Brown are now deceased, Schulz saw to it that the likeness of "our" Charlie Brown lives on - a reminder to Park folks that it all started here.

On Vallacher, the Riklis family had a neat little rambler. Meshulan Riklis taught Hebrew at Talmad Torah Academy here in SLP. Riklis eventually left SLP and in time, became prominent in the management of numerous large publicly-held corporations. Particularly noteworthy was his rise to CEO of the Rapid-American Corporation, a holding company comprising many firms with household names. In the mid-1980s, Riklis was recognized as the highest paid executive in the US at about \$970,000. Ultimately Riklis and his wife, actress Pia Zadora moved to Beverly Hills and bought the mansion formerly owned by Douglas Fairbanks and Mary Pickford - the home known by all the tour guides as Pickfair. Pickfair is, without a doubt, one of the most well known homes in the US. We wonder if Riklis, while living in Pickfair, recalled his earlier days in the modest little rambler on Vallacher Avenue, just off Excelsior Boulevard.

So, folks, there is the tale of a quiet little intersection and its two famous Park residents, Charlie Brown and Meshulan Riklis.

Al Olson
7806 Victoria Circle
St Louis Park, MN 55426
anmolson@wildflower.net

TALES OF MCCARTHY'S

We received a letter from Mr. Meredith McCarthy, brother of the Keith McCarthy who owned the restaurant of the same name. We followed up with an interview, and learned that the restaurant was originally proposed to be at Excelsior Blvd. and Highway 100, where the King's Inn and now Granite City is. The City Council turned Keith McCarthy down, but a member of the City Council (who might have been corrupt) introduced Keith to the notorious gangster Tommy Banks. Banks held part interest in several bars in Minneapolis, and got McCarthy into business. In 1942 they received

the last liquor license that the City could issue until the next census in 1950.

The café was originally a long stucco rambler, and was added onto in 1947. At one time it featured black pianist Auzie Dial, and big tipper Mel Hanson, who would put down no less than a \$20 bill, even for a 50 cent drink.

Meredith McCarthy worked at the bar before he was of age. He left the bar (as did his brother Keith) in 1947 but stayed in the business. See more at slphistory.org/history/mccarthys.asp

WHO WE ARE

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

3700 Monterey Drive
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

To contact us by phone, call 952-924-2550, leave a message, and someone will return the call. Our email address is history@slphistory.org. You may also contact a member of our board:

President: John Olson. 952-929-6156
jrocnwr@juno.com
Vice President: Robert Jorvig. 952-938-6553
rjorvig@comcast.net
Secretary: Kathy Johnson. 952-926-5040
drjksj@msn.com
Treasurer: Megan Crosby. 952-933-1399
mcrosby@mmrf.org
Trustee: Barbara Reiss. 952-830-9676
Trustee: Don Schimmel. 952-890-7107
donaldkschimmel@comcast.net
Trustee: Faye Ross 952-929-7423
FRoss@braunintertec.com
Trustee: Doug Johnson 952-926-5040
drjksj@msn.com
Trustee: Jeanne Andersen. 612-396-6292
jeanneandersen@comcast.net

ABOUT THE RE-ECHO

The Re-Echo is published quarterly by the St. Louis Park Historical Society. Its purpose is to share information about the City's history and the Society's activities. The Re-Echo was started by Robert C. Reiss. The name was inspired by the *Echo* newspaper, which has been published by and for the students of SLP High School since 1917.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

You might have noticed that there are several references to our web site in this issue (www.slphistory.org). We realize that not everyone has access to the Internet, but there simply is not enough room in our little newsletter for all of the history we wish to tell you about. Also, our format does not allow pictures. So please try to join us on the web, where you will find more information than we can possibly impart in the Re-Echo.

JOIN US!

The St. Louis Park Historical Society is a nonprofit organization and is wholly dependent on membership dues and donations for its operating costs, including the cost of mailing the Re-Echo. You don't have to be a member to receive the Re-Echo, but we really need new members, and are looking for people to become active in the Society. Meetings are at 7pm on the first Tuesday of every month, and are open to everyone. They are held at Lenox Community Center October-May and at the Historic Depot June-September.

The Re-Echo
St. Louis Park Historical Society
3700 Monterey Drive
St. Louis Park, MN 55416

Nonprofit
Organization
U.S. Postage
PAID
Permit No. 32087
Minneapolis, MN