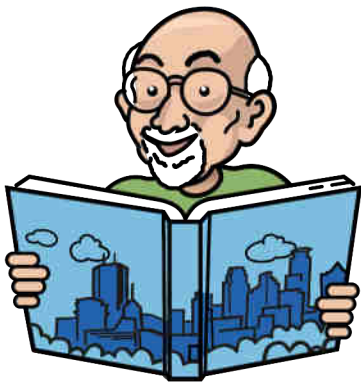




***BEEN THERE, DONE THAT.
TOOK NOTES.***

2020-2026

therayharris.com



To download a copy of this PDF, please visit:

<https://arewewhereyet.us/dads-final-words-all-10000-or-so-of-them/>

**To visit Ray's trees on the Loring Greenway,
flip to the map on the last page.**

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Introduction

November 13, 2020

Ray Harris here. Yes, that Ray Harris. I've been around for a loooooong time — Going on 92 years. I've been busy — as a writer, a cowboy, a beach bum, a Korean war army vet, a Stanford university graduate and author, a real estate developer and consultant, and a person deeply interested in people and their quality of life in urban America.

The city of Minneapolis has been my base. Minneapolis was incorporated in 1867, 153 years — of which I have been around well over half of that time. My family has been deeply involved in Minneapolis life and development for over 100 years; my father was on the Park Board in 1915 working with Theodore Wirth in the creation of the Grand Rounds roadway system connecting the chain lakes — that has brought so much pleasure to Minneapolis residents and visitors. I have never lived or worked outside of Minneapolis (except for the time spent in the army or at Stanford University).

I would guess that no one, or very few, have experienced Minneapolis as have I. I have eaten, slept, played, worked, and worshiped in Minneapolis. I have raised my family in Minneapolis and my children have gone to the Minneapolis Public schools.

Minneapolis is, and has been my life — all of its great features — and even its problems.

During my professional career of over 60 years, I have directly participated in, and been responsible for, many of the physical improvements throughout Minneapolis. I've also been present and seen many other changes, as they occurred — Minneapolis, as it was, and Minneapolis, as it is — is a fascinating story that needs to be told. Events and people that caused or prevented the present Minneapolis are part of our Minneapolis story connecting the past with the present, weaving the when into the now fabric explains and humanizes Minneapolis. Minneapolis today is more than brick and mortar.

With the encouragement of many friends and colleagues and with a clear mind, I am going to tell my version of the Minneapolis story — as I remember it. The unique aspect of the story is that I was there first hand. I'll be blunt, non-partisan, irreverent at times, perhaps slightly philosophical, critical, and complimentary, and certainly full of experiences previously unknown or at least long forgotten.

Very few of you will remember many of the subjects of these blogs — most will be much too young and/or relatively new arrivals to Minneapolis. Hopefully my story will be intriguing and thought-provoking. If so, let me know.



of

I Believe

November 13, 2020

Occasionally, I am going to include a blog explaining the philosophy that has guided my actions, my attitude, and the way I live – why I do what I do, why I am so stubborn, why I am a marshmallow, why I smile, why I am so demanding, so self-deprecating, why I was always self-employed (“no one would ever hire you” says my family) and maybe why I met with some success.

You may choose to place this sheet with these thoughts at the bottom of your bird cage. However, as long as I control the pen and ink I can proceed. When I quote something, I will try to attribute it properly – if I fail, I apologize.

“To laugh often and much, to win the respect of intelligent people and the affection of children, to earn the appreciation of honest critics and to endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to leave the world a bit better whether by a healthy child, a garden patch, or a redeemed social condition; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived. This is to have succeeded.”

Ralph Waldo Emerson

Dogs

November 13, 2020

Off-leash Downtown Dog Park.

Over my 90 years, I have shared my home with 16 different dogs, – large, small, and many of Heinz 57 varieties – but all of them have been my close and loyal friends.

Buddy, an energetic golden retriever mix with a penchant to chase a tennis ball into eternity, lived with me in my downtown townhouse without a space to expend his energy. Lisa Goodman, my friend and seventh ward Council member, also had a large active dog – Sadie Rose. Sadie Rose was also a Downtown resident without exercise space.

Where to exercise the dogs?

Almost every day and early in the morning the four of us, Buddy and Sadie Rose, Lisa – the elected city officer, and I, hiked- somewhat surreptitiously, over to the Loring Park tennis courts where signs clearly stated that dogs were not allowed. At those very tennis courts the dogs proceeded to chase balls illegally thrown to them by people who clearly knew better. But what was the alternative downtown?

Lisa and I spent many hours trying to identify an off – leash exercise space for our four-legged friends. Our quest was, unsuccessful. At that point Buddy barked to Sadie Rose “so when are these so-called community leaders going to go beyond eating and sleeping with us? We need space to exercise, play and socialize and in a legal place!”

Still searching, we wondered whether Loring Park might be an acceptable solution. Lisa felt that the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation staff would quickly veto the idea (actually the loudest opposition came from human “squirrel lovers”). Jon Gurban, The MPRB superintendent, was immediately supportive of the dog park idea. We negotiated a 10 year lease for space in the north east corner of Loring Park – adjacent to the Minneapolis Community and Technical College. The lease specified that the park board would not be required to provide any financial support for construction or operations.

With the lease in hand, a newly formed dog lovers group began planning a “dog and people place that would complement the nearby neighborhood, the community college, Loring Park, and the natural and artistic elements of the surrounding area.”

Instead of bringing in some traditional manufactured Benches, we paid to bring in large rocks to fit into Loring Park, for humans to sit on and for dogs to leap over.

We brought in the bridge to EREWHON (nowhere spelled backwards) referring to the Samuel Butler book about a place where monsters duel and beauty and health are everywhere. Dogs cross the bridge endlessly – to nowhere.

With the financial help of our contractor Kraus Anderson, we installed a handsome wrought iron fence.

The main feature/centerpiece of the dog park is the dog sculpture. We found a talented chainsaw sculptor in Hinckley Minnesota who carved from a single pine panel a marvelous piece of art – seven dogs sitting on top of each other – a tribute to our canine friends. Buddy and Sadie Rose are two of the seven dogs. The dog sculpture is mounted upon a massive steel pedestal.



Ray and Buddy in the park

The brilliant developer of the Downtown dog park (me) and one of the senior architects of an outstanding architectural firm (HGA) decided the dog park needed a drinking facility for the dogs. We determined that the pedestal could also serve as a water tank to supply water for thirsty dogs – with water coming out all around the base of the pedestal – similar to a horse watering trough.

However, the brilliant developer and the senior architect didn't realize that **dogs are not horses!** The dogs, instead of drinking the water, proceeded to urinate and swim in the trough.

"Finally" Sadie Rose squealed "our friends have listened! They feed us and sleep with us but we have needed a place to run and play with our friends (liberals and conservatives) – we get along with practically everyone regardless of their color or background. Now, we can run and play downtown; we even have a place to swim and then mark the spot. If only our human friends would stay out of the way."

And so, the downtown off-leash dog park in Loring Park is open for all four-legged Downtown residents and their two-legged leash holders. This park meets all of their exercise and socializing needs and is a natural and artistic gem, a community amenity of which Minneapolis can forever be proud.

Take me out to the Ball Game

November 13, 2020



Nicollet Baseball Park



Willie Mays, Minneapolis Millers Player

Baseball, in Minneapolis, has a fascinating history – affecting many aspects of life – commercial and residential real estate development, parking, traffic patterns, public transportation, and last but not least, the relationship between citizens of Saint Paul and Minneapolis.

As a baseball fan for 80+ years and a loyal Minneapolitan for 90 years, I have so many baseball memories that I am going to mention them chronologically (Webster says “in order of time of occurrence”) – but my comments will be in reverse order – today’s Minnesota Twins go back many decades to the most exciting Minneapolis Millers.

Target Field – perhaps the best baseball venue in all of major-league baseball. The Pohlad family has exhibited enormous patience and has, with great public financial support, certainly stepped up to the plate financially and delivered a “grand slam home run”.

Restrooms are really adequate, food offerings are outstanding, the view of the city is spectacular, parking in the public and private parking facilities is convenient, public transportation is available nearby – and pedestrians have nearby access to outstanding liquid and chewy refreshments. The baseball team, provides excitement, even during Covid, and are very professional and well coached. However, they need to win the “7th game”- almost 30 years ago!

The Metrodome – built “on the cheap” (I think between \$50 and \$100 million). Balls never come down, snow (so rare in Minnesota!) caves in the roof, where to park – great tailgating, entry/exit doors hard on the young and elderly. No green, no sun, no rain delays, no prevailing wind problems.

Playing baseball in the Metrodome required much patience by players, an advantage for the local teams. Lighting varied in places, balls were often lost in the gray background of the ceiling or never came down when gobbled up in the lighting paraphernalia. However, our team quickly adapted and brought about success – twice!

Who can or would like to forget:

- In 1987, one of our all-time favorites, Kirby Puckett, approaching second base “there will be a game tomorrow”
- In 1991 – current broadcaster and Iron Man Jack Morris insisting on pitching and finishing and winning game seven – 1–0.

The Metrodome was a special place!

Metropolitan Stadium was built for the purpose of luring a major league baseball team to the Minneapolis area. Concurrently, as part of the Twin City rivalry, persons interested in a major league team located in St. Paul, constructed Midway Stadium.

Metropolitan Stadium – not very memorable except 1) located in Bloomington, not Minneapolis; 2) convenient, cheap, adjacent parking; 3) 1965 World Series. Twins versus LA Dodgers; Remember Harmon Killebrew and Bob Allison. Remember Sandy Koufax -the great LA pitcher – unbeatable (only stopped by the Jewish holiday – Yom Kippur); The Twins lost a very exciting series!

Nicollet Park – before Metropolitan Stadium and during the Nicollet Park era there were several efforts to bring major league baseball to Minnesota-focusing on Minneapolis. The two principal examples: – the New York Giants (before they moved to San Francisco) Horace Stoneham, the owner of the Giants, spent considerable time and money considering a Minneapolis location for the Giants. The Giants even purchased land in the vicinity of the present Highway 100 and interstate 394 interchange. Washington Senators – concurrently with the search being conducted by the Giants, Calvin Griffith, the owner of the Senators was considering the twin cities.

Griffith's efforts were successful and the Washington Senators became the Minnesota Twins – moving into the new Metropolitan Stadium. Nicollet Park was located at the corner of Nicollet and Lake Street (now a Wells Fargo bank location) – the home of the Minneapolis Millers and the gathering place for Minneapolis baseball fans (Remember Babe Barna or Willie Mays?). The enemy of the Minneapolis fans were the residents from across the river – Saint Paul Saints fans who protected their fortress -Lexington Park, located on University Avenue – at Lexington, in Saint Paul. The rivalry between the two teams – and two cities was fierce!!

Every Memorial day and Fourth of July holiday featured a doubleheader between the Minneapolis Millers and Saint Paul Saints. The first game was played in Minneapolis and then the crowds boarded the Selby-Lake Street car and headed for the second game, in Saint Paul, at Lexington Park.

This was before autos replaced street cars and street car tokens cost 2 for \$.15. Of course a few stragglers stopped at the Presidents Café which held the only legal liquor license south of downtown. The rivalry between Minneapolis and Saint Paul centered around baseball but was clearly evident throughout all life in the Twin Cities. Whoever named the “Minnesota Twins” was a neutral genius and should be credited with the somewhat compatible relationship currently existing between Saint Paulites and Minneapolisans.

Image Sources:

Thornley, S. (n.d.). Minneapolis Millers. Retrieved December 13, 2020, from <https://stewthornley.net/millers.html> <https://bleacherleaguesports.com/product/1951-minneapolis-millers-road-jersey/>. (n.d.).

From Stanislaw to Osmo – The Orchestra Hall Story

December 20, 2020

Where it is – Why and How.

In the early seventies I received a call from Stephen Pflaum, one of my attorneys at the Leonard Street and Deinard Law Firm. I thought to myself “What have I done wrong now?” Stephen replied “Nothing this time, but we need your help.”

The Minnesota Orchestra performed for many years in Northrup Auditorium on the University of Minnesota campus. The Orchestra left Northrup in the early seventies and began the search for a new venue in which to perform. In the suburbs or in the city – in an existing or a new facility – as a tenant or as an owner?

The leader of The Orchestral Association, John Pillsbury, and several other prominent music lovers, Kenneth Dayton and Judson Bemis strongly favored downtown Minneapolis if an adequate facility could be identified. Stephen Pflaum, a Minneapolis attorney, was appointed chairman of this search committee and thus the intensive search began.

Cyril Harris, a well known acoustical consultant, was retained to assist with the search. I was not related to Harris; My only claim to fame in the music world was/is that I am related to Aaron Copland, the world famous composer.

The Committee first focused on the possibility of moving into one of the theaters on Hennepin Ave. It was soon concluded that none of the existing venues on Hennepin Ave. would meet the criteria to be used by the Orchestra. The search committee then directed their efforts to determine if any other existing facility would meet the rigid requirements.

A concurrent search for a site for a new music hall was begun. These efforts were intense. Many hours and many days passed as I searched; the possibility of an existing building appeared – The Old Lyceum Theater on 11th St. between Nicollet and Marquette Ave. The Old Lyceum was then owned by a religious group, Souls Harbor, represented by Rev. Gordon Peterson. A multi tenant office building was adjacent to the Lyceum and could be converted to administrative offices for the Orchestral Association if it could also be acquired.



The Lyceum Theater

Coincidentally, in 1905, the Lyceum, (then owned by NW National Life Insurance Co.) was used as its musical venue by the Orchestra. Maestro Skrowaczewski and others excitedly thought that moving the Orchestra back into the original Lyceum venue would be a great idea – conditioned on a careful review of the building condition, acoustics, renovation costs, adequate number of seats etc. etc. I was authorized and succeeded in negotiating purchase options for the Lyceum and the adjacent office building – at which point the analysis of the Lyceum began.

The analysis concluded that the condition of the building was acceptable, the acoustics outstanding and the number of seats adequate. However, one large and unexpected problem surfaced – while there were the number of seats required, the width of a seat needed by today's music lover is considerably wider than existed in the Lyceum, and therefore new wider seats would be required – thus reducing the number of seats. It was soon concluded that building renovation costs would be comparable to the costs of a new structure.

The committee quickly concluded – A newly constructed Orchestra Hall.

In making a new construction decision, the committee set up the following criteria:

- Ownership of the entire “Lyceum” block would be necessary
- Removal of all structures on the block by May 1, 1974. The timelines required removal of more than a dozen tenants from two office buildings – most of which had leases!

The committee was determined to break ground on the block by May 1, 1974 – a daunting task for me.

My assignment consisted of buying all of the properties on the block and moving out all of the tenants! The City of Minneapolis was unwilling to provide any acquisition or relocation assistance. This was to be entirely a private development project – the city did suggest possible availability of some financial assistance at project completion. The City was skeptical that a project of this size and complexity would ever be privately planned, financed, and built with a groundbreaking on May 1, 1974. “There is no way this will happen without public assistance,” according to City Coordinator Tommy Thompson.

Private collaboration and determination proceeded to accomplish a miracle. Private donors cobbled together the financing needed.

A financial commitment was even received from the Peavey Foundation to fund the construction of a small park (Peavey Plaza) on the Orchestra block.

We were able to complete the acquisition of the five properties to complete the ownership control of the entire block. Only the relocation of the office tenants remained, most of whom had leases; with a great deal of cajoling and handholding, I was able to locate a place for each tenant and physically assist in their move. Everything required was completed by May 1, 1974.

SUCCESS.

Minneapolis has the Minnesota Orchestra in a permanent home.

Image source:

Pascual, A. (2020, July 03). Twin Cities Music Highlights. Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://twincitiesmusichighlights.net/venues/lyceum/>

Withdrawals from My Memory Bank

January 12, 2021

I don't pretend to understand the new language that has evolved in the most recent decades – “browser, download, Facebook, Instagram, the Cloud etc. etc.”

However, my memory is filled with relics from the past – where we worked, how we lived, what we wore, where we ate, how we received and paid for goods and services and so much more. It would be a shame to let this past lore disappear. The following is a sampling of some of these remote relics which now seem almost medieval.

I remember:

- Daily milk delivery in glass bottles by Norris Creameries, Northland Milk Co. and Ewald Brothers Dairy.
- The predecessor of Office Max, Farnham's, located on 5th street across from City Hall. Farnham's sold everything – paper, legal forms, office furniture, mimeograph machines, primitive answering machines etc. (pre computers and iPhones and today's technology).
- Green stamps and Gold Bond Stamps (a piece of the Curt Carlson empire). These stamps were given out with various purchases and allowed the holder to purchase merchandise with this “community currency” adding value to the original purchase.
- The Munsingwear building on North Lyndale (now International Market Square), a large manufacturing co. of t-shirts, underwear etc.
- Before Lunds & Byerly's, Cub, Kowalski's, and Whole Foods, shoppers bought groceries in the neighborhood at Red Owl, Country Club, Red and White, Hoves, Stillman's and Piggly Wiggly.
- Twice daily newspaper delivery – and the paper boy rang the doorbell often to receive his payment – usually around \$3.20. Until the fifties the only fast food restaurant was White Castle.



*Frequented by my high school football team, we had five sliders and a malted milk and then took the streetcar home in time for dinner.
Exterior view of White Castle No 8., 616 Washington Ave. S. E. in Minneapolis, MN.*

- Before credit cards we paid for all purchases with CASH! Pennies and nickels were important (we even picked them up from the ground!.) Credit cards have replaced cash and are now the “Coin of the Realm.”
- Holtzerman’s at 314 Cedar Ave. Trim and proper, J.D. Holtzerman limped around his store in full dress Swiss or German garb – selling German, Swiss and other European gifts.
- Free delivery. Many department stores had their own fleet of delivery trucks – offering free delivery of any products sold in their store. They also sent monthly invoices in their own logo envelopes.
- “Service Stations” – not solely gasoline. The customer purchased gasoline and then the attendant checked the oil, checked the air pressure in the tires and even cleaned the windows – while the customer sat in the car – rain or shine!
- Tower Club on the top floor of the IDS Building – a restaurant with a view of the world. In the men’s room the urinals had a view of the world (and vice versa) – no curtains.

More memories in a future edition

Image source

(n.d.). Retrieved January 20, 2021, from <https://ohiomemory.org/digital/collection/p15005coll29/id/705/>

Streetcars – The Yellow Banana

January 19, 2021



In the good old days almost everyone rode the streetcar – to and from everywhere! Seniors grabbed the rail and pulled themselves up into the car. Teenagers hopped on quickly. In those pre ADA days there weren't any accommodations for the handicapped. Night or day rain or snow, streetcars were *the* form of transportation – to work, to school, to downtown for a movie, or on a date.

The "Yellow Banana," as it was fondly called, traversed both Minneapolis and St. Paul, a total of 635 miles of track just within the Minneapolis-St. Paul city limits – From Bryant in South Minneapolis to Johnson St. NE – From Como Ave. in St. Paul to Lake Harriet in Minneapolis – From W Lake St. in Minneapolis to Selby Ave in St. Paul, all within a few blocks of everyone's home.

The Streetcar routes did not change; in fact these routes determined the location and size of the commercial nodes that served the departing riders of the streetcars. Grocers, hardware stores, barber shops and small restaurants could be frequently found along these streetcar routes.

The streetcars were very utilitarian – not very comfortable, not very clean, warm in the summer, cold in the winter, not expensive – 2 tokens (2 rides) for fifteen cents! And very reliable!



Streetcar token

Streetcars were not foolproof. I'm told that almost all teenage boys were experts at pulling the trolley off the overhead cable – rendering the car inoperable!

The “Yellow Banana” was a treasure! It didn't carry bicycles – was not handicapped friendly and didn't provide heated bus shelters – but people of all colors, shapes, and sizes used it – relied on it and praised it!

The Streetcar stopped running in 1954 – amid numerous illegal activities and legal actions – including jail time for the owners. I think we all rue the day when riding the *Yellow Banana* came to an end. Automobiles and buses took over the streets. Was that an improvement?

The Calhoun Square Planning and Development Process

February 8, 2021

A five year saga dominated by controversy and national interest rates of 18 percent.

Developer Selection

Five serious proposals were submitted to the Minneapolis School Board and Minneapolis Planning Department:

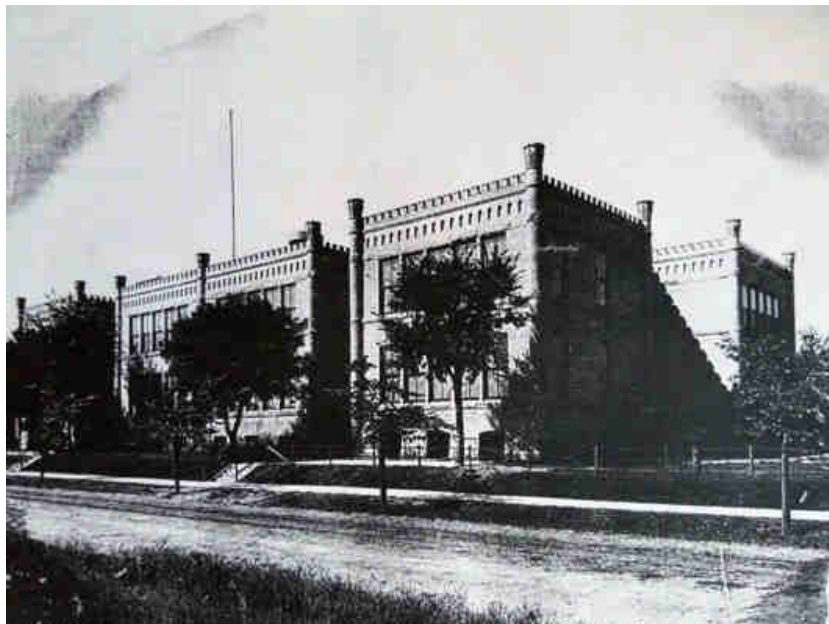
1. A Free Parking lot – proposed by members of the Business Community.
2. A Community Center – proposed by members of the Resident Associations.
3. A Greek Retirement Home – proposed by the nearby Greek Church.
4. A Thematic single story mall on a portion of the block.
5. A Community Commercial Center (Calhoun Square) covering the school site and most of the balance of the block including a multi story parking facility – proposed by Ray Harris and future partners Doug and Martha Head.

The Parking Lot proposal, the Community Center proposal, and the Greek Retirement Home proposal were eliminated because they proposed tax exemption and didn't meet the planning department commercial guidelines. The Calhoun Square proposal was selected by the City and School Board – contingent upon the procuring of a satisfactory financing package and design approval.

Land Acquisition and Financing

The Calhoun Square development proposal required the inclusion of seven separate land parcels.

1. The Calhoun School Site – price by appraisal
2. A one foot wide by 165 ft long parcel owned by a speculator requiring public condemnation
3. A small newer building (replacing a Junior League building destroyed by fire). The owner would not sell – we negotiated a 95 year lease of the land – building was demolished.
4. Four privately owned properties/buildings. Federal tax laws allowed certain tax benefits if at least 75% of exterior walls of buildings older than 50 years old were preserved. Since our plan was proposing an infill of existing and new buildings – we had already been planning to rejuvenate these buildings when construction began.



Calhoun Elementary School

Financing

The City of Minneapolis – The miracle of Calhoun Square is that it even HAPPENED when national interest rates were 18%.

Actually, the City of Minneapolis only guaranteed \$2.7 million by the sale of bonds guaranteed by the full faith and credit of the City. This City guaranteed by use of tax increment financing turned out to be the main reason for the huge controversy. Actually, Calhoun Square benefited the city financially at least 100 fold and probably even 200 or 300.

Revenue Bonds – (guaranteed by NW National Bank and First National Bank) The Director of the City Development Agency, Jim Heltzer, said “The two banks would only guarantee the bonds when I stepped on their air hose.”

Developer Equity – Yes, my family ate rice and spaghetti for awhile.

Contractor Deferral – Kraus Anderson not only worked on the project for more than five years – and also were willing to defer receiving their well earned fee. Thank you Lloyd Englesma!

Urban Development Action Grant/Loan (UDAG) – Funds were made available from the Federal Government in order to build additional parking spaces – not required by the development project.

Miscellaneous – There were several other not inconsequential kinds of financial assistance.

The end result was **SUCCESS** in spite of 18% interest rates! Design approval was received and Calhoun Square would be built!

Controversy

Five years of controversy and several hundred heated meetings with passionate opponents *and* equally passionate proponents and more than enough fodder for all of the legitimate and questionable media resulted in Calhoun Square. The opposition used some of all of the following:

Too much traffic, too much litter, and too much noise are all excuses that have been used by project opponents since Adam and Eve days.

Another “DALE” eg. Southdale, Rosedale

Does area meet blight designation requirement for tax increment financing? Required business or tenant replacement

Project will be such a failure that the whole area will be blighted

Project will be so successful that the whole area will be high rise buildings

My assessment of the entire controversy is that most of us are uncomfortable with **CHANGE** – of any kind. “It could be better and could be worse.” “Just leave it alone.” There is no one alive now that will admit they were opponents of the original Calhoun Square.

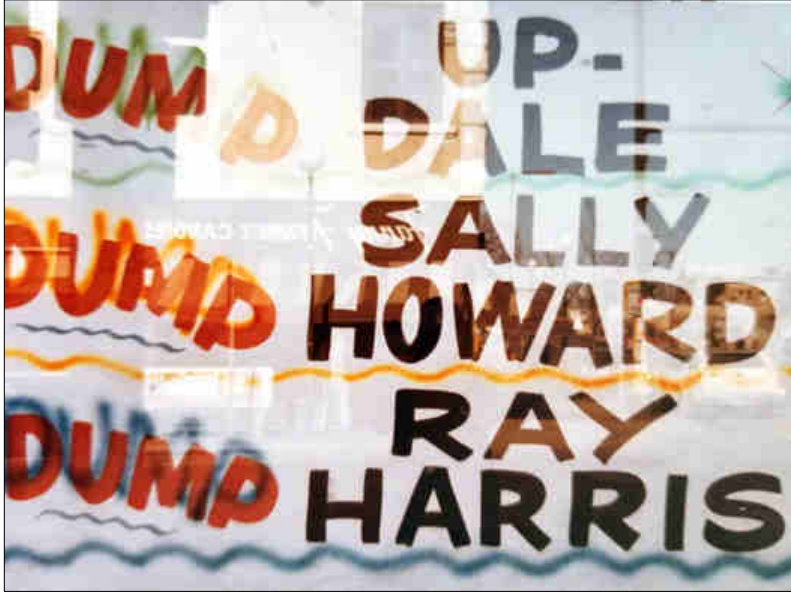
Main article – Uptown and Calhoun Square

Part 1 – Liquor Patrol Limits Law

Part 3 – What happened at Calhoun Square and by Whom

What Happened at Calhoun Square and by Whom

February 8, 2021



Dump Ray Harris!

Calhoun Square was considered the **BEST** project ever proposed for the City of Minneapolis by the proponents! The opponents considered Calhoun Square the **WORST** project ever proposed for the City of Minneapolis. The proponents and opponents heatedly argued the merits of this development for five years. Who were they and why? As I remember:

The Opponents –

- Trilby and Anders Christenson – Preservationists and Anti- Developers. Rabid advocates of doing nothing! Barbara Flanagan filled her columns debating the Christensons and did a great job of neutralizing them.
- Mary Ann Pittman – very articulate but, in my opinion, her main concern was losing the school site as a place for her beautiful Irish Setter dog to relieve itself
- Walter Dziedzic (Minneapolis Alderman, policeman, and from a hockey family) – “Calhoun Square is a great project but I’m against it because I don’t like Alderman Sally Howard – in whose ward Calhoun Square is located.”
- Pat Fleetham – Owner of nearby Fleetham Furniture

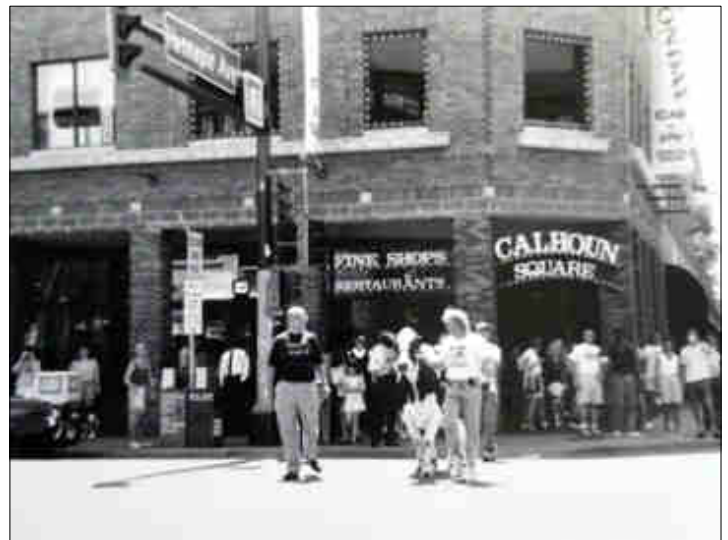
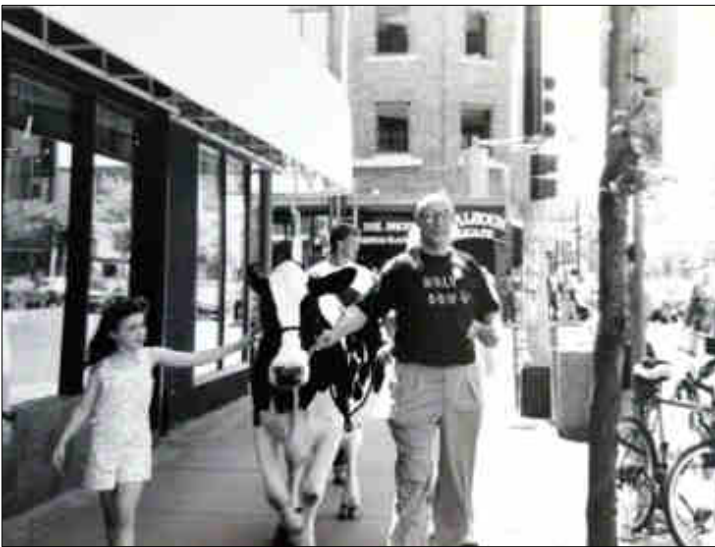
The opponents are far fewer than the proponents but many times noisier.

The Proponents – Our development team recruited supporters from each of the adjacent resident associations.

- East Calhoun Community Organization (ECCO)
 - Neal Gustafson, Cari Dewart, and Bob Hentges
- Calhoun Area Resident Action Group (CARAG)
 - Juanita and Stan Bernard
- The Wedge – Lowry Hill East
 - Greg and Lorraine Scott, Mary Ellen Grika

- Public Employees
 - Mike Brinda – Our connection to City Hall
- Mike Monahan – The Traffic Guru – The problem solver
- Barbara Flanagan – an advocate of neighborhood and urban development, pedestrians, outside dining, reducing the emphasis on automobiles – she loved Calhoun Square!
- Mayor Donald Fraser and Alderman Sally Howard – a Democrat and Republican working together whenever needed – wouldn't have happened without their support!
- Private Sector Supporters (most memorable)
 - Phil Roberts – creator of Figlios – one of the best restaurants on the globe – half of which exceeded the noise levels at Target Field and half of which was for us “old codgers”
 - Greg Greffin (Greffin Jewelers) an original and loyal tenant
 - Gibson Carrothers (creator of Tenants) Sox Appeal and Boxer Men's Underwear

Only in Uptown – Since its inception, Calhoun Square became the place where the unexpected was the norm. It was risqué, unique, a leader in trends, and certainly, daring in its promotion and marketing. Marketing Directors such as Jayne Haugen Olson (recognize the name?) and Dali Wiederhoft became very creative sponsoring:



- Annual wine tasting events Originating the annual coffee festivals
- Sponsoring a spectacular chocolate festival
- Sponsoring a Garlic festival featuring Garlic Ice Cream (you didn't miss anything!)
- Sponsoring a Kemps Ice Cream event complete with the Kemps Holstein Cow which was led across the Hennepin and Lake intersection by Yours truly! (Yes, the cow was followed by a man and a large bag) Drivers in autos and pedestrians were understandably shocked.
- Encouraging every conceivable peaceful protest to terminate at Calhoun Square.
- Collaborating with Cari Dewall and the Hennepin and Lake Improvement Association (HLIA soon to be Uptown Association) on annual efforts to improve and expand the nationally famous Uptown Art Fair.
- Becoming the termination point for the annual Wirth Ski Loppet – the World's largest warming house!

Problem Solving

Uptown/Calhoun Square was always at the forefront of risk-taking and then a leader at problem solving.

- “It doesn’t snow in Uptown.” Recognizing that every property owner doesn’t remove snow promptly or at all, legislation for an Uptown Special Service District was created (with assistance of the Faegre Law Firm and, particularly, Bob Hentges) in order to remove Uptown snow as soon as one inch of snow had fallen – and charge all property owners prorata.
- “Don’t place benches in Calhoun Square. You will encourage loitering and sleeping.” The police counseled the planners. We put benches everywhere! People sat on the benches, chattered and seniors even relaxed for a few minutes!
- Pornography in Calhoun Square. One of our prized tenants carried some obviously suggestive greeting cards. In order to avoid likely litigation, the new lease between Calhoun Square and the tenant gave absolute discretion to the landlord as to the definition of pornography and how it was interpreted.
- Security in Calhoun Square/Uptown. In order to avoid security issues, the Minneapolis Police were prepared to be firm and proactive! Uptown and Calhoun Square management preferred and adopted a much more relaxed and community managed approach. Police Chief Tony Bouza concurred – The community approach succeeded! A great working relationship resulted between the police and private security!
- Parking for Calhoun Square and Uptown. A multilevel parking facility with five hundred plus parking spaces was included in the Calhoun Square development. Aided by the almost miraculous management by the Sanders family of Loop Parking, the usage of the parking facility set all kinds of records – even using each space 10 times each day during the holiday seasons. We did not allocate spaces for monthly parking and narrowed each space by a few inches (in order to increase the total number of spaces, and hired off duty police to speed up the entry and exit – but we were still unable to keep up with the parking demand! Call it unforgettable success!

main article – Uptown and Calhoun Square

Part 1 – Liquor Patrol Limits Law

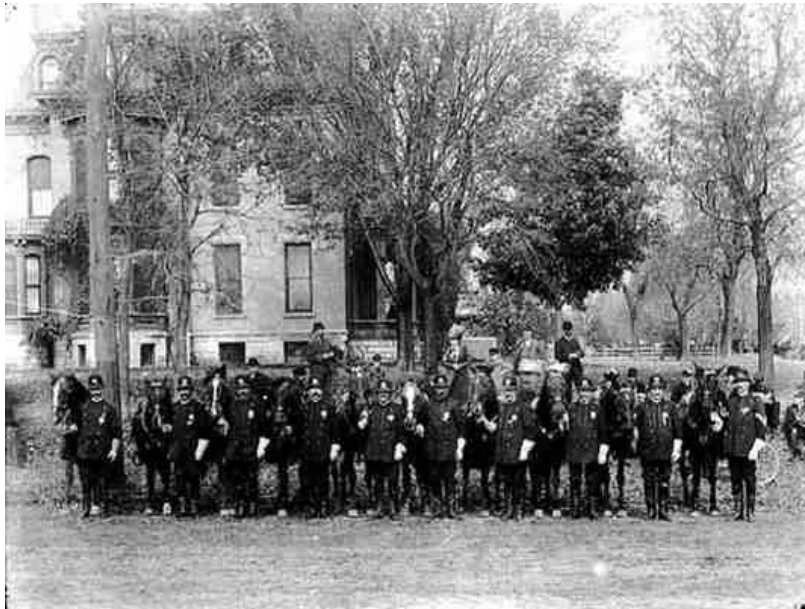
Part 2 – The Calhoun Square Planning and Development Process

Liquor Patrol Limits Law

February 15, 2021

Prior to 1975 most of the City of Minneapolis was “dry”. Persons desirous of an alcoholic drink with their dinner were restricted to restaurants in Downtown Minneapolis – as defined by an arbitrarily determined boundary titled **The Liquor Patrol Limits**.

When and how The Liquor Patrol Limits originated happened prior to my presence on the scene. I am told that the boundary was established by a mounted patrolman (men only back then) on a horse. I am told that the limits were established by the area that the mounted patrol cover, during his work day – or evening. The only legal liquor license granted outside of the patrol limits was held by the President Cafe located on Lake St. at Nicollet Ave – across from the Minneapolis Miller’s Baseball Park. It was commonly known that an informal liquor license was held by the blacks only NACIREMA Club (American spelled backwards) on Lake St.



The Minneapolis Mounted Police, ca. 1900.

When the Liquor Patrol Limits was eliminated in 1975, many commercial areas throughout the city became candidates for restaurants with liquor licenses. It was predicted that the Hennepin and Lake Commercial area (now called Uptown) would be flooded with license applications.

Soon thereafter I received a phone call from Ed Schlamp, owner of Schlamp Furs – “Ray, I’m sitting here with Ted Lund (one of the principals of Lund Foods), John Cochran (President of Fifth Northwest Bank) Ralph Durand (president of Sons of Norway).” “We need help. We’re about to be deluged with many food & liquor operations and we need to be prepared to intelligently respond to requests. We need your help.”

We met soon thereafter and proceeded, to hire Dewey Joseph of the Dorsey & Whitney law firm to incorporate a non-profit Hennepin & Lake Improvement Association (HLIA), later, The Uptown Association. I was the first executive (unpaid).

This set in motion the planning and redevelopment of the Uptown area. See future articles about Uptown; I did have a role in this planning and redevelopment!

Main article – Uptown and Calhoun Square

Part 2 – The Calhoun Square Planning and Development Process

Part 3 – What happened at Calhoun Square and by Whom

Image Source: “Minneapolis Mounted Police.” [Mnhs.org](https://collections.mnhs.org/cms/display.php?irn=10725954), collections.mnhs.org/cms/display.php?irn=10725954.

Uptown and Calhoun Square

February 16, 2021

In writing about Minneapolis I have so many stories surging around in my noggin that, so far, I have been providing random stories about our city. However, there is usually a connection, a relationship between most of which happens/happened. This is true about the Uptown Story. The stories in this blog will connect history, the development process and the fascinating planned and unplanned events that have characterized Uptown and the people responsible.



Three events, proposed by different Minneapolis governmental agencies, were responsible for the focus on development of Uptown/Hennepin and Lake.

1. Termination of the little known Liquor Patrol Limits Law.
2. The Minneapolis School Board, having closed Calhoun Elementary school, desired to sell and put the site back on the tax rolls.
3. The Minneapolis Planning Department desired to encourage commercial development at its busiest commercial intersections – Hennepin Ave. and Lake St., being the first and, hopefully, a model for all of the other Minneapolis commercial areas.

The Climax/Signing all of the Documents

The final chapter in this abbreviated version of the Calhoun Square Five year development saga was “The Closing” – the signing of hundreds of documents required before construction could begin. Due to the expiration of several tax laws at the end of 1982, the closing was scheduled for December 28, 1982. Unscheduled for that day was a huge snowstorm which proceeded to shut down EVERYTHING! Obviously no closing! The Closing was rescheduled for December 30, 1982 with no possibility to reschedule or cancel.

Another huge snowstorm descended on December 30th. Participants in the closing, lawyers, elected public officials, representatives of the lenders were seen skiing, snow shoeing, or walking to the meeting place – an entire floor of the Dorsey Law Office. The meeting began as scheduled at 10am and continued all night (we covered the clocks) and concluded at 4 pm on December 31st.

During the 30 hour closing, two obstacles arose that could have stalled the closing – stopping everything, missing the deadline and ending Calhoun Square.

1. A change was necessary in the 95 year lease documents. Approval was needed from Norman Ackenberg – the property owner. The problem was that Norman was on vacation in rural Mexico – it was in the middle of the night and the telephone operators did not speak English – it finally and barely happened!
2. In case of project failure, the School Board insisted that the school site be returned to the School District. The lenders resisted. A middle of the night School Board meeting was proposed to resolve the impasse. Finally Lou Demars, president of the Minneapolis City Council, was able to intercede and solve the problem.

At 4 pm, on December 31st, 1982, all problems, obstacles, real and imagined were overcome. Calhoun Square construction began soon thereafter! Calhoun Square was immediately successful!

That is the short version of the Calhoun Square/Uptown Story. Perhaps writing a book is in order.

If

March 10, 2021

This was written long ago by a great author, Rudyard Kipling. I read it often and try to believe in and emulate each phrase. You should too. It focuses on a man but is just as relevant for women!

If you can keep your head when all about you
Are losing theirs and blaming it on you;
If you can trust yourself when all men doubt you,
But make allowance for their doubting too;
If you can wait and not be tired by waiting,
Or being lied about, don't deal in lies,
Or being hated, don't give way to hating,
And yet don't look too good, nor talk too wise;

If you can dream – and not make dreams your master;
If you can think – and not make thoughts your aim;
If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster
And treat those two impostors just the same;
If you can bear to hear the truth you've spoken
Twisted by knaves to make a trap for fools,
Or watch the things you gave your life to, broken
And stoop and build 'em up with worn-out tools;

If you can make one heap of all your winnings
And risk it on one turn of pitch-and-toss
And lose, and start again at your beginnings
And never breathe a word about your loss;
If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone
And so hold on when there is nothing in you
Except the Will which says to them: Hold on!

If you can talk with crowds and keep your virtue,
Or walk with kings – nor lose the common touch,
If neither foes nor loving friends can hurt you,
If all men count with you, but none too much;
If you can fill the unforgiving minute
With sixty seconds worth of distance run
Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it,
And – which is more – you'll be a Man, my son.

- Rudyard Kipling

You had to be there..

March 12, 2021

The early response to the “Been There, Done That. Took Notes” blog has been very positive: an unexpected request, from a number of viewers, has wondered who is Ray Harris and what is his background? Does he cause these crazy things to happen or is he just an innocent victim?

Both! I am guilty of enjoying an occasional humorous event at someone else’s expense. However, my willingness to adventure out in new directions and take some risks has often resulted in “unintended consequences.” I shall relate some of these happenings in this blog.

My College Experiences

I graduated from high school in 1946 and wanted to be away from home for my college years. I craved independence. I chose Stanford University, the Harvard of the west. Why Stanford? The year 1946 was several years prior to Alaska and Hawaii becoming states. I picked the school that was, and is located in Palo Alto, California, the furthest spot in the continental United States from my mother and father. Stanford was and is a great school, comparable to any other in the country.

Besides studying hard and receiving decent grades, my two most lingering memories of Stanford are:

I was on the wrestling team at Stanford. One year we scheduled a match with the inmates from San Quentin Prison. I don’t recall much about the wrestling match, but I do recall sitting in the electric chair (no I don’t think they turned it on) and eating lunch in “the pit” with armed guards roving overhead.

Stanford was located about 30 miles from the ocean at Rio Del Mar. Every spring quarter, several of us rented a cabin at Rio Del Mar and commuted to school at Stanford. We didn’t sleep much, ate peanut butter sandwiches, drank beer, and spent every waking hour on the beach and in the water. While on the beach, we played a new game using a metal pie tin manufactured by the Frisbee Company. Yes, that was the origin of the game Frisbee.

Stanford, Harvard of the west, San Quentin, the Electric Chair, the ocean, Frisbee; what an education and preparation for life.

The Adult Years

The colorful experience surrounding me during my adult years can be grouped into three categories: Experiences for which I was responsible, experiences for which I was NOT responsible, and Don Quixote.

Experiences for which I WAS responsible:

- My son Dan was bringing his soon-to-be bride to Minneapolis to meet his family. To make an impression, I rented five very realistic gorilla suits and replete with bananas and before current security restrictions and obstacles at the airport, the Harris Family descended upon the unsuspecting couple. She married him anyway!!
- I was the second person to walk on water! With styrofoam planks and waterski harnesses, and after a great deal of practice in the YMCA pool, I entered Cedar Lake and walked on water! The only problem was a law of physics – for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction – one foot went forward and the other backwards. Scant forward progress.
- I had, and have the ugliest hat that ever existed – A bright green hat and wore it everywhere. My family HATED it. As we departed for a family vacation to Hawaii, I was warned that the hat was to remain in Minneapolis. Upon our arrival in Hawaii, I soon received a package in the mail. Voila, my green hat! My wonderful secretary, Barbara, conspired with me and put the precious hat in the mail. Soon after, my daughter-in-law Julie acquired some bright green material, and meticulously fashioned a complete ensemble (shirt and shorts) to accessorize the hat.



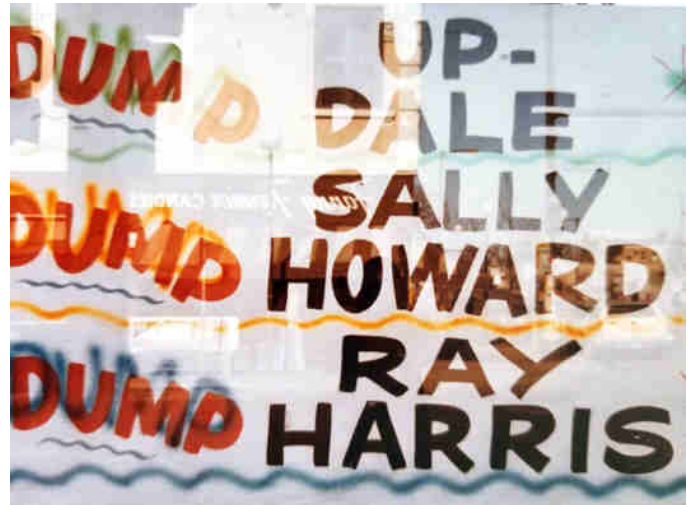
Experiences for which I was NOT responsible:

In 1984, construction of the new Calhoun Square shopping center was almost complete. The leasing program of the 65 retail spaces had been a resounding success – with only a few small spaces remaining to be leased. One of my leasing assistants came to me, “a well regarded fitness center wants to be a tenant in Calhoun Square and we no longer have a large enough space for them, except in the basement of one of the older renovated, three-story buildings.” We all agreed that was a good solution.

Soon the leasing assistant indicated the prospective tenant objected to the location due to the unacceptable and inadequate ceiling height of the space. “So we’ll solve the problem by lowering the basement floor.” Owen Beckwith, the superintendent of our contractor, Kraus Anderson, agreed and directed his construction team to begin work on the “floor lowering” project. A successful solution, I thought as I prepared to leave the city on a family vacation. Early the next day as my family was climbing into the car, I received an emergency call from Kraus Anderson, “We began to lower the floor and found that all of the basement wood columns holding up the entire building have rotted and are no longer attached to the floor – no longer attached to anything! The building will soon fall into the basement!”

Within a day, the contractor installed steel columns throughout the building. Wow, a disaster averted, only because we had cleverly decided to create a leasable space for a tenant, by providing enough ceiling height by lowering the floor.

When our team was selected to be the developer of Calhoun Square, I was quickly volunteered to be the public face of the project. My partners, Doug and Martha Head, gladly accepted the role of silent partners. At the time we didn’t realize that the planning, financing, and approval process would stretch out more than 5 years. Suddenly I became the target of everyone opposing the project – those who felt Calhoun Square would be such a failure that the entire area would become blighted, or it would be so successful that it would result in numerous high rise buildings, or the area would be a full time traffic jam, or people opposed to change of any kind. Large signs began popping up all over Minneapolis. The favorite sign blared “Dump Ray Harris, Dump Updale,” (the name assigned the horrible project by the opponents) and “Dump Sally Howard,” the 7th ward council member. For years local papers and a very loud and vocal minority continued to spread every imaginable kind of negativity about the Calhoun Square project and the larger-than-life, evil developer, Ray Harris.



Don Quixote

My hero, in literature and life, is Don Quixote. Almost everyone is familiar with the story of Man of La Mancha – a story written in 1605 by Miguel Cervantes, of a crazy old man on an old horse striving to reach “the Impossible Dream.” Quite obviously there is a physical resemblance between Don Quixote and me. Mentally, he was crazy and the verdict is still out on my mental state. But both of us had the same goal, “the Impossible Dream.” The Don Quixote Society pledge summarized the two of us, “Always proud to admit to being a dreamer, being unrealistic, being idealistic, refusing to accept the world as they find it and dedicated to making it what they believe it should be and exhibiting behavior pursuing the above even at the risk of failing, being laughed at, or considered a fool.”

“Dad, Don, and the Ass. Which is which?”

The quest continues!



Another Withdrawal from my Memory Bank

March 12, 2021

My memory bank is full again, it's time to withdraw some obsolete tidbits reminiscent of the days before one could press a button to activate every convenience in our lives. Do you remember –

- When the roads were filled with Studebakers, Edsels, Packards, DeSotos, Pontiacs, Oldsmobiles, and other brands built in the USA.
- When THE BEST coffee shop was the Mayflower coffee shop at 804 Nicollet Ave. – specialized in donuts hatching every few seconds in the store window – along with hot Maxwell House coffee.
- Majestic (mean – not to be trusted) swans gracefully paddled around the lake in Loring Park.
- Rickety launches cruised on Lake Calhoun and Lake Harriet with relaxing kids, old folks, and romantics.
- The Aqua Follies (part of the summer Aquatennial) on Wirth Lake just off Glenwood Ave. An aquatic show with diving, coordinated swimming, comedy et. al.



Aqua Follies c. 1952

-
- The Soap Box Derby – mostly 9 year old boys (a few younger, a few older, and an occasional girl) designed and built their own racers and competed annually for prizes, mostly glory.
 - Streets –
 - Lyndale Ave. – the only street going from the southern to the northern boundary of Minneapolis. Lake St. – the only street going from the western to the eastern boundary of Minneapolis.
 - Emerson Ave. – Southbound and Dupont Ave. Northbound – one way streets serving South Minneapolis.
 - Lagoon Ave. – originally only from Hennepin to Lake Calhoun, the Westerner restaurant was located where Lagoon is east of Hennepin Ave.
 - Highway 100 – The extent of development west of Minneapolis.
 - Wold Chamberlain Field – the airport used by passengers preceding the Minneapolis – St. Paul International Airport. Access to Wold Chamberlain was from Minnehaha Pkwy followed by 34th Ave. southbound.
 - Simple toboggan and rather primitive “Flexible Flyer” sleds traversed the winter snows.

- Bicycles – single speed with only rear wheel brakes. No hand activated gears or brakes. No public bicycle lanes. Bikes were used primarily by kids and teens.
- Chewing gum – a pack of gum, five sticks individually wrapped per package – priced 5 cents. Street Cars stalled during snowstorms at Hennepin and Lyndale intersection – at the bottleneck.
- Using hand mowers to mow the grass in your yard. It should be remembered that the idea of a manicured front yard originated with financially comfortable estate owners who turned over yard care to their employees. In America, lawns which should have provided leisure opportunities, instead required a great deal of seasonal effort to maintain one of the most visible symbols of the American Dream.



The Memory Bank is never empty, and more withdrawals will be made in future blog editions.

Trains

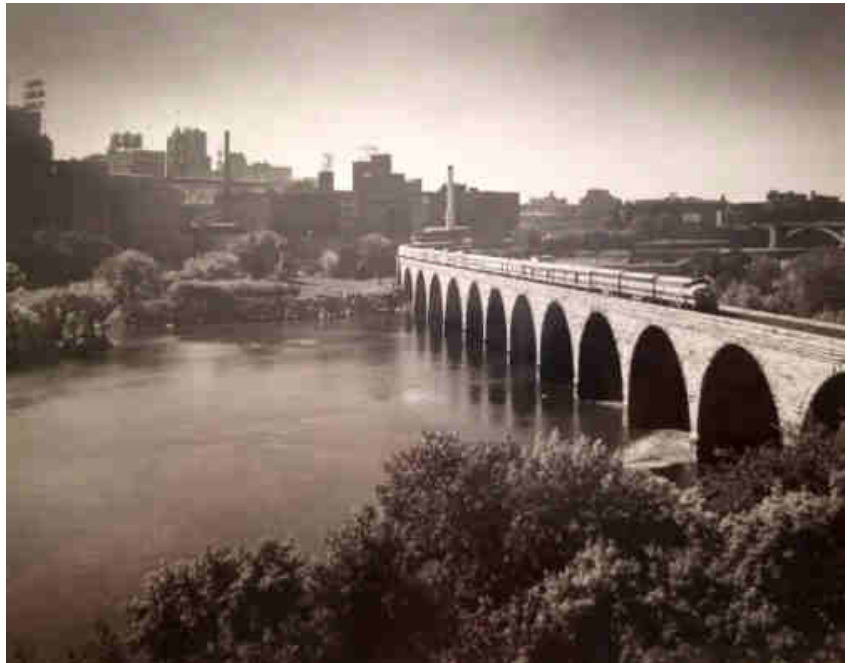
March 12, 2021

There was a time, not too many years ago, when all travelers arriving in or leaving Minneapolis traveled by train. After WWII, in the 50s and 60s, travelers gradually began flying in the now obsolete DC3's. The train was still dominant, and cheaper, and more comfortable.

There were two train passenger stations in Minneapolis – the Milwaukee Depot at Washington and 3rd Ave. and the Great Northern Station at 3rd St. and Hennepin Ave. (where the Federal Reserve Bank is now located) and next to the Berman Buckskin building.

Trains coming to the Milwaukee Depot moved through south Minneapolis and crossed Washington Ave. over the 10th and Washington viaduct. The Washington Avenue viaduct was a never ending nightmare for vehicles moving on Hennepin Avenue. Washington Avenue was steeply depressed under the viaduct but not enough for tall trucks which regularly were crushed for lack of clearance. Also, after heavy storms the depression under the viaduct often became a small lake and stalled all traffic. The viaduct was removed as soon as train use at the depot was discontinued.

Trains whose destination was the Great Northern station, rumbled through SE Minneapolis, through the gorge (the depressed part of Dinkytown) and then crossed the Mississippi via the Stone Arch bridge (yes, the Stone Arch bridge was constructed for trains only and used only by trains!). Trains then continued behind the main post office, across Hennepin Ave. into the Great Northern station. The lowest level of the post office was built with a large space with multiple large doors to serve train passengers and pedestrians along the river. I don't believe the space and doors were ever used.



During the train dominant era, trains to anywhere were numerous, timely, and affordable. Everyone carried their own suitcase (this was before a genius invented a suitcase with wheels) or they called for assistance from a Red Cap – predominantly African American men. The greeting public mixed with the arrivals – causing a temporary human traffic jam. Trains like streetcars were not handicapped accessible.

The Hiawatha, the Burlington Zephyr, and the 400 (400 miles in 400 minutes) offered daily service to Chicago. These trains offered meal service and true comfort, and relaxation.

The Empire Builder traveled to the northern part of the west coast. If a traveler wanted to reach California it was necessary to take a train to Omaha or Chicago and transfer to the Challenger or Union Pacific.

Gradually, passenger train use diminished and the Amtrak system took over. Most travelers switched their allegiance to the airline industry.

The Future of Traditional Retailing

April 1, 2021

Retailing, as we have known it, is failing throughout the United States – throughout the world. Delinquencies, even bankruptcies are not just a Minneapolis phenomenon; even before Covid 19 affected every aspect of our lives, the world of personal, on-site retailing was failing. There are some obvious reasons for this failure and some not so obvious.

The *online shopping phenomenon* is the primary reason that on-site, personal shopping is failing. When identical products are available at competitive prices often with free prompt delivery often with attractive return programs and not requiring customers to battle traffic, weather, and parking inconveniences – why not buy online? Although some shoppers want to touch and feel the merchandise, return policies usually overcome that concern.

A less obvious explanation for the failure of on site shopping in shopping centers and street front shops is that this mode of shopping has been the primary and important part of the lifestyle of “Middle Americans.” To the extent that the cost of living – food costs, housing, health care, education, travel etc., are increasing more rapidly than the increase of incomes – the result is that more and more people have less to spend on discretionary spending in retail shops. Since many “middle Americans” are struggling financially, they are spending less of their discretionary funds at the retail counter.

There is also a fundamental life style change affecting the retail world.

- Casual living has become the norm; extensive and expensive wardrobes are becoming, passe. As a result Goodwill Stores (and others offering inexpensive, almost new goods), and Dollar General (and others) offering casual and moderately priced merchandise have become very popular and successful financially.
- Customers are increasingly choosing to rent rather than buy whenever possible – everything from automobiles, houses – even clothes!
- Lest we forget, the environment has become a deciding factor in what and when many people purchase – almost everything – and this will surely increase.

All of the above factors do not bode well for the retail industry – in particular, on-site retailing. Retailing as we have known it, is risky. As stores close, shopping centers can no longer survive financially – and are shutting down all over the United States. The result is many fewer retail opportunities.

Another important victim of the failure of on-site retailing is the widespread failure of first floor retailing, that many municipalities are requiring in new multi-family and office developments. Lacking tenants, the retail spaces remain vacant. What an urban eyesore! I will address this eyesore in a future blog.

It is difficult to be optimistic about an industry, traditional retailing, that is failing, in the form that currently exists.

Restaurants in Minneapolis

April 1, 2021

Pre Covid, Minneapolis offered a variety of restaurants – upscale, neighborhood, multi-chain operations, buffets, restaurants offering almost every conceivable cultural food choice – as well as dessert bars and wine bars. It seemed that new restaurants were opening weekly and as many closing weekly.

Eating out in Minneapolis was not always like that; Choices were fewer and restaurant openings and closures seemed to be rare.

The restaurant scene was, however, memorable with offerings for the most fickle.

For Example:

- **Charlie's Cafe Exceptionale** (operated by Charlie and Louise Sanders) – upscale, the place for the “two martini lunch” and completion of many business deals, and also a lazy-susan on each table featuring Charlie's scrumptious potato salad.
- **Harry's** – on 11th Street – great food, the important people ate on the second floor
- **Curly's, Freddie's** (all men?) **Murrays**, favorites of many (only Murrays and the Silver butter knife steak remain.
- **Nankin** (by the Chalfens) and **John's Number One Son** were the favorite Asian spots
- **Rainbow** (in Uptown) Chris, George and John Legeros catered to late nighters, breakfast meetings and everybody!
- **Hasty Tasty** – the other Uptown favorite – in the basement.
- **Cafeterias** – the Forum (spectacular Art Deco architecture), Millers, Becky's, (Clayton Sonmore offered great food with a religious decor).
- **Fast Food** – White Castle was the first – offering 5 “sliders” for 25 cents with a special of 5 “sliders” for 12 cents. After WWII McDonald's, Burger King and others followed.
- **Normandy** – the other “breakfast meeting” location and massive popovers!
- **Shieks** – Good food accompanied by popular music offerings before it specialized on men and women.
- **Waikiki Room** in the Nicollet Hotel
- **Norse Room** in the Leamington Hotel
- Italian Food aficionados frequented **Mama D's, Mama Rosa's, Vescio's, Totinos**, and **DiNapoli**.
- **Perkins** – started by Wyman Nelson in the sixties, and expanded rapidly thereafter.
- **620 Club** – “Where Turkey is King,” a favorite of Sids on Block E. Max Winter owned the Vikings also.
- **Delicatessens** – Oh do we miss them!
- **Lincoln Dell** – The most popular – desserts, bread, omelets, etc., etc. oh la la!
- **Bernie's** – Across the street in St. Louis Park.
- **Plitman's** and **Malcopfs** (sp) – Plymouth Ave, until the fire and riots in 1968.
- **Brothers** – Downtown Locations
- **Abrams** – on Lake St .and Emerson (a one way street for homeward bound Minneapolis residents) served corned beef and challah for take out drivers.
- **Currans** – The drive in restaurant for south Minneapolis

- **Covered Wagon** – the lunch spot for public employees
- **White House** (The one in MPLS!) burned a couple of times...
- **McCarthy's** (Wayzata Blvd., Highway 12, now 394) – Almost in Minneapolis
- **Fuji Ya** – Japanese food eaten while sitting on the floor



Charlie's Cafe Exceptionale

I could go on and on but

1. I am hungry
2. I am drooling
3. The above list is a pretty good sampling

You will notice that most of these restaurants were located in downtown Minneapolis. Why? There is an interesting explanation... See the Liquor Patrol Limits blog.

Believe It or Not

April 1, 2021

Retail on the Nicollet Mall



Nicollet Ave. looking north, Minneapolis, MN.

The Nicollet Mall was the pre-eminent retail location in the entire Upper Midwest. Shoppers from Canada and the states between Chicago and Denver traveled often to shop on the Nicollet mall. The retail offerings were extensive. All of the following retail stores were located on the Nicollet Mall in its “heyday.”

- **Department Stores** – Daytons, Donaldsons, J.C. Penney, Powers
- **Women’s Merchandise** – Harold’s, Jackson Graves, John W. Thomas, Albrechts, Peck and Peck, Bjorkmans, Wenders, Young Quinlan
- **Men’s Merchandise** – Leimandt’s, Justers, Maurice L. Rothschild, Radins, Grodniks
- **Miscellaneous:**
 - Warner Hardware
 - Thiss (Luggage)
 - Anderson (Gifts)
 - Levoy’s (Decorator studio)
 - W.T. Grant, Woolworth’s, Kresge
 - Ohio Picture Frame (Gifts and Frames)
 - Amluxens (Fabrics)
 - Boutells (Home furnishings)

There were probably more but not still in my memory. I wasn’t and am not a shopper. Why are they all gone? As a former owner and manager of a shopping center (Calhoun Square), I have my ideas and explanations. (See blog on the future of traditional retailing).

Better Way – Find It

April 1, 2021



“There is a better way – Find It” – a well known quote by Thomas Edison. Finding a better way to carry out my assignments, to meet challenges and solve problems has been THE guiding factor for all of my 60+ year professional career. Being self employed, I have always done things “my way” and I believe my clients and certainly the citizens of Minneapolis have benefited. Some Examples are:

Calhoun Square – The city wanted the Hennepin and Lake commercial area developed as the first community commercial center in the city. This prompted the convening of many groups – both proponents and opponents of a changed commercial area and began a 5 year period of planning, meetings, financing applications, meetings, suffering through the national interest rate of 18%, and more meetings – Finally success! Calhoun Square opened in 1984, to instant success! The conversion of a commercial area with too many automobiles and not much else to a charming pedestrian oriented destination with national prominence was complete.

- The result –
 - A model for other areas undertaking redevelopment
 - A dramatically increased tax base for a portion of the city Rejuvenation, mostly private, of SW Minneapolis
 - Demonstration that community area commercial developments can be successful and commercial development need not be limited to the suburbs or downtown

Special Service Districts - The problem: Snow falls on everyone’s sidewalks but some property owners delay or never remove it. The Uptown Business Association determined that the pedestrian oriented area could not tolerate these ice and snow covered sidewalks. Some of the property owners with the assistance of the Faegre Law Office (mainly Bob Hentges), created and implemented the first Special Service District legislation in Minnesota. The legislation, when implemented, provided services, such as snow and litter removal, to all properties in an area and required all properties to pay their fair share of the costs. This program has been a huge success. “There is no snow in Uptown!”

This special service district legislation has been subsequently used to inspire a variety of services to make commercial areas more attractive and sustainable.

Villa Apartments – Senior Assistance Program - The Community Housing and Service Corporation (CHSC); a non-profit subsidiary of the Minneapolis Federation for Jewish Services needed a place for seniors to live and receive services, including meals; as needed.

Minnesota Federal Savings and Loan had just taken back an eight building apartment complex on 34th and Emerson in south Minneapolis. Minnesota Federal desired to sell the buildings; Instead, on behalf of CHSC, I negotiated a net lease for all of the Villa Apartment Buildings – with the lease payment to Minnesota Federal less than the income to be received from the tenants when the buildings were fully leased. The CHSC promptly leased all of the apartments and operated the buildings successfully until the lease expired.

In addition to acquiring free control of eight buildings the CHSC instituted a service program called “Meals on Wheels” – one of the first such programs in Minnesota. Problem solved!

Greenway Gables in Loring Park -

“Are you crazy?” “Who in their right mind, would want to move downtown and especially into that awful and unsafe Loring Park area? How could you even consider such a move with your daughter, Sarah, just finishing sixth grade?”

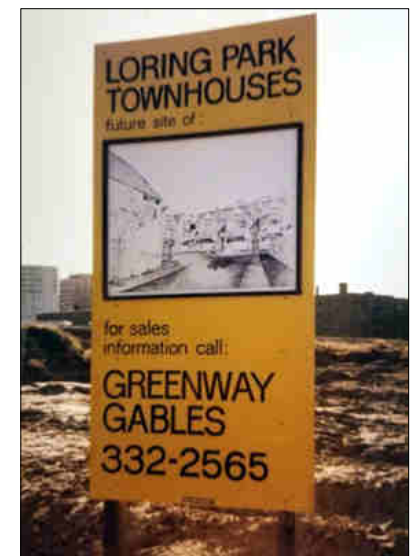
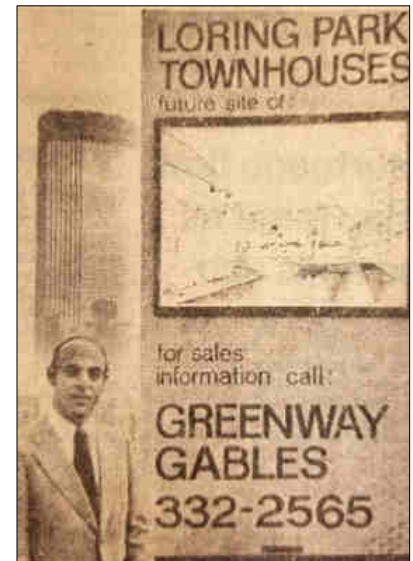
The following comments were almost a consensus from my relatives, friends, and my peers. My (to be) partner Bill Fine and I felt strongly that many people did want to live downtown; in fact we were both prepared to make the move. So what was the problem? Where and when would a home be available. The answer, Loring Park and when, TBD.

In the early seventies, the City of Minneapolis established The Loring Development District – a large area full of deteriorating properties and rampant problems. The buildings were demolished – assuring that new development would soon follow.

Due to the exorbitant interest rates in the country and the reputation of the area, lenders were unwilling to provide financing to developers for construction of the planned high-rise buildings and therefore new construction in the area lagged for months into years. The problem – without financing construction will not happen.

My partner and I would not give up. In spite of the reputation of the area, we felt that the proximity to the Walker Art Center, the Guthrie Theater, Loring Park and the IDS Building would attract buyers of well-designed townhomes. We also felt that these buyers would be willing to commit to financing their own townhomes. Both Midland Bank and Northwestern National Bank subsequently committed financing for the townhomes! Success! The next hurdle was to identify buyers for the homes. As a test, we installed a small sign offering the townhomes for sales. The response was phenomenal and all the townhomes were sold in response to the single small for sale sign. The entire Loring Development District then became alive and development soon followed.

They said we were crazy to even think of living downtown – near Loring Park! Crazy? There are now more than 50,000 people living downtown!



Minne and Me

April 1, 2021

Some of my recent blogs have prompted comments from several prominent Minneapolitans – about the blogs but mainly about

From Burt Cohen – publisher emeritus of Minneapolis – St. Paul Magazine and owner and in possession of the prime seat in the Minneapolis Club Dining Room

“Ray Harris has advised me that if I don’t recommend his new blog, he will beat me up. His strength is waning, not to mention his memory and sense of direction, but still, I hesitate to take a chance, so please read his blog.”

From Minne Apolis – one of the original residents of Minneapolis

“Ray and I are a “thing.” Although I am a few years older than Ray, we met in kindergarten and fell in love! And our love affair continues! He is loyal to me and knows everything about me that is fit to print.”

From R.T. Rybak – former Mayor of Minneapolis

“I always thought the easiest way to predict the future of Minneapolis was to find out what Ray Harris was thinking 20 years ago.”

From Father Louis Hennepin

“Although he doesn’t act like it, Ray is almost as old as Minneapolis. I met him on one of my excursions and he quickly became one of my drinking buddies. Louis Hennepin, Joseph Nicollet, Jacques Marquette, and Ray Harris – Louis, Joseph, Jacques, and Ray. One day while we were socializing we decided to name the prominent Minneapolis streets after our group – Hennepin Ave., Nicollet Ave., Marquette Ave., and Harris Ave., but for some unknown reasons the city never built Harris Ave.



Let's Go to the Movies!

June 2, 2021

Before the existence of a fancy TV set or more than one in every home and long before the availability of movie theaters with wide, reclining seats, special futuristic sound and vision gimmicks – priced along with food treats at almost unreachable cost – was **the Movie Theater** – a coveted family experience – or for a “cheap date” – or for a really special occasion. Back then, we eagerly looked forward to the “flicks.”

Movie Theaters (with a few exceptions) were uncomfortable, with limited leg space and narrow seats. Every third seat had a piece of well chewed (somebody else's) gum attached somewhere on the seat or on the floor exactly beneath the current occupants left foot.

Popcorn was cheap, and noisy. The air conditioning worked intermittently; many viewers watched multiple performances of the movies (in order to avoid the summer heat).

Back then, we overlooked the physical conditions of the venue – and focused on the movie and the stars such as, Steve McQueen, Dorothy Lamour, Rita Hayworth, and Humphrey Bogart. In addition to the feature film (before TV and iPhones) we usually received three eagerly awaited extras – a news clip about the most recent world news events, a sports clip featuring the most exciting recent game or race, and a short comedy such as Bugs Bunny or the Road Runner.

Prices ranged from 25 cents at the neighborhood theaters to a lot more – probably two or three dollars at the first run downtown theaters.

Where were the theaters back then? Most of the downtown theaters were on Hennepin Ave. – The Orpheum, State, Lyric, Pantages (also called the Mann), and Gopher. Several were on North 7th St. – The World, Alvin (later renamed Academy, and renamed Schubert. (The Alvin, in its burlesque days had a separate entrance to the second almost vertical level for citizens not welcome on the first floor).

The Century theater was also on 7th St. Probably the fanciest of all of the theaters was the Radio City Theater which was located at 9th St. and LaSalle.

Neighborhood theaters carried re-runs of the first runs of the downtown theaters. Unlike the downtown theaters where the movie goers usually dressed up for the event. – the neighborhood theaters were much more casual – and cheaper – even had Saturday matinees. The Uptown and Granada were in Uptown, The Westgate at 43rd and France, The Boulevard and Parkway in South Minneapolis, The Homewood on Plymouth, the Capri in North Minneapolis, Ritz in Northeast Minneapolis, Campus and Varsity near the U of M campus.



Granada Theater



Orpheum Theater



Pantages Theater



Ritz Theater

In addition to the above, Ferris Alexander opened several risque adult only theaters – including the Rialto and the American. Movie theater goers also regularly attended the Edina Theater at 50th and France, the St. Louis Park Theater on Minnetonka

Boulevard and the Terrace on West Broadway. Finally this was also the Drive-in Theater era with car loads attending the Mann France and other drive-in theaters.

The Marlboro Man

June 2, 2021

Smoking and Matchbooks

In the distant future when archaeologists explore landfills around Minneapolis, they will undoubtedly uncover some soggy packages containing unused “cancer sticks,” (now we know what they are) sometimes called cigarettes. At one time smoking cigarettes was widely accepted.

“The Marlboro Man,” “I’d walk a mile for a Camel,” “Lucky Strike green has gone to war.” Ads for smoking and smoke from smoking was everywhere. A rite of passage for many teenagers was to sneak a smoke. My cousin thought it was “cool” to teach me how to roll my own cigarettes – when I was eleven years old. I’m sure that smokers outnumbered non-smokers. Smoking was an acceptable vice – before the health hazards were brought forth.

As a sports enthusiast, I did not smoke – except when I was in the army during the Korean War. During training our leaders regularly allowed a ten minute break for soldiers who smoked. Non-smokers continued to work. I lit a cigarette – and took the allowed break – and did not smoke the cigarette.

Smoking was allowed in theaters – and restaurants – and on airplanes – everywhere. Gradually the smoking hazard grew and restaurants established smoking areas. Airplanes set up designated smoking sections – as if that could help restrict the smoke.

Major lawsuits soon followed – resulting in predominantly non-smoking public areas – and ultimately private decisions to ban most further smoking.

In the landfill mentioned earlier in this blog, the archaeologists also uncovered an advertisement covering some unlit fire sticks (matches – duh!) – used to activate the previously described cancer sticks. When smoking was still popular, every smoker lit their cigarette with a match from a match box, more often called a matchbook. Matchbooks were a widely accepted advertising tool for most restaurants, hotels, businesses, and even an occasional individual who had a message for the public.

I collected match boxes from all over the country. One source for this match box collection was my family and friends during their travels. The local source for my collection occurred after Minnesota Gopher Football games at the old Memorial Stadium. I would circle the stadium many times, picking up discarded match boxes. My match box collection includes many hundreds of boxes advertising mostly no longer existing hotels, restaurants, businesses, airlines, etc. – a literal history of businesses in Minneapolis, reminding us of Minneapolis – as it was.

The former Dayton’s Department Store, Charlie’s Cafe Exceptionale, The Curtis and Dyckman hotels, The President Cafe across the street from the Minneapolis Millers Ball park and even a matchbook “Taken from Hubert Humphrey’s desk.”

Many articles and books have been written about brick and mortar buildings in Minneapolis. Little has been documented about the occupants of these buildings. These matchbooks serve to humanize Minneapolis – who was there and when. These matchboxes are a welcome remnant from an almost forgotten part of our lives.



Berger's Dandelion

July 15, 2021

The Berger Fountain

One day when I returned from a peaceful stroll with my dog, I noticed my phone answering machine (this was before iPhones) was sputtering with a message from the irascible Martin Freidman – the Director of the Walker Art Center. “Mickey (his wife Mildred Freidman) and I need your help – Right now! How soon can you be at our office? “I’ll be there ASAP.”

Apparently my background in the business world and success with Ken Dayton impressed Martin (also that my mother Eleanor, had been on the Board of Directors at the Walker – and my Father Leo had been an elected member of the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board (MPRB) and worked closely with Theodore Wirth in establishing the Grand Rounds.

When I arrived, Mickey allowed me to sit down while Martin erupted “Ben Berger (a park board commissioner and local theater magnate) has given the City of Minneapolis a copy of the beautiful fountain that is located in front of the Opera House in Sydney, Australia.” I said something like “That’s wonderful – so what’s the problem?” “It’s a copy, not the original and should not dominate the four and a half acre park board land in front of the front door of the Walker and Guthrie Theater. Even though the Park Board has already given its approval, we deserve better – and certainly a much more appropriate use of the land (think Sculpture Garden).” We have the support of the Hennepin Lowry Hill Council and one of it’s leaders Roger Hale, and the Board of the Walker Art Center and its leader Mrs. Kenneth Judy Dayton – and the 7th ward alderman John Bergford (a Republican – when the Republicans controlled the City Council). However the Park Board has voted and made a commitment to its board member Ben Berger. The odds are against us. “What do we do?”

If nothing, I’ve learned that vocal opposition to a project is rarely successful; an alternative, or two, is much more likely to succeed. We first met with Ben Berger and pleaded, and cajoled – Finally Ben said “I’m 77 years old, I’ll accept another location as long as the fountain is operational while I’m still alive.” – Number one hurdle overcome! Next – find a relocation site.

A 12th and Nicollet site was suggested and argued. Finally a site in Loring Park, where the mythical yet to be financed and yet to be built, Loring Greenway meets Loring Park was agreed upon by all – unanimously. Success! Now the “Berger Fountain” is almost 50 years old. The pump and the electrical system work, sporadically. Some of the aluminum spouts emit a few drops occasionally, some shoot water almost across Willow Street. There were no repair funds requested of Berger along with the gift – so the fountain only works part time, in the summer. And then comes winter! The aluminum rods are dismantled – to avoid theft and for its entire life the fountain has been completely covered in the winter with an “ugly” box without any decoration.

However, the Berger Fountain thrives, as does the Sculpture Garden.



The Dunwoody Saga

July 15, 2021

The first development proposal for the 4 and 1/2 acre Dunwoody property in the Lowry Hill neighborhood was submitted to the City of Minneapolis and the Lowry Hill Homeowners organization (LHHO) in 1959 – more than 20 years of controversy and negotiations followed before the property was developed – to everyone's satisfaction.

Part One – The Approval Process

In 1959, developer Anthony Cherne bought the property (including the Dunwoody Mansion) and proposed to build a 12 story 55 unit apartment in a neighborhood consisting of 2 and 3 story homes overlooking the Walker Art Center, Guthrie Theater and downtown Minneapolis.

The development required a zoning change; the homeowners group (LHHO) was adamantly opposed to the rezoning (spot zoning) – submitting petitions and attending many controversial meetings. The early rezoning was turned down.

The developer (Cherne), if he could not build the high rise building, next threatened to demolish the mansion, cut down the trees throughout the property and build numerous small inexpensive homes that would not be compatible with the neighborhood but would be acceptable under the present zoning of the area. Stressing the inexpensive rental housing could be removed in 10 or 15 years upon receipt of the rezoning, Cherne expected community approval; the community responded with even stronger opposition.

This battle between the developer and the community continued for years. At one point Cherne believed he was making some progress – but was met by a veto from Mayor Arthur Naftalin. Cherne then claimed that the veto by Mayor Naftalin was illegal – and the legality issue was taken up by the Minnesota Supreme Court – which promptly ruled in favor of the community.

The battle continued. The developer Cherne's only response was to revise the proposal – now the building was to be an 18 story building with 100 rental units. During these later skirmishes, the community formed a committee to review the status of the battle and determine a course of action. The group, of many devoted community members and led by Howard Dahlgren, concluded that the land use map could and should be revised to allow townhomes in addition to single family homes. Subsequently, the city of Minneapolis did revise the land use map.

Part Two – Progress

During the later years of the protracted encounter, I had attempted and finally succeeded in meeting with the leader of the opposition, Tony Cherne. I only confided in one resident, Ernie Lehman; otherwise the homeowners group was not aware of my efforts to end the twenty year land use war. At first Cherne was angry and not willing to consider any resolution. Eventually, after several meetings, Cherne agreed that his high rise goals would never be realized and that he would prepare an option to sell the property to me, absent any contingencies. Success.

The next step in the twenty year Dunwoody saga was to design and build a townhome project that could meet the lofty expectations of the surrounding home owners, the balance of the Lowry Hill community, and everyone throughout Minneapolis who had been interested in this decades long effort to preserve the quality and unique aspects of one of the original neighborhoods of Minneapolis.

My partner, Norman Ackerberg (a seasonal local developer who shared my commitment to Minneapolis and the Lowry Hill community), and I were determined to make the Dunwoody Townhomes (to be soon named Mt. Curve Place), a project whose design, quality of construction and special site improvements would always symbolize the excellence achieved by the commitment and efforts expended by the community and the developers. Recognizing the spectacular location of the property, overlooking the Guthrie Theater, the Walker Art Center and downtown Minneapolis – and the extreme vertical nature of the property, we selected an architect with experience designing and building on similar steep sites in San Francisco – John Field, formerly of Minneapolis and a partner in the well known California firm, Bull Field Volkmann Stockwell. John joined us

for a number of community meetings during which neighbors and planners and architects gave us their input and ideas for the development of Mt. Curve Place.

After several iterations, the final plans showed –

- **STUNNING, LARGE, DARK BRICK, 3 LEVEL HOMES** completely compatible with the surrounding Lowry Hill Mansions.
- **STEEP HILL** – When we retained John Field with his San Francisco hillside construction experience we expected the project would utilize the hillside; John Field surprised us and placed the home sites of most of the homes at the top of the hill – along Mt. Curve Ave. overlooking downtown Minneapolis. “Don’t build on the hill,” John advised, “but take advantage of the view.”
- **EARTHQUAKE-PROOF** – Using his California experience, John significantly over-planned the homes – to withstand California earthquakes and unnecessarily adding to the sale price.
- **RETAINING WALL** – An additional feature that was required was the construction of a massive retaining wall that would prevent any future movement of the plateau which holds all of the townhomes at the top of the hill.

My recent success in building and selling the Greenway Gables Townhomes in Loring Park led my partner and me to expect an overwhelming buyer interest for the homes. We expected some resistance due to the large size of the homes and the purchase price; however we were surprised that, in spite of the spectacular site, its unique location overlooking downtown Minneapolis and the exciting appearance and quality of the homes – many potential buyers made it clear that they wanted to purchase a downtown townhome – and the Dunwoody/Mt. Curve place development was not downtown!

The homes were ultimately sold to committed urban Minneapolis buyers – even the future governor, Mark Dayton.

All in all, Mt. Curve Place was/is a great success – a credit to all of the community efforts over a twenty year period. Once in a while, “It’s a funny thing about life; if you refuse to accept anything but the best, you very often get it!



The Douglas School Site

July 15, 2021

In the early 70s when Douglas School was demolished, the future use of the site and the effect it would have on the surrounding area became a concern for the surrounding neighbors. The School Board wanted to sell the site – for a use supported by the neighborhood and one that would put the property back on the tax rolls. So what should be the use and who should be the developer?

Everyone felt a residential use would be appropriate. However, selecting a developer became a major problem. The urban unrest and the fires in North Minneapolis in 1968 had caused many developers to transfer their development efforts to the suburbs. Planners and lenders were also deeply concerned about the future of the cities! The area surrounding the Douglas School site was declared to be “transitional” at best. The lenders from the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) recommended a high density rental development with small units and limited rents. This was not the kind of development desired by the community. The very vocal neighborhood groups and the surrounding neighbors were strongly in favor of a low density development including home ownership. The residents of the neighborhood obviously had a much more positive opinion about their community and were adamant about their position.

A successful resolution was accomplished! Members of the Lowry Hill neighborhood group entered into an informal arrangement with me, and a local developer; the group then acquired an option to purchase the Douglas site from the school district. Next, the local banks agreed to provide project financing. Ultimately, the project consisted of 25 attached 3 level homes for home ownership. This was to be the first attached townhomes in Minneapolis – for individual home owners. In addition to the town homes, approximately 25% of the site was to be preserved as a neighborhood park space.



The development proceeded, was completed and all of the homes promptly sold. Almost fifty years later, the townhomes continue to be a very positive community asset. In spite of the risk assumed by the development group and in spite of the skepticism of HUD and many planners, the entire Lowry Hill area is a model of great success.

Another Withdrawal from My Memory Bank

August 20, 2021

My memories are overflowing my memory bank again. Today I'm going to provide some interesting facts about Minneapolis that only a few of us can remember and have probably forgotten – and some Minneapolitans (of a younger age or originally from elsewhere) were never aware.

Did you know –

- That the marvelous Sculpture Garden on the Park Board property (managed and developed by the Walker Art Center) was called Armory Gardens. Why – In the early 1900s, Armory Gardens was the site of the National Guard Armory. Soil conditions were not conducive to support a major building. Following continuing problems and several structural failures the building was demolished. The Sculpture Garden was subsequently developed on the site. Bad soil conditions have continued to cause cracks and failures to the structures on the property.



Armory Gardens

- That, with the exception of the Foshay Tower constructed in 1929, and a few others in the downtown area – Minneapolis was not known as a city with high rise buildings. Whatever the reason, the city skyline included almost entirely buildings of five stories or less in height.
 - In the 1960s and 70s, the Public Housing Authority began to build public buildings throughout the city – high rise buildings – the precedent was set – private high rise buildings followed.
- That the First Ave music venue on 7th Street and First Avenue, was the site of the downtown Minneapolis Greyhound Bus Station. Greyhound buses used entry and exits on both 7th St. and First Ave. Greyhound was the predominant bus company serving other cities and outstate Minnesota.
- That Minneapolis was considered the most anti-Semitic city in the United States.
 - Restrictive zoning ordinances prohibited Jewish persons from residing in certain communities.
 - Jewish persons could not belong to the Automotive Association (AAA) – then located on LaSalle Ave. near Loring Park Mount Sinai Hospital (at 22nd and Chicago Ave.) was developed and served as the hospital for Jewish doctors who were not allowed to serve patients at other Minneapolis hospitals



- The Minneapolis Athletic Club and the Minneapolis Club did not allow Jewish members.
- Few Jewish persons were employed at Minneapolis banks, financial institutions and major Minneapolis businesses. Perhaps the best and certainly the loudest example of this anti-Semitic era were the antics of the father and son duo who were the spokesmen for the River Lake Gospel Tabernacle on East Lake St. Paul and Luke Rader spewed anti Semitic venom to everyone in their sanctuary and to thousands of radio listeners in the area!



River Lake Gospel Tabernacle

- Powderhorn Lake was only a swamp before dredges were brought in to remove enough of the swamp to create the lake. The south portion of Lake Calhoun (now Bde Maka Ska) was also converted from it's natural state to become part of the larger lake. The Minneapolis Dredging Co. performed both conversions. My father owned Minneapolis Dredging Co.
- Every year elephants, tigers, lions and clowns frequented and paraded in downtown Minneapolis. The Shrine Circus filled the old Minneapolis Auditorium and entertained small children as well as adult children.
- Originally, an agreement was reached that made St. Paul the capital of Minnesota. Other parts of the agreement placed the main campus of the University of Minnesota in Minneapolis – and awarded the prison to Stillwater.
 - in 1895, several Minneapolis legislators mounted a strong effort to move the capital to Minneapolis. The proposal was that Loring Park would be donated and become the location of the capital. Controversy between St. Paul and Minneapolis ensued. An existing mortgage on the Loring Park property ultimately caused the transfer to be declined. St. Paul remains the capital.

Affordable Housing and Rent Control

August 20, 2021

The need for more affordable housing is one of the top priorities for every community in the United States. Minneapolis is no exception. City officials, developers, politicians, and community groups have consistently focused on this problem – a wide variety of efforts to mitigate this problem have been tried. New construction, rehabilitation, and rent control are examples. The problem persists and is steadily worsening! It seems as if we are only taking an aspirin pill in an attempt to eliminate a major disease – a disease that has been spreading and affecting more of our citizens for many years; many decades.

The Crisis in Rental Housing

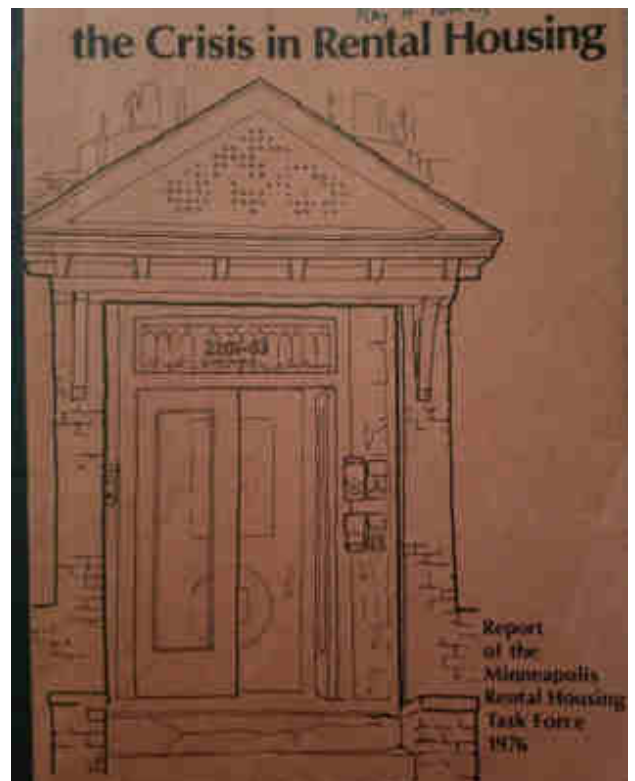
In 1975 (46 years ago) the President of the Minneapolis City Council, Alderman Lou DeMars, asked me to chair a blue ribbon committee to investigate the rental housing crisis in Minneapolis and to respond to rent control efforts that were being advocated. Apparently I was considered neutral and able to keep control of a group of passionate housing advocates – developers, owners, renters, property managers, city and state public officials, national advocates of different housing aspects such as modular housing and rent control and even representatives of financial institutions and building materials. This was truly a group that represented every conceivable point of view regarding the housing situation in Minneapolis.

The committee met more than 60 times during the following year. Every aspect of housing – the physical buildings, the management of the buildings, and the occupants of the buildings was discussed – almost endlessly but to the satisfaction of the entire committee.

We published a report “The Crisis in Rental Housing.” The conclusion of the year long study and of the report did not focus on the cost of building materials or the quality of management or the behavior of building occupants or even the expressed financial needs of the building owners. No, the unanimous conclusion was that the problem was tenant affordability or more succinctly stated – non- affordability of the tenants – the inability of the tenant to afford the cost of rent along with all of their other costs of living – food costs, health care costs, the costs of transportation, education, taxes, heat etc. etc. The total sum of their costs was beyond their income – their ability to pay.

Rent control was also thoroughly discussed during many of the meetings in 1975. Ultimately the community agreed that “rent control would not solve the basic lack of income problem – the disparity between the ability to pay rent and the rent required to operate rental housing in a satisfactory manner.” Rent control was not supported by the committee.

The problem in 1975 was an affordability problem – the tenant of rental housing was unable to afford to pay all of their costs of living – food, health care, housing taxes, transportation etc. etc. The problem today, 46 years later, has not changed; actually the problem has worsened because all of the costs of living have increased far more rapidly than personal incomes, which after adjusting for inflation, have barely changed.



Minneapolis Rental Housing Task Force Report, 1976

There are only two ways to address the affordability problem – to reduce the affordability squeeze.

1. Increase the income of the tenant
2. Reduce the costs of housing so that rents could be reduced

1. Increase tenant income – The most direct method to improve affordability would be to increase or supplement the tenants income. For example, Universal Basic Income (UBI) is a financial tool being tried in California and elsewhere. UBI is the provision of funds to eligible individuals in an effort to assist them in covering their costs of living. Other efforts to increase income should be supported – such as the \$15.00/hour minimum wage.

2. Reduce the costs of housing –

- Materials and labor – the rapidly rising cost of materials and labor work against cost reductions
- Rent control is not the answer! Since renter affordability is the problem, rent control makes no more sense than placing similar controls on all other rental costs. How about food cost controls, health care cost controls, gasoline cost controls, etc? Lee Shafer wrote an excellent article on rent control in the Star Tribune dated July 4, 2021. The article was not supportive of rent control – suggesting the addition of more rental units as a solution to the affordability problems rather than rent control. The addition of more housing units, thereby providing competition for available tenants, should theoretically reduce rents. The opposite effect might result – New construction may well be terminated if total net income is problematic to the developer.
- Reduce the cost of money. The developer of rental housing expects to pay a “market” rate for the money needed to pay all of the costs of materials and labor to build the building – or expects a “market” rate return for the amount he or she invests as equity in the building. To the extent the cost of funds can be available at a “below” market rate, the total building cost would be reduced which then will allow lower rents – and better affordability. This subsidy can be provided through the use of social impact funds (below market interest rate funds), crowdfunding (below market rate funds for a particular project) and from the public sector through low income housing tax credits (LIHTC). All of these techniques are helpful in reducing housing costs – but they are not nearly adequate in the amount of funds provided.

There could be another source of below market funds – a source with greater potential!

In our society there is an enormous amount of discretionary/disposable income controlled primarily by persons of the Boomer generation (born between 1945 and 1965). These funds are often being provided for worthwhile causes at below market rates. Many of these funds are, or could be provided as pure contributions with zero expectations of even a return of the capital provided. Current recipients of these funds, for example, the Cancer Society, Humane Society and Walker Art Center, receive substantial amounts annually to support their other sources of income. An **Affordable Living Fund** could be established – not in lieu of but as an alternative to these other worthwhile causes. Substantial funds could be available annually with the donor receiving a deduction for tax purposes. These efforts to reduce the cost of funds needed to provide “affordable housing” would result in lower rents and improved affordability.

While a direct income supplement would be the most effective means to improve affordability – adding new units and reducing the costs of funds will certainly help. **ANYTHING TO IMPROVE AFFORDABILITY, AFFORDABLE LIVING IS THE GOAL!**

Favorite People

August 20, 2021

My professional career in Minneapolis began in the late 1950s, almost sixty five years ago. I've been a part of many changes/improvements in Minneapolis – and I've been an interested spectator at many more. During that time, there are several persons who particularly influenced me and played a very important part in Minneapolis, as it was and as it is. They were fascinating personalities and certainly memorable.

Amos Deinard – one of the greatest attorneys ever! And I know most of them – representing and controlling me – or on the opposite side. Amos was blind! His brother Benedict, helped him as the two of them went through Harvard Law School. They were partners in the highly respected law firm Leonard, Street and Deinard. Amos had a “photographic memory” – remembered every word of legal documents – or important speeches. He was a great scrabble and anagram player – seldom lost. An avid participant in general community and Jewish community affairs, he was selected to lead in both. A brilliant and compassionate community leader.

Barbara Flanagan – Depending on your point of view, Barbara was “far ahead of her time – the community conscience – a visionary” – OR “a burr under the saddle – entirely unrealistic – a wildly enthusiastic gadfly.” Barbara hated automobiles and the vacant lots used for parking them. She thought everyone should eat outside and encouraged rehabilitation of old buildings – usually urban and sometimes salvageable. Barbara wrote a regular column in the daily paper. Everyone read her column and some even agreed with her. Barbara loved Calhoun Square – with its hidden auto parking facility, outside eating, rehabbed buildings and window shopping for her beloved pedestrians.

For me, Barbara was the Minneapolis version of Jane Jacobs, the world famous urbanologist and visionary author (*Death and life of Great American Cities*)



Barbara Flanagan and Harry Davis

Harry Davis – I met Harry while the fires were burning on Plymouth Ave. during the riots in 1968. Harry was *the* person who connected with the protestors (mostly African-American) and the white business community – and succeeded in calming the furor. He was a leader in the Urban Coalition in its efforts to respond to the urban unrest.

Harry was tough, and kind, and determined to put out the fires that existed on the streets and in people's minds. A former boxer, Harry fought to bring people together and was tireless in striving to forge a single community from its disparate parts. Harry was on the

Minneapolis School Board, a candidate for mayor and many more – an important piece of the history of Minneapolis. Too bad he isn't around now!

Ted Mann – Whenever I received a phone call at the ungodly hour of 3:23 AM or 4:17 AM, I knew it was not a crank call or an emergency. It was Ted Mann! “Ray, I’ve decided to buy (or sell).” Ted lived 24/7 and expected the same from others. In all of my real estate years when I represented clients, Ted was the most unpredictable and one of my favorites. He was a theater magnate – the Mann Theater, the Mann Drive-In theater on France Avenue etc. and was also buyer and seller of real estate. He asked a lot of questions and sometimes listened. He started with nothing and multiplied his successes. Ted was charming and could be a fearless negotiator – success was his! He was also philanthropic – a fanatic in his support of the community and the arts (The Mann Theater for the Arts) – a wonderful human being!



Mann Drive-In Theater on France Ave.

Others who are unforgettable; who made my career interesting –

- **Lou Zelle** – the creator of St. Anthony Main, for whom I assembled the old mattress factory and the other required properties.
- **Mayor George Latimer** – The wonderful St. Paul leader, who tried repeatedly to lure me to develop in his city – without success.
- **Rudy Boschwitz** – The king of Plywood, Minnesota – very active in Jewish community activities and even the Republican Senator for Minnesota.
- **Chuck Denny** – a classmate of mine at Stanford University, a highly successful business leader – always available to help wannabe entrepreneurs and the world's nicest guy!
- **The Chalfen family** – owned the Nankin restaurant, built the Summit House Towers (one of the earliest high rise residential complexes, brought the aqua follies to Minneapolis.

Comments from the Blog

Jane Bierstein Abel (February 18, 2022)

Thanks for your recollection of the early days. Wish my family had settled in the area, instead of Texas and Ca. Keep enjoying life.

I am a STRULDBRUG

September 23, 2021

One of my favorite and most memorable books is *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. The book portrays the lives and travails of the Lilliputians, a mythical group of tiny people. A STRULDBRUG is an old and decrepit Lilliputian who keeps getting older and older but never dies!

By the time you finish reading this post, I am sure that I will fit your STRULDBRUG definition. My post today is relevant to more than Minneapolis and its residents – to everyone in the United States and even most of the world. It is about my carefully considered opinions and conclusions (and perhaps a few exaggerations) about the evolution of **COMMUNICATION** during my lifetime – 92 years.

I decided to write this blog when I recently received a phone call from half way around the world. My daughter Sarah was in Riga, Latvia to watch her son Chet, my grandson, lead his USA team to the World Championships for 19 year old basketball players. I marveled at the basketball team and almost as much about the phone call and the quality of the television coverage. Thus, this Communication post.

In the Beginning

If possible, the custom of sending messages using a blanket, sending signals over an open fire, was before my time. I'm sure, the absence of wind or the wind blowing in the wrong direction made that method of communication problematic!

I'll start this communication blog with **the Pencil**.

The most desirable pencil was, and is, the #2 (if my memory is correct – made by the Eberhard Faber Co.) Any number higher than #2 meant the pencil was too hard to make an impression without the lead breaking. A hand operated pencil sharpener was needed often in order to keep #2 sharp enough to allow continued use. Every #2 pencil included a rubber eraser at its other end. The eraser served the writer as the delete button operates presently. However, erasers wore out quickly if the writer made numerous mistakes or the eraser soon became hard and unusable if mistakes were seldom made.

Pen and Ink

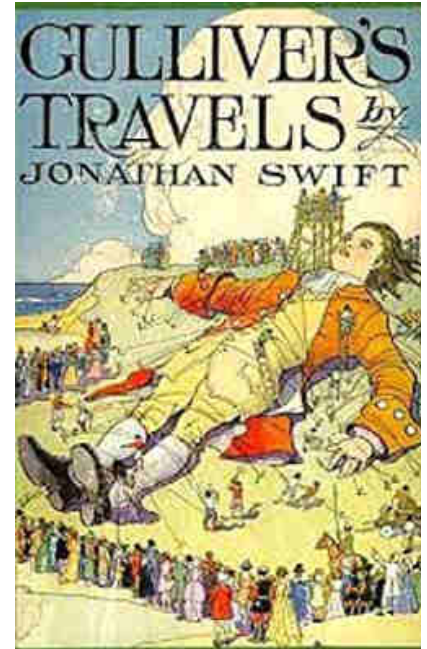
Soon a bottle of ink became widely available and a pen or quill to transfer the ink to paper. A blotter was necessary to dry or remove any excess ink. Next the Fountain Pen was introduced – a device that held enough ink to allow the ink bottle to be kept elsewhere – elsewhere was such an inconvenient place that the writer sometimes continued the document with a pencil.



The pencil or the pen could be used for printing or cursive writing (cursive no longer being taught) – assuming the writer knew either or both.

The **Ball Point Pen** was next to appear.

With a seemingly endless supply of “ink” – Ball points always stopped functioning at the most critical moments and became part of the throw away mentality. Oh well, just find another ball point pen! Ball points have survived and are still in use.



There was a small group of people (usually women), who trained as “**stenographers**” and were able to rapidly take dictation. They then could magically transform the “hieroglyphics” into a finished and rational document.

Typewriter

Next, the Typewriter became popular (the Royal was my favorite) with some people; it’s advantage was speed and legibility – and, for a patient few, copies of the original document could be produced by the use of Carbon paper – guaranteed to produce ink like stains on all hands! A fluid, whiteout, was available to cover up mistakes or else the document could be retyped.

Using the **Pencil, Pen and Typewriter**

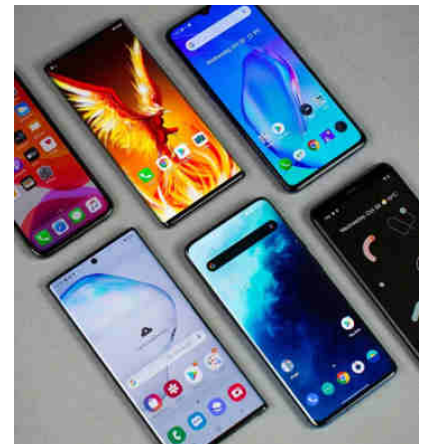
- We could create “snail mail” letters or invoices for our friends and relatives and customers. Letter postage cost three cents!
- Air Mail required the letter to be clearly designated AIR MAIL, and additional postage.
- Special delivery – For even more postage, the letter could be delivered to the recipient by a real live person. Postcards could also be sent – a postcard stamp cost one cent.
- Zip codes came much later – Without a zip code or If the zip code was incorrect – the letter was sent to oblivion, even if the address was correct.
- Special (important) messages could be sent locally, and more often nationally and delivered to the recipient in the form of a telegram – by a company called Western Union – even money could be sent to the eagerly waiting recipient.
- Copying capabilities – guaranteed to generate frustration and profanity
 - Carbon paper – a wannabe piece of paper inserted between two immaculate pieces of paper was supposed to copy the original message but most likely to produce two “smudged” copies and an ink like substance on the hands, nose, and ears of the person responsible for the copy. The Mimeograph machine was to be a successor to carbon paper – and it succeeded in making a bigger mess, and faster.
- The Fax machine could send messages from a phone number of the sender – through the air waves to a phone number of the recipient, and the message was printed out on special paper whereby the message disappeared almost instantaneously. This quirk was eliminated on more recent fax machines.

Telephone

So far this blog post has focused on the written word and the tools needed to express them. The telephone gave an opportunity for the callers to exchange ideas from a distance.

I remember that one of my first exposures to the telephone was to a device attached to the wall – a device that rang often because it was a “party line” with quite a number of members. Privacy on a party line was not possible as most of the other members listened to all calls – whether or not they were the party calling or being called.

Next I remember a vertical speaker about 12 inches tall attached by a long cord to a receiver that was manually held to the ear by the person talking on the phone. Similar to new car models every year, the design of phones were updated and made more efficient – with a circular dialing system. Six digit numbers and area codes did not exist yet. Four digit numbers were attached to prefixes such as Locust, Gladstone, Hyland, Colfax – all for local calls. If the phone line was “busy” – in use by others – a message *could not be* provided for the intended recipient.



Long distance calls were another matter. The caller had to dial (0) and enlist an operator to place the call. Long distance calls were expensive and charged by the minutes spoken, the time of day (late night was least expensive) and the distance of the call. Most of the calls initiated by my family were placed around 9PM and lasted only a few minutes. Actually, the charges could be reversed (the recipient paying for the call) if the operator received the recipient's permission.

Thick and heavy **phone books** were distributed annually with listings of every phone number user. A separate Yellow Pages book listed all business numbers. These books were also used for unrelated purposes such as senseless scribbling or as a youngster "high chair."

Phone books are almost obsolete now.

Before iPhones and Computers became popular, **Newspapers** received widespread readership; some people even subscribed to a morning AND evening paper. Some papers projected a blue hue while others were clearly reddish. All of them, however, featured Dick Tracy, Jack Armstrong – The All American Boy, and Popeye and Olive Oyl. Newspapers cost only a few cents. Those who subscribed to the newspaper were visited regularly by the "Paper Boy" who diligently collected the few dollars owed for the delivered papers.

Readership of newspapers has declined (due to widespread TV and mobile phone usage), resulting in mergers and closures of many newspaper publishers.

Radio

Then, there was, and is the Radio – the principal mode of entertainment and information gathering for most homeowners before the advent of television. Everyone had favorite stations and favorite programs. Edward R. Murrow and H.V. Kaltenborn spoke of their views of the news. Jack Benny and Fred Allen kept everybody laughing. The Shadow Knows was a popular weekly mystery. Sporting events were all described – probably the best known was by Halsey Hall on WCCO radio – who erupted with a "Holy Cow" with every touchdown or home run! In those days we had no expectation of seeing sporting events or news as they happened. That explains the excitement of seeing the short news and sports clips at the movie theaters before the main feature was shown.

Speaking of radio in Minneapolis, I would be remiss without stressing the dominance of WCCO radio in Minneapolis and in the entire upper Midwest. In addition to Halsey Hall in sports, the gravelly voice of Cedric Adams with the 10PM news was a tradition in many households. Other notable WCCO programs were Clellan Card, Boone & Erickson, and Steve Cannon with his cast of characters including Morgan Mundane and Ma Linger.

My most vivid memories of events reported on radio were the events that precipitated World War II – Pearl Harbor and the unexpected Armistice Day Blizzard and the scary "End of the World" put on by Orson Welles.

Television

Following World War II, the primitive Black and White television came on the scene. Only four channels were available – At first, remotes did not exist and TV reception was mediocre at best. Most people added "rabbit ears" antennae. Gradually, TV improvements were available. An instant ON feature was added – causing many fires (my home on Fremont was totally gutted by a TV fire). Additional channels and Color TV soon followed – our lifestyles were forever changed as TV programs were refined and larger TV screens became common. TV allowed us to see everything almost before it happened – people became glued to their television sets; many were so fascinated by the "tube" that they practically retired from their active lives – trading it for becoming a passive bystander.

The next improvement in our quality of life has been the age of the **computer/tablet/smart phone** – number 1 through number 27

(I've lost track of the number of updated phones and the cost of each)

- Now we have a GPS system to guarantee we will never again be lost
- Now we have Google – to allow us to know everything by pushing a button – even though this knowledge disappears almost instantly.

- Now we have online meeting and dating – completely changing who and how we meet and the future of relationships
- Now we blame communication failures on “the internet.” “Just turn off the machine and restart it.” Years ago we had a mythical and mischievous character named Kilroy – “Kilroy was here!” To take all blame.
- Now we can write letters, perform financial machinations by email – clearly and rapidly – with instantaneous ability to make corrections and even deliver the message anywhere in the world – instantly!

A whole new set of vocabulary has been added to our language – “streaming,” “the cloud,” “Fire Stick,” “Blog,” etc. And now we have **TEXTING** – rapidly becoming the sole means of communication for a growing number of people – predominantly the young. Human beings are social animals, differentiated from all other animals by their ability and need to exchange ideas directly with other human beings – to speak to each other. Many who text choose not to speak directly with anyone anymore (the wink of an eye, or a harsh glare or any “body chemistry) have disappeared – and are losing the desire and ability to look up from their phone and exchange comments directly.

Is this progress? As a **STRULDBRUG** – an old codger – a 92 year old curmudgeon, I will never approve of trading a machine for direct communication with any friends, and even some of my relatives.

Why

September 21, 2021

Some of the people reading my blogs are asking and often I wonder why I have chosen to take on some of these risky and seemingly impossible projects and persist until success appears or, in very few cases, failures is the end result. After all, being self-employed, I have no one else to blame; I am totally responsible for my actions – or inactions. So, why? My answer is quite simple – summarized in a few sentences (source unknown) by someone who certainly knows me –

The master in the art of living makes little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his education and recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence in whatever he does, leaving to others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him he is always doing both.

Yes, I choose what I do or don't. Further, to me, life is a challenge, a game with winners and losers – full of risks, hard work and sometimes – reward.

Theodore Roosevelt summarized my “addiction” as follows –

It is not the critic who counts, not the man who points out how the strong man stumbled or where the doer of deeds could have done them better. The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena; whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood; who strives valiantly; who errs and comes short again and again; who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause; who, at the best, knows the triumph of high achievement; and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so that his place shall never be with those cold and timid souls who know neither victory nor defeat.

Thanksgiving

December 15, 2021



"A picture of a turkey, not me (Ray) AS a turkey." My instructions for this image from one Ray Harris – Aleah

Thanksgiving week has passed and Thursday, November 25th was Turkey Day for most Americans. However, my family did not celebrate in our traditional manner. My grandson Chet Holmgren, a 7'1" basketball player, and his Gonzaga Team were playing two games in Las Vegas, Nevada with half of the family attending. Knowing this was scheduled, our family and about 75 guests sat down and shared a Turkey (and assorted wonderful, tasty items that traditionally accompany the bird) on Friday, August 20th – this year August 20th was our Thanksgiving!

During the dinner and many times afterwards, I've thought about Thanksgiving – what is it and what should it be? Is it a day to sit around a gorgeous turkey followed by a couple of hours gorging on the bird and then watching a few football games? Or does it signify the beginning of the holiday/shopping season? Thanksgiving should not be either of these – Thanksgiving should be with us all year, every day. It is an inner feeling that should nourish us as much as our daily meals. Thanksgiving day should only be about an opportunity to express these feelings openly – to our friends and family.

Most of us should be full of thanks – for a year of plenty – enough good food, reasonably good health for family and friends and a year that has many more pleasant and positive experiences than ones to be forgotten.

There are many that are less fortunate. We need to help them – when and where and if we can – they will be thankful and we will too – that we are able to give some of our overflowing, to others not so lucky.

I am 92 years old and permanently in an electric wheelchair (my Lamborghini), the recipient of twelve pills daily and on a low- sodium and no sugar diet. And I have never been more thankful because, I am the patriarch of a wonderful family – a basketball player, a teacher, a Republican, a couple of inveterate travelers etc., and bunches of great friends. I plan to live a long time – maybe forever! I have written my own self-deprecating obituary – but since it may never be needed, I've destroyed it and am now embarking on "My Life's Journey – so far."

So what else is on my Thankful List?

- I love my city – Minneapolis.
 - with all of it's lakes – a couple of which were created by my father's dredging company.
 - with all of it's parks – my father was on the Park Board and worked with Theodore Wirth to create the Grand Rounds
 - with it's ever changing weather – better than hurricanes, fires, earthquakes, and floods. I love the snow and the rain but leave the singing and dancing to Gene Kelly
- Dogs have been my special joy. I've had sixteen of them sharing my food and bed. I gave them the Loring Park Off-Leash Dog Park as a tiny act of gratitude. May they forever romp and enjoy!
- I've "made lemonade out of lemons" even though sugar is now replaced by Splenda (tastes almost as good).
- Now that walking is replaced by riding in my Lamborghini, I am thankful that I will never again be required to buy replacement soles and heels for my shoes. Little things are important.
- Thanksgiving is a special day for me. I have set a record never to be equaled. For 61 consecutive years, I carved the turkey at the beginning of our Thanksgiving dinner. Oh what memories of family and friends sharing the bird!

Yes, Thanksgiving is much more than just a day to eat or sleep or shop; rather to reflect, to appreciate what we have, to treasure family and friends, and to remember hard times and good ones – and to dedicate part of ourselves to helping those who have less to be thankful for.

Cedar Riverside

December 15, 2021

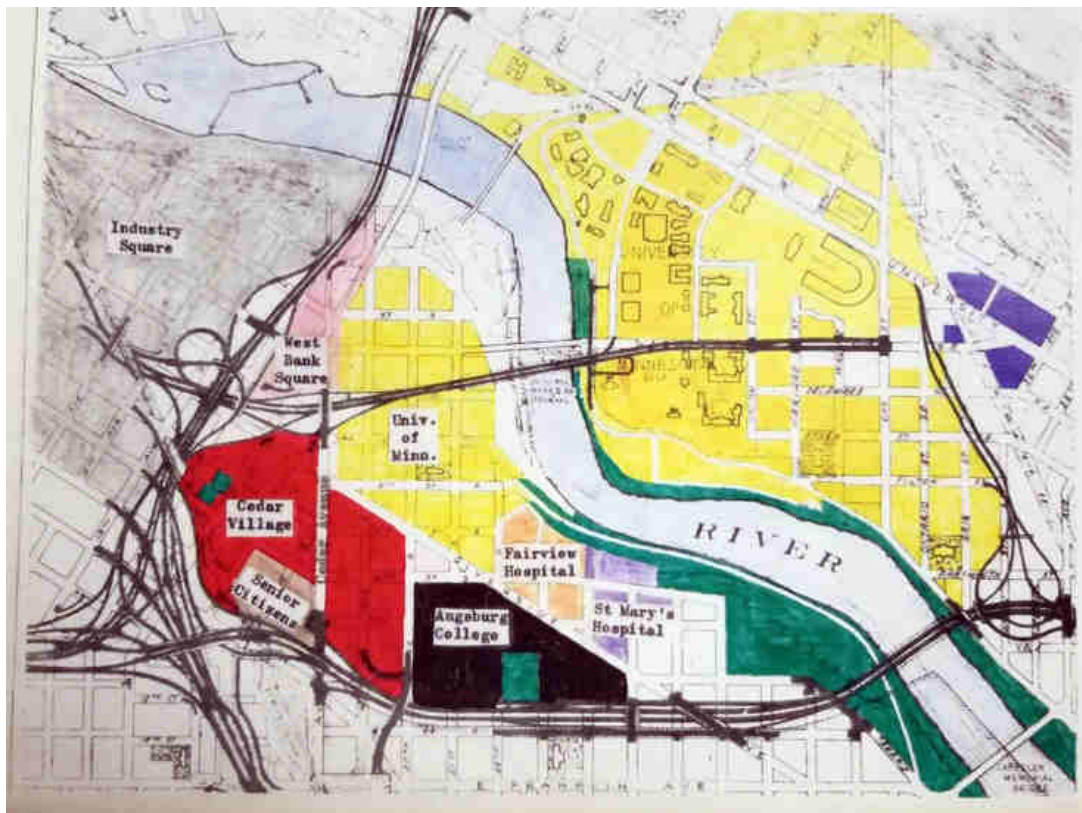
The installation of the Interstate Highway System during the Eisenhower Administration caused major changes in urban areas throughout America; changes to our psyche, our lifestyles, and our physical environment.

The massive roadway expansion cemented our love affair with the automobile – increasing our reliance on it for our groceries, our vacations, to travel to our place of work, and our place of worship. City and traffic planners are also continually promoting public transportation, and futurists are even predicting that driverless autos are just around the corner.

The interstate system has facilitated the expansion of the suburbs – enlarging urban areas with white picket fences, manicured front yards, soccer fields, cul-de-sacs, backed up traffic, and greatly extended commuter times.

In many cities, Minneapolis included, the highway expansion has physically split neighborhoods, usually lower economic neighborhoods and ones of color. The highway planners certainly fostered systemic racism into the distant future.

The highway expansion program did contribute to at least one profound positive change in Minneapolis. The University of Minnesota expanded its main urban campus across the Mississippi River to the “West Bank” and the Cedar Riverside neighborhood evolved.



The construction of Interstate 35W (going north and south at that location) and the construction of Interstate 94 (going east and west) and the existing Mississippi River, created a large parcel of land surrounded by these three barriers (I- 35, I-94, and the river). The University soon established the boundaries of the West Bank campus. The Augsburg College campus already was located within this newly created area as were the Fairview and St. Mary's Hospitals. The balance of the newly created neighborhood (approximately equal to that committed to the institutions), was to remain private and continue in its present use or be developed privately.

Cedar Riverside

Historically, the Cedar Riverside area (named after its two principal streets – Cedar Ave. and Riverside Ave.) consisted of small older properties occupied mostly by immigrants. The intersection of Cedar Ave. with Riverside Ave. and the nearby confluence of many streets called Seven Corners served the commercial needs of the area. The entire aging neighborhood had already deteriorated – some vacant lots and even some small industrial properties remained, along with the residential properties..

Two private investment development groups became interested in the ownership and development of projects in the area. The Segal/Heller group selected the area east of Cedar Ave. The leaders of this group were Gloria Segal (a former state representative) and Keith Heller (a rotund instructor at the University of Minnesota).

I was brought in to assist Cedar Riverside Associates, the group interested in the properties west of Cedar Ave.

My job description was short and clear – purchase ALL of the more than 50 properties west of Cedar Ave. and, if successful, manage all of these properties until the time was appropriate to build a low-rise residential series of buildings to serve the adjacent institutions.

Property acquisition began. I negotiated with all 50+ owners, separately, night and day. The acquisition phase lasted almost a year.

The Star Tribune called me “the Skulker,” because of my stealthy style. Some of the purchases were certainly noteworthy.

For example –

- The seller of one aging and deteriorated residential property was Arne Carlson – the future Governor of Minnesota.
- Hallie (last name redacted for privacy) owned what appeared to be a large rooming house. Hallie said very directly “you’re not buying real estate – you’re buying a business and I want the proceeds in cash.” Yes, Hallie was a madam running a “house of ill repute.” We bought the property – not the business – and paid in cash. About twenty years later I received a call from Hallie, “I’m going into an assisted living facility and you were so gracious when you purchased my property in Cedar Riverside that I will sell you my duplex/ home adjacent to your Calhoun Square project. I did purchase the duplex for my son and daughter to occupy.
- The purchase of one small property required obtaining 13 signatures of property heirs. I obtained 12 and the thirteenth person was found hanging from a tree in Spirit Lake, Iowa.
- We purchased a tiny abandoned house and found a Tiffany-style lamp in the basement – which turned out to have a value much greater than the purchase price of the house.
- We acquired several businesses that required us to construct a new building and trade it to the property seller.
- There were many more interesting acquisitions; A bookstore, operated by the community, “character”, Melvin McCosh, a dog food manufacturer, several properties owned by real estate speculators and so on etc. etc.

We were successful in acquiring ALL of the properties. Next came the management phase – intended to be only temporary – until the highway construction was completed and the University of Minnesota began to hold classes on the new West Bank campus – perhaps 2-5 years.

The property management phase turned out to be a daily nightmare. A few examples –

- One of the buildings, an up and down duplex had been occupied by a divorced couple living on separate floors. They jointly owned two very large dogs that were never allowed to go outside; the duplex was clearly uninhabitable and was soon demolished. An elderly immigrant, Mrs. Ryan, occupied a very small home – living alone – no dogs or cats but only a lifetime collection full of jars of perhaps a million **buttons**!
- A rooming house – one day a small fire started – fire engines responded rapidly and turned on the water hoses – lots of water. The fire was soon extinguished. Shortly thereafter, the sawdust in the walls (being

used as insulation) became soaked with water. The weight of the water soaked sawdust caused the home to collapse.

- A vacant, single floor, house with a full basement. When we went in to prepare to rent it – we found the entire basement filled up to the main level – with rotting trash and garbage.
- When we took over possession of another house, the water bills were astronomically high. We called a plumber who proceeded to look for the problem. Unexpectedly, he fell into a sink hole of water and had to swim to safety.

The Cedar Riverside saga continued. The two private development groups proceeded to begin some joint planning – naming the area Cedar Village. We retained three highly respected, national planning firms (Barton Aschman Assoc., Lawrence Halprin Assoc. and Sasaki Walker) to assist us.

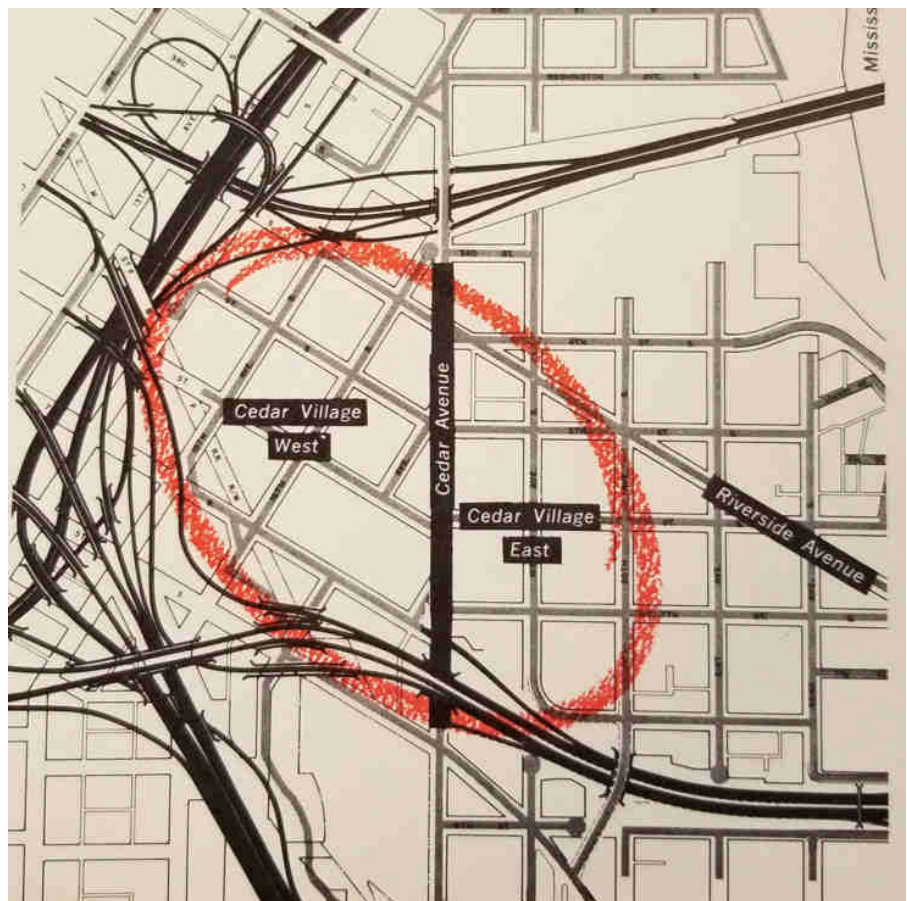
Concurrently, the federal government announced a new funding program which intended to inject innovation, new ideas, and contemporary techniques into urban development. The program was to be called something like “New Towns in Town.” Cedar Village became a candidate for this program. An area near Chanhassen and Chaska, named Jonathan, was also selected as the suburban group to receive funding. The Jonathan portion of the program made some progress and created a somewhat innovative new community.

Cedar Riverside failed miserably. Social engineering became the central theme of the program – assuming that people from totally different backgrounds, different cultures and different income situations could live and thrive in extremely dense vertical living conditions.

Cedar Village was expected to implement this radical concept. The group representing the area east of Cedar Ave (Cedar Village East) was clearly supportive of the In Town Program. At this point, Cedar Village East, with financial support of their principal funder, Henry McKnight, approached the Cedar Village West group and offered to buy all of the Cedar Village West properties with the right of the Cedar Village West partners to reinvest in the larger partnership. The offer was accepted and the sale consummated. The Cedar Village West partners never reinvested.

Then the battles began. Segal and Heller intended to implement the In Town program. Opposition sprouted up from all directions. Tenants and the Tenants Union, led by its brilliant and articulate leader, Jack Caan, were the loudest and most effective. The opposition between the two sides became personal and the media fanned the flames.

Segal and Heller commissioned the well known local architect, Ralph Rapson to design the first phase of Cedar Riverside – which was subsequently built. Trouble continued and success of the In Town program was never fully achieved.



Someone should write the second chapter. George Sherman has assumed control of the properties and is doing a remarkable job –

Today I am 93 Years Young!

April 14, 2022

I was born in Eitel Hospital in Loring Park and now I live in the Kenwood – less than a mile away, not far in 93 years. But I doubt that anyone has ever seen and done more in every day, hour, minute and second.

My hero, Don Quixote, and I are tilting at windmills every waking hour and forever chasing “The Impossible Dream.” The dream is not in Spain or Mexico or Hawaii, or Canada or etc. I’ve been there! The Impossible Dream is every day – in what I do and what I’ve done! It surrounds my family, my friends, my colleagues and my dogs. Every day is, and has been, a gift that I cherish – whether I deserve it or not. I try to cram each day and every minute (I don’t sleep much – 11:30PM to 5AM) with friends and experiences that will make our lives full of fun but at the same time, safer, more beautiful, and more meaningful for each and everyone of us on this planet.

So far I’ve been busy! The following is an abbreviated version! (Enough to fill a book but I’ve already written my one and only book)

I’ve done a lot! I was primarily responsible for –

- Being the second person walking on water – on Cedar Lake
- Building Greenway Gables – the first owner occupied housing downtown and being the first homeowner – now 50,000 + Walking the Kemps Holstein Cow across the Hennepin and Lake intersection
- Buying the Sears Building on Lake Street, preventing it being demolished and preserving the site for the Midtown Exchange Sitting in the electric chair in San Quentin Prison. They had the opportunity to turn it on – to prevent all of my future intentional mischievous activities
- Creating a successful urban middle school
- Playing frisbee on the Santa Cruz Beach with a pie tin made by the Frisbee Tin Co. – starting the frisbee craze in the 1940s Identifying the site and providing property for Orchestra Hall
- Breaking most of the bones in my body (some repaired) Creating the World’s Best Off-Leash Dog Park
- Regularly **pulling** trolleys on streetcars – rendering them immobile – followed by rotten tomato bombs Creating Calhoun Square and Uptown – 5 years to achieve the impossible!
- Dressing up multiple family members in Gorilla suits with bananas to meet son Dan and his to-be wife at the MSP Airport. Developing Douglas School and MT Curve Townhomes on Lowry Hill
- Placing quacking ducks in bridal suite of a fancy Kansas City hotel for my former friend and college roommate
- Buying my beautiful, dark-wood interior home at 4339 Fremont Ave S. – by sealed bid followed years later by a fire that totally gutted the interior – followed by a contemporary all-white renovation
- Being the local fashion icon and owning (still) a spectacular green hat and green ensemble Being called and being a “skulker” as I acquired properties for major corporations
- Helping Lowry Hill group move the Berger Fountain in order to make the Sculpture Garden a reality Frequenting my favorite two restaurants, Manny’s on 9th and Marquette and White Castle on Lake Street
- Organizing and leading Community housing/Sholom Alliance Senior Housing and Service Facility and starting Meals on Wheels in the 1970s

Yes, I accomplished a lot and admitted to some!

As I look back, and forward, my family, friends and colleagues have made my journey worthwhile! Great people of all colors and backgrounds have all helped fit my life’s puzzle together. To them, I am thankful! Some of the names you know and of their exploits –

- **Harry Davis** – my friend and favorite social justice champion

- **John Pillsbury and Ken Dayton** – who cared more about the community than their money and themselves
- **Judson (Sandy) Bemis** – the link between the world of business and the world needing help
- **Barbara Flanagan** – the wonderful community gadfly – caring mightily for her city
- **Mayor Don Fraser** – thoughtful and 100% non partisan
- **Ted Mann** – the entertainment impresario who never slept
- **George Latimer** – the great Mayor of our sister city

and some not familiar names but oh so important –

My favorite Attorney – Sightless Amos Deinard

My favorite Architects –

- Randall Bradley – North MPLS Anti Poverty Champion
- Lew Moran – great mind and taken too soon
- Dick Gilyard – a true visionary and my favorite sounding board
- Nick Koch – knows everyone and cares for all

My favorite city employees –

- Tommy Thompson – City Coordinator extraordinaire
- Mike Monahan – Traffic guru and problem solver

My favorite Republican – Rudy Boschwitz – Mr. Plywood MN and senator Rudy

Memorable Friends –

- Brenda Ueland – Barbara Flanagan's Predecessor Tony Mastrey – early Cedar Ave pizza provider
- Barbara Carlson, Jens Christenson, Sally Howard, and Lew DeMars – City Council Notables Hallie Cowan – Cedar Riverside Madam who sold her business and real estate to me.
- Phil Roberts – World's number one food "Maven"

John B. Davis – MPLS School Superintendent – articulate and cared for everyone

My Business Partners – Astute, tough, patient with me

- Bill Fine
- Doug Head
- Norman Ackerman
- David Jasper

And especially my family – all of them. Artists, ball players, teachers, travelers, Mothers, Fathers – who tolerate me, and care for me. And lastly, but not leastly – My sixteen dogs – they make life worthwhile!

Thank you all – the trip so far, continues!

Comments from the Blog

Mark Daniel Holdridge (April 14, 2022)

That was an inspirational, wonderful read. Thanks Ray, see you in a few days

Nick Koch (April 19, 2022)

Ray, that was beautiful and inspiring. Touching and moving. I AM SO PROUD OF YOU and PROUD TO KNOW YOU. Please don't blush, but YOU are a latter-day Don Quixote. And if I can qualify to be among your legions of Sanchos, that would be great. Your friend and co-conspirator, Nick

Dave Zeman (April 23, 2022)

Congratulations Ray! I think of you often as I try to figure out this retirement gig.

Infamous Block E

April 14, 2022

All of my blogs have related to the years during my professional career in Minneapolis. During these sixty plus years, the physical environment has changed greatly. Some of these changes to streets or parks or public buildings have been the result of public decisions and community needs. Most of the changes, however, have resulted from private initiatives. New buildings or expansion to meet business needs are common. Most other private building construction occurs to meet investment purposes – residential buildings (apartments or condominiums) or commercial buildings for restaurants or retail use.

All construction in Minneapolis requires a lengthy and complicated review process before actual construction can proceed. Zoning and city ordinance approval, planning department support, environmental review, and area neighborhood reviews are all necessary prerequisites before construction. Additional requirements are necessary if the public sector is to be involved – on project financing or any kind of public participation in the proposed project.

Following my development successes in Loring Park with Greenway Gables and in Uptown with Calhoun Square, I was encouraged by several elected officials and many private citizens and organizations to redevelop Block E on Hennepin Avenue. Block E – the block between 6th and 7th St and, between Hennepin Ave and 1st Avenue North was the number one trouble spot in Minneapolis!

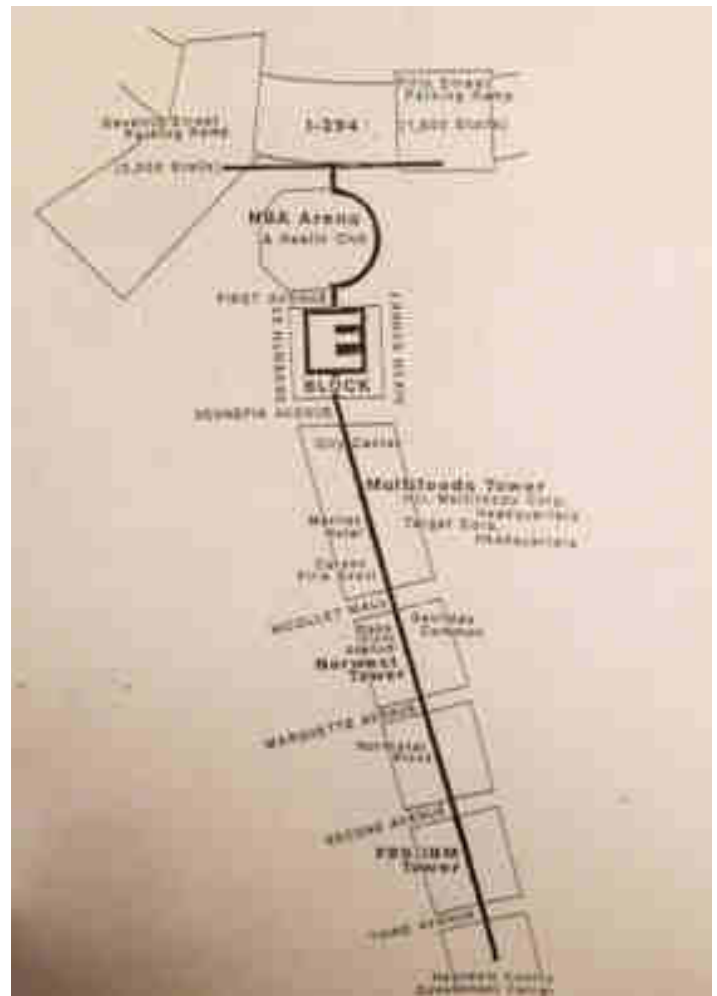
While many years earlier the block was the home of the 620 club (“where turkey is king”) and other legitimate and popular establishments and shops, Block E now spelled trouble! Moby Dicks bar and Shinders were the best known trouble spots. Determined to deal with the problems, the City took the actions necessary to eliminate the problems by purchasing all of the properties on the block and then looking for a development solution.

Developers were hesitant – Hennepin Ave was considered risky. Developers and most businesses were unwilling to develop or even locate north of Hennepin. The realities occurring on Hennepin Ave and the negative perception of the area north of Hennepin were causing developers to avoid the opportunities to proceed with any developments.

In order to attract a developer for Block E, the city of Minneapolis created several marketing “gimmicks/promotions.” The most creative was that the blocks from 6th to 7th stretching all the way from the Hennepin County Government Center to Block E on Hennepin should all be part of the “Skyway Highway.” The parking ramps built as part of the Interstate 94 roadway system would then be the culmination of the “Skyway Highway.”

Skyway Highway E Block will be the final link in Minneapolis’ “SKYWAY HIGHWAY,” downtown’s primary crosstown artery.

Suddenly, Harv and Marv appeared – and so did Ray. Harvey Ratner and Marv Wolfenson (longtime real estate partners) were submitting a proposal to be the owners of a new NBA professional basketball team (later named the Timberwolves) to be located on Block E.



Approximately at the same time Ray Harris – I decided that I would submit a proposal to be the developer of Block E! My proposal would be to build a block that would be the Entertainment Center of Minneapolis – located on Hennepin Ave.

The sudden developer competition was shocking. The Block E trouble spot in Minneapolis with no developer interest and suddenly a site with two developers vying to be designated.

Both developers had numerous supporters – and detractors. Sports enthusiasts wanted basketball, others preferred the restaurants, retail, nightclubs, bookstores and the entertainment center – whatever that meant. Competition became heated – Harv and Marv were determined to play basketball on Block E. I wanted to create a great entertainment center for Minneapolis to turn Block E around. – to E Block – that would be the name. E Block for Excitement, Entertainment, Energy, Eating, and Enthusiasm.

The location of E Block was perfect – skyway connections, adequate nearby parking, an expanding adjacent warehouse district (ultimately named North Loop). I wanted E Block to serve as the focal point for downtown activity – as the missing link between north of Hennepin, the I-94 highway system, and over 6,000 parking spaces attached to I-94. The controversy disappeared when the basketball arena was officially located immediately north of E Block.

I searched for and hired one of the country's most highly regarded architects of entertainment complexes, Jon Jerde of the Jerde Partnership located in Venice, California. Jerde eagerly took on the E Block challenge. He created a mostly glass plan for a multi-level retail and entertainment center with a parking facility, multi-screen cinema and potential for two towers – a hotel and office structure. The plan was perfect for the destination spelled out in the City of Minneapolis Metro 2000 plan – a place for impulse shopping, a place catering to the pedestrian coming to theater and sporting events, or the parking facilities serving the nearby offices and financial centers. It was to be the kind of place that would lure people downtown and entice persons already downtown, to stay longer. A place to connect the daytime and evening activities of a major American city.



E Block depiction

The E Block plan created by Jerde elicited great enthusiasm by city officials and likely customers. The next challenge was to find and commit tenants that would be appropriate for a place that exuded excitement during the day and evenings. Equally challenging would be to locate and commit private financing for this unique place.

Tenant search began – restaurants, nightclubs, retail shops were contacted by leasing personnel – including RT Rybak who was in between his newspaper and political career. Project financing depended on committed commercial tenants and the financial credit of hotel and office tower tenants.

The search for tenants and private financing was complicated and widespread. The City of Minneapolis wanted to support E Block efforts but city officials began to put unrealistic deadlines on the approval process. This was not a typical project application. The tenant mix that would be appropriate for an entertainment center – that would bring excitement and enthusiasm and energy to the “party” were few and far between and their financial credit ratings were mostly not very high. This was to be a very special place with a unique mix of tenants to offer a unique mix of goods and services to the public; a project that was only **mediocre was not going to be acceptable**.

Project financing was especially difficult – given the unusual nature of the project; successful financing relied primarily on the financial credit of the hotel tower sponsor and the credit of the principal tenants of the proposed office tower – neither of which had been identified. To add to the complexity, an office tower on Block E would be the first tower developed on Hennepin Ave. or north of Hennepin Ave.

The E Block management needed more time to lock down tenant and financing commitments – and city officials needed to be patient. Negotiations continued – with prospective tenants – with prospective leaders – with city staff and various council members. Although everyone agreed that E Block was the right project – at the right time and the right place – and no other development had been proposed for Block E – the city set a deadline for further negotiations and refused to consider any financial support from the city.

Further discussion between the E Block developer and city officials failed to provide additional time. E Block could not/did not provide enough tenant and financial commitments. E Block was not going to happen!

Block E languished without a developer for several years. Finally the city responded to an out of town developer and provided almost forty million dollars in financial assistance. Block E was developed – absent the excitement, enthusiasm, and energy – a great opportunity missed and lost!

Comments from the Blog

Jim Wickham (April 15, 2022)

*Happy Birthday Ray! Hope to stop in and say hello when the weather improves.
Best Wishes, Jim Wickham*

33,900 Days

December 29, 2022

I was born on March 25, 1929. Since that day, I have awakened 33,900 mornings, including 23 leap year days. Since I am a “morning” person, on almost all of those days, I have been eager to begin – to study, to work, to play.

In October my kidneys, affected by diabetes, stopped pumping. I went to the hospital – to be told, “an infection with a body temperature of 92 degrees! Whispers didn’t offer a positive prognosis. Time for hospice! A place where most never return from. My primary doctor and my kidney doctor signed off – prescriptions were ordered for sleeping pills, coughing pills, and whatever else that would support the hospice tenets of “keep him comfortable and safe.”

But I’m not ready to go! I’m feeling much better, ignoring all the pills and the predictions. I may even graduate from hospice.

Defying the odds once again – as I’ve been doing for most of my 93 years.

About 15 years ago, I even wrote my own obituary – a self-deprecating and somewhat selective collection of my activities over the years. Since then, I decided that I will stay around – maybe forever! So, no need for an obituary – I tore it to pieces and threw it in the trash. In lieu of the obituary, I am busy writing my journey so far.

My Journey So Far –

I was born! The year 1929 has gone down in history for at least two memorable happenings – my birth and the great depression – many believe the two were related! I follow in the steps of many great forbearers, including Adam and Eve, Methuselah, Miguel Cervantes – the creator of my hero (Don Quixote in 1605 A.D.) and certainly, my wonderful mother and father, Eleanor and Leo.

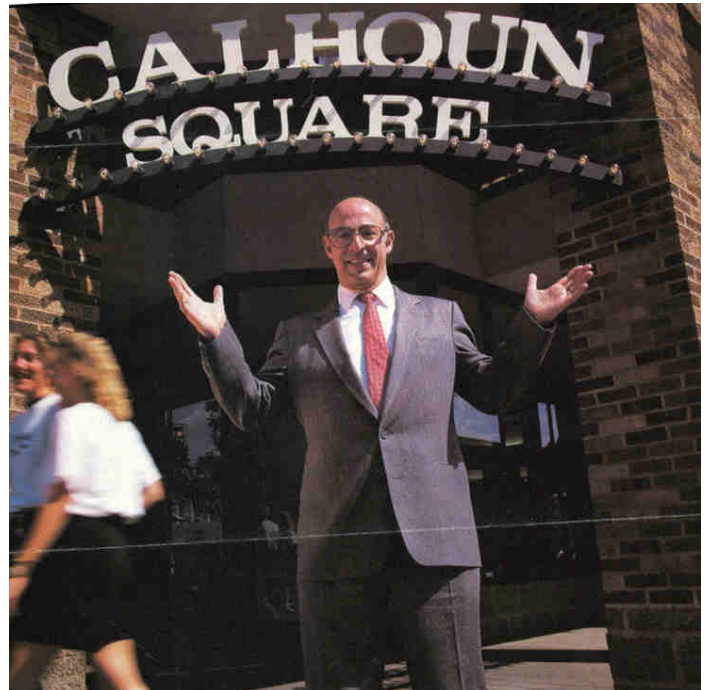
Eleanor was the first feminist, an artist, a creative genius, my kindred spirit. My father, Leo, was a powerful man, the recognized leader in his family and his community – also an artist and fascinated by classical music and reading James Joyce. The best gift from my parents was encouragement, from age 5, for me to make my own decisions, right or wrong and be responsible for the consequences – the credit or the blame. My entire life’s path has been positively affected by this early independence.

High school, at University High, was a mix of academics, football, wrestling, and baseball teams, and numerous leadership opportunities. Success at all of the above led to a good foundation for future success.

Stanford University followed – four years of good grades, good friends, wrestling team, volleyball, good weather all followed – but no progress identifying any areas of interest or some direction for my future. My single most important benefit from my Stanford education was not learned in the classroom – but on the wrestling mat. If you have a goal and want to achieve it, then hard work, many hours of practice – much persistence – then you win most of the time.

After graduating from Stanford, in 1950, I enlisted in the Army for a four-year stint during the Korean War. This was the only period during my entire career when I had an employer – Uncle Sam – and received a regular paycheck!

What to do next? Lots of energy. A real estate career was the answer intertwined with my knack for problem-solving. 68 years later – 2022 – I’m still solving problems. Still mixing financial accountability with creative out-of-the-box thinking.



During these 6+ decades:

I've served clients, too numerous to mention, with their real estate, buying, selling, and investment needs. **Calhoun Square** – After almost 5 years of planning, hundreds of protests and meetings, project financing efforts during a period when national interest rates were 18%, and almost unanimous doubts about the project's likely success, we delivered an immediate success! Charming in-city community shopping center that attracted national attention.

I've taken big financial risks and been the developer of:

Greenway Gables – The first downtown owner-occupied housing after years of unsuccessful efforts to achieve new housing in the Loring Park neighborhood – failure to secure financing, failure to overcome the age-old negative perception of the area – Greenway Gables brought the first downtown homeowners. Overcoming prevailing doubts about downtown living in Greenway Gables won numerous architectural awards and established the quality level for the entire Loring Park community. Currently more than 50,000 permanent Downtown homeowners have further proven the demand for Downtown living.

Sears/Midtown Exchange – In order to prevent the efforts of a Chicago developer to demolish the 2,000,000 sq. ft. Sears Tower on Lake Street, I negotiated a purchase agreement for the gigantic tower and the adjacent 19 acres. When Sears attempted to void the purchase, David took Goliath to court and won. The conclusion of the court suit allowed the purchase to be completed and the Midtown saga moved forward.

Residential and commercial projects – Filling a community need. Numerous development projects continued in Minneapolis – the most notable and unique:

- Townhomes on the former Douglas school site – the first owner-occupied attached townhomes in Minneapolis – a great success.
- Successful development of the Dunwoody property with Mount Curve Place townhomes – after more than 20 years of controversy.

Pro bono activities – In addition to serving clients and the myriad of real estate developments, I consciously made a decision that (in lieu of making financial donations – which I could not afford) I would allocate and donate one third of my time towards assisting projects in Minneapolis. I believe that the city of Minneapolis and the residents of the city have benefited in ways that could not have been imagined. Some examples of my pro bono assistance are:

- I was a member of the Urban Coalition which was organized as a response to the civil unrest, protest, and fires on Plymouth Avenue in 1968.
- Located the site, designed, and financed construction of the immensely popular off leash dog park in Loring Park where I also commissioned and financed the public art dog sculpture.
- In response to public school unrest, I organized and led the creation of Chiron school – an experimental school – the first “charter” school in Minnesota – a very successful endeavor!
- Participated in, and led, numerous city, Metropolitan Council and state committees focusing on housing issues and urban development.
- Assisted in the relocation of the Minnesota Orchestra to the present Orchestral Hall site – identifying the site, purchasing it, relocating existing tenants, and assisting in permanent financing.
- Participated in the design and original construction of the Loring Greenway and then, years later, led its renovation and long-term management.
- Led relocation of the Berger Fountain to Loring Park in order to facilitate the creation of the Sculpture Garden. Led legislation and set up the first special service district in Minnesota.
- Advanced Prospect Park/Towerside area in establishment of an innovative new community.
- Established corporation and led creation and growth of Shalom Alliance – a full-service senior facility – from independent living to hospice.

and the list goes on and on!

I had and have a life outside of my professional career – best described by an Asian text, author unknown, “the master in the art of living makes a little distinction between his work and his play, his labor and his leisure, his mind and his body, his education and recreation, his love and his religion. He hardly knows which is which. He simply pursues his vision of excellence in whatever he does, leaving to others to decide whether he is working or playing. To him he is always doing both.”

I am the family patriarch – doing what I want, when I want, and how I want, for well over 90 years. I do have some unofficial rules that guide my behavior:

1. *Be an individual – dare to take risks.*
2. *Have a dream and long-term vision.*
3. *Dare to begin – and then persist.*
4. *Do it right*
5. *Have fun along the way and enjoy the challenges*
6. *Give of yourself/volunteer.*

Otherwise, no limitations!

I’ve been a sports enthusiast – “life is a game” – a competition – and I win most of the time – played football, wrestled, played volleyball – and am the self-anointed world cribbage champion. I’ve written books: Welcome to Wynott – about our resistance to change, Out of my Mind – for my family and friends only – about how to live and how I’ve lived, Been There Done That, Took Notes – a continuous blog about my professional career in Minneapolis, and various papers and stories about dogs, affordable housing, the Loring Greenway, eating habits, etc.

My favorite eating places are the White Castle on Lake Street for the greasy, all-beef, sliders and Manny’s for their spectacular steaks.

Education has been one of my priorities. While I graduated from Stanford University, my most relevant education has been received from the College of Hard Knocks – on the streets and in the trenches. And I led the effort to organize and manage the very successful middle school – Chiron – in Minneapolis. I was also a speaker and instructor on subjects of urban education, housing, urban development, fiscal alternatives for cities etc.

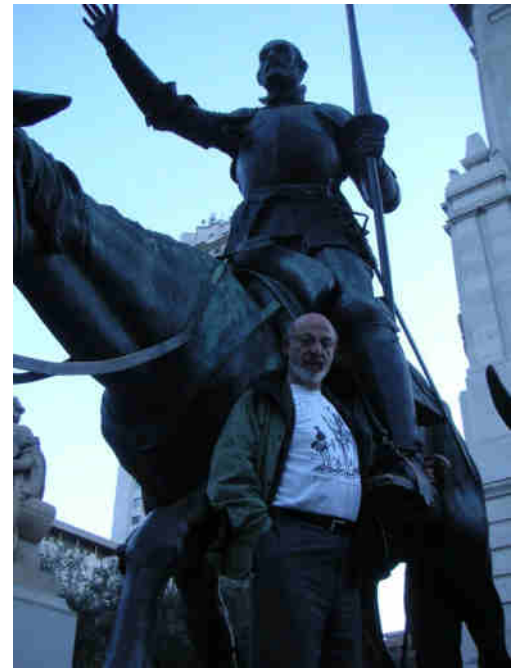
Vacations were few and far between and short! My busy life allowed only short two or three day respite to nearby cities. The family relaxed at two Minnesota lake cabins on Lake Manuela near Hutchinson and Cedar Lake near Aitkin. Lots of fishing, swimming, boating, and eating. I simply enjoyed! First house was on Wentworth and then a five-bedroom brick mansion on Fremont gutted by a fire. Then the Greenway Gables townhome that I built – then a Loring Park condo.

I think I knew all the architects, lawyers, bankers, and politicians in Minneapolis – all of them worked for me, against me, or with me. I was born at Eitel Hospital in Loring Park – went to school in Minneapolis, and have always belonged to Temple Israel on Hennepin Avenue. I haven’t gone very far in my years but very few have done so much – varied, risky, and exciting! My busy life never included golf, memberships at community clubs, long vacations, or being a world traveler. Belonging to numerous Boards of Directors did occupy too much of my time.

A huge factor in the last 70 or so years has been my relationship to Don Quixote De la Mancha. The story, written in 1605 by Miguel Cervantes, depicts my hero in literature as well as my alter ego in every-day living. Don was a crazy, tilting at windmills, dreamer whose singular goal was to achieve the impossible dream. His faithful companion, Sancho Panza, is probably my faithful dog who has always been my companion. The four

of us, Don and Sancho, my dog and I, have been tightly tied together. I have many Don Q books, and pictures and 3-D objects and have even traveled to Spain to traverse the path of Don Quixote's great quest. I fully intend to continue tilting at windmills and seeking the impossible dream. When there are no more windmills it may be time to move on.

So, who am I? I am an old curmudgeon – my hair and hearing almost gone – riding around in my electric (Lamborghini) wheelchair. My plumbing leaks – a three-time cancer survivor – numerous broken bones (some repaired). Above the waist I'm still going 200mph – below the waist only 2 mph. I am extremely self-confident and unabashedly humble. I am more than slightly outspoken. Ethical and honest – people call me a “tough marshmallow.” Hard to anger – I enjoy being the butt of jokes. I never grew up. I'm persistent – some call me stubborn. Definitely a fashion icon. PR person for Minneapolis – seldom allowed outside the city limits – wealthy rich if definition is not ROI – but respect from family and friends.



To be continued...

Maybe not. Don and Sancho and I are going to move on where there are more windmills to tilt. It's been a wonderful life on this planet, in Minneapolis with the best possible family and friends! I hope that you'll all say “**Bon Voyage**” and “**Au Revoir**” and then celebrate. I know a few who might chime in with “**Good Riddance**” or “**Dump Ray Harris**”.

Where should we go Sancho and Don, and when?

Comments from the Blog

Joan Shapiro (December 30, 2022)

Ray. You have created a life many would envy and all should learn from. It is inspirational. And truthful at the same time. Bravo!! Don Quixote would be so proud to be your guide. Love from thee DC Dog spa. Joan

Tracy Nordstrom (December 30, 2022)

Thank you, Old Curmudgeon, for your recollections and your always-tilting vision. I have delighted in being part of your dog park, Towerside, and other placemaking efforts.

“Wynott” was a good read, and nothing beats our conversations in your condo, or at your apartment, as we mused about the many ways Minneapolis could be even better, more connected, and more joyous. I loved how your black lab would race down the hall in your condo building to meet me at the elevator! She matched your energy and spunk. Both very good things...

And, you gave Sarah to the world and she has carried on (and expanded) your development goals and human ideals. And grandchildren who, I hear, are breaking boundaries and forging new pathways for themselves. Win. Win.

Here's to windmills, and shared public spaces; public art and commerce! To big ideas, and small graces, and mostly, to old friends who accrue experience but never really age.

Foster Kirk Langsdorf (December 30, 2022)

Ray thank you for supporting and growing the Minneapolis community. You make the Stanford Cardinal community proud!

Patrick Coyle (December 31, 2022)

Best thing I've read in a long time. If anyone can graduate from hospice it's Ray Harris. Glad to have shared some of those 33,900 with you, Ray. Sláinte—to you, Sancho, and Don! Patrick Coyle

Been There, Done That. Took Notes. – Blog 2.0

All of the subjects covered over the last couple of years in my “Been There, Done That. Took Notes.” Blog have covered my activities, mostly in Minneapolis. I’ve also written about some interesting aspects of Minneapolis which occurred during that same period but did not involve me directly.

In all of these articles, I have tried to be accurate and objective; “This is what happened!” and “This is what I saw”.

Future blogs are going to be different! I’m going to inject my opinion as to a better way of living in Minneapolis – I intend to be critical of current activities of residents and public employees when deserved and I will sprinkle praise where it belongs.

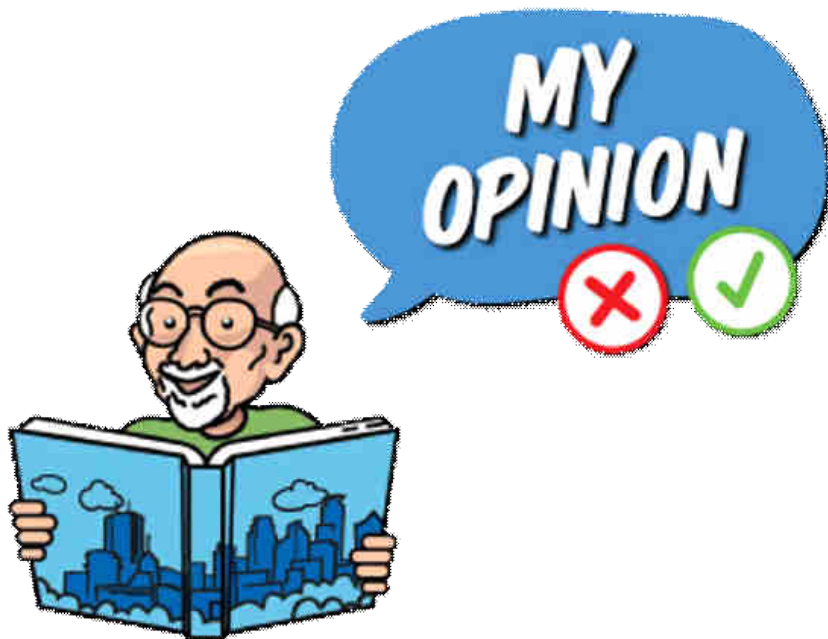
I’m going to compare, in my opinion, the quality of life in Minneapolis at the beginning of my career (60 years ago) with today.

Many of you may disagree – so be it!

In my humble way I’m going to suggest some rather drastic changes to the way we currently live and operate in Minneapolis. I know that we resist change in most aspects of how we live – but our life just might be improved.

So here goes – you can delete my thoughts and future blogs if you like.

I believe that my experiences in these 60 years have filled me with some promising ideas that could improve our lives – for all of us.



Comments from the Blog

Joan Shapiro (December 30, 2022)

Ray. I enjoyed every word of your Blog. Painted a vivid picture. Keep Blogging!!! Love joan

James B McComb (December 30, 2022)

Ray, can't wait to read your observations on life in Minneapolis and suggestions for the future.

Happy new year. Jim McComb

Joe Nathan (January 1, 2023)

Looking forward to your advice about future directions, Ray.

Hope you have a healthy, happy 2023.

Victoria Ann Barlow (January 8, 2023)

I love your new direction Ray. Your experience and creative mind have been such a benefit to our Minneapolis community from gathering places, commercial destinations, dog parks and more!! Your unique perspective is so welcome as well as a great source of information and upbeat attitude! And dare I say it, entertaining as well. Can't wait to read more!!

Then and Now

May 19, 2023

As I sit in my trusty electric wheelchair, looking out the window, I am in awe, at my past – as it flashes in front of me – of what I've seen, what I've done – who I've known, what I've enjoyed and what I've tolerated.

The good old times were mostly good. I think I have earned the right, or wrong, to give my twist on life – as it was and as it is. So here goes – 94 years of living – the good and not!

I miss –

- The wonderful sound and smell of burning and crackling leaves every fall – no longer legal, an environmental no no.
- Downtown Dayton's store – they sold books and toys and clothes and lunch – everything! Personal service was everywhere and the highlight was the Nicollet Ave decorated Christmas windows.
- Miss Vogels's neighborhood pharmacy where I could buy my choice of penny candies and a nickel chocolate ice cream cone served pleasantly by Miss Vogel herself.
- The stately Greyhound Bus Depot now "First Avenue nightclub and entertainment complex"
- Liemandt Men's store on the Nicollet Mall. Jack Liemandt and little Danny Karatz tried valiantly but not always successfully to fit me – the wrestler with a 19 inch neck measurement and a 29 inch waist.
- The overnight trains to Chicago – the uneasy feeling of sleeping on the top bunk as the train rumbled around curves or stopped abruptly at a station to pick up or let off a single passenger.
- When both Democrats and Republicans were elected to sit on the Minneapolis City Council – sometimes partisan, sometimes cooperative, usually cordial!
- Trips to Woolworths and Kresges – true 5 cent and 10 cent stores, and the predecessor to Home Depot – Warner Hardware. The world at my fingertips but cash was always sparse.
- The smell of the elephants at the Shrine Circus in the majestic old auditorium – and the nimble aerialists who performed magically in the cavernous spaces far above the excited crowd.
- Mr. Heard's neighborhood grocery store on the streetcar line on Bryant Ave. – long before Hove's and Lund's and Byerly's
 - Mr. Heard displayed fresh fruits and vegetables when they were in season. His store was almost dingy – but he personally and proudly helped bag the purchases – and he delivered!



Liemandt's Mens Store – Then and Now



Woolworths and Kresges

I remember –

- Sports – We had Bernie Bierman coaching national champion Gopher football – we had the champion Minneapolis Lakers led by George Mikan and Harmon Killebrew's Twins.
- Charming Plymouth Avenue before the 1968 riots. The Homewood theater served the neighborhood as did Brochins delicatessen with their corned beef and dill pickles. Old bearded Jewish men mixed easily on the avenue with African Americans and Irish – with everyone.
- Central and South High School – in inner city Minneapolis. All of my 4 kids received real life education there. So did I! Real, honest diversity! True friends of all colors!
- I remember when I would pick up every penny that I saw on the ground. Now, even if I could stoop over, I would not bother picking up a penny – maybe a nickel, surely a quarter.
- Gas stations on every thoroughfare and in every neighborhood – Standard oil, Pure oil, Sinclair and Shell, etc. Gasoline cost less than a dollar per gallon and every station provided free full service – cleaned windshields, checked oil levels, filled tires with free air – even in a heavy thunderstorm.
- The autos were all American – no Toyota, Hyundai, Honda, or Mitsubishi – just Dodge, Ford, Edsel, Buick, Pontiac etc., and unlike today's cars, they all looked very very different.



Homewood Theater on Plymouth Ave.



Central High School, Minneapolis, MN

However, All was not better back then!

- We didn't know how to anticipate the weather. The Armistice Day blizzard in 1941 killed unprepared hunters. The heat wave in 1936 forced us to live in our basements without air conditioning. Now we have snow emergencies and several days notice of incoming inclement weather.
- Long distance phone calls were excruciating to arrange, requiring operators to assist – and each call was expensive! Now calls are quick and free.
- Dogs could run loose – no leashes required – unwanted gifts left everywhere, a few dog and cat fights and ruined gardens.
- We mostly ignored the handicapped – made few accommodations to make living easier! No curb cuts, no help to access trains or buses, etc.
- We didn't have "social media," instead we had endless meetings, printed brochures, installed billboards, and filled the telephone lines. Yes, communication was primitive and expensive before email and texting became available and popular.
- Halloween was not a panoply of little elves and costumed goblins. It was an annual night for urchins (mostly boys) to tip over garbage cans, set every pile of leaves on fire and write soap messages on screen windows.

"Tricks or Treats" meant exactly what it said.

- Health care is much more successful and efficient today than it was yesterday. But I remember and miss the arrival of our family doctor who made house calls when we were sick!
- Baseball is different also! Should it offer padded suites and every kind of sweet imaginable or should a hot dog, coke, and popcorn, and folding chair be enough. We're spoiled – Baseball should be less expensive and uncomfortable.



THEN: Nicollet Park,
home of the Minneapolis Millers



NOW: Target Field,
home of the Minnesota Twins

I could go on and on remembering!

Many people come to mind – I was and am so lucky to have always been surrounded by wonderful characters, friends colleagues, and family.

Along the way there were some special people –

A couple of Barbaras, a couple of Tonys, and a couple of Davis' –

- Barbara Carlson "Babs," Ms. Brash to say the least – accompanied by a loud voice, a smile and too many cutting remarks.
- Barbara Flanagan – MPLS version of the famous urbanologist Jane Jacobs, who stressed walking and no automobiles.
- Tony Mastrey – the all time best pizza maker.
- Tony Bouza – a great police chief – daring – a tough gentleman.
- Harry Davis – The former African American prize fighter, the successful "go between" who cooled tempers during the 1968 riots and long thereafter.
- John B. Davis – the leader of the MPLSPublic Schools – a smart, cultural gentleman with a ferocious commitment to kids.
- Mike Monahan – the city traffic guru, who didn't allow any problem/challenge to get in the way of cutting red tape towards progress.
- Gibson Carothers – an uptown regular, who loved to bet on the horses.
- Hallie Cowan – the Cedar Riverside madam who sold to me her property and "business".
- Movie impresarios – Ted Mann, Ben Berger and Ferris Alexander from first run to slightly porn to really porn

More from Then –

- Bicycles did exist back then! I had the classiest in the neighborhood. My “Schwinn” cost \$72.00 and had thick tires (one was always in need of air) – and only rear wheel brakes – activated by my feet. It did not have any gears, and no lock. (Why would I need one?)
- Eating has always been popular – and necessary. But not always convenient – to buy, store, and prepare. The handy microwave did not yet exist and frozen food was just arriving. Fresh fruits and vegetables were only seasonal (I hated canned peas every winter).

Back in those days –

- Almost everyone smoked – everywhere. The air quality is much better now.
- When the snow came, we hauled out our hand shovels – powered by sweat and elbow grease. Snow blowers were not yet a “figment of anyone’s imagination.”
- When the grass in our yards needed cutting, once again, hand powered grass cutters were used.
- Air Conditioning did not exist. We opened our car windows and often moved to the cooler basements during hot spells.
- Sleeping outside was common and attendance at several feature movies in a row was a temporary solution.
- When a train trip (no planes!) was taken, every passenger had to carry his or her luggage. Wheels on luggage did not exist!

I drooled at the wonderful aroma emanating from –

- The all-beef sliders from White Castle (5 for 12 cents during specials).
- The doughnuts popping out continuously at the 8th and Nicollet Mayflower Shop.
- The “Challah” bread sold by Lou Abrams on Friday night at Abrams deli.
- The “Original” pizza prepared and served by Tony Mastrey at Mama Rosa’s on Cedar Ave.
- My favorite Butterscotch pie on Thursday at the Rainbow Cafe in Uptown



A lasting memory is airplane trips to everywhere. We could casually purchase a ticket at an airline office. Then on the day and time of the flight – not three hours earlier – we could board the plane and take our seats. No lines! – no luggage search! No hassle! Always a pleasant experience!

To compare and rate Then vs. Now will not satisfy everyone, maybe nobody. Each has their good attributes and not so good ones.

Now, can be characterized as our lives were slower and we weren't always in a hurry. We gave service and received it everywhere when we shopped and at the gas station. We socialized when and where we could. We respected others in our dress and our actions. We felt safe. Profanity was not acceptable. Our community, our neighborhood was extremely important to our lifestyles. We probably had fewer but closer friends. We valued things more – repair not replace.

Now, we have much better and quicker sources of knowledge. Most everything we do is mechanized or requires computers to operate; in fact life can be almost robotic – almost. We are becoming a number instead of a person. We prefer not to communicate as social animals; we text! And life goes on.

If I had to choose Then vs. Now, my choice would be Then! No AR-15s to kill innocents. If we had disagreements Then, we would use our fists and once in a while enhance our fists with brass knuckles. We felt safe in our neighborhood and our home.

Finally, just as we can count on death and taxes, both Then and Now – we should add two more constants to our life – mosquitoes and potholes!

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Comments from the Blog

Elizabeth Ryan (May 19, 2023)

Ray,

Best wishes to you. I enjoyed reading some of your favorite memories. Thank you!

Joe Nathan (May 19, 2023)

Thanks. Yes, you've certainly earned the right to comment. Thanks for your many accomplishments and insights.

Mark J. Oyaas (May 19, 2023)

So loved the people section. I knew everybody one way or the other except Hallie Cowan, and I bet I missed a special person given the company she is in!

Joan Shapiro (May 27, 2023)

Dear Ray this blog and others should be put in book form so all can enjoy your wonderful wisdom. You write so wonderfully the reader is transported. Please consider publishing a book. Love. Joan

Going to the Dogs

July 24, 2023

1894, Rudyard Kipling wrote *The Jungle Book* in which he wrote of Mowgli (probably my new name), a little boy who was raised by wolves in the jungle. During that time, Mowgli learned self sufficiency and wisdom from the jungle animals.

I feel a similar close relationship with the sixteen dogs who have shared my 94 years on this earth. We grew up together, ate together, slept together, played together and grew old together. Along with my human family and friends, dogs have always occupied an essential place in my life.

All of my dogs were very different. Some of them were pedigreed, some were mixed breed, some cute and some not so, some a little nasty, a few arrogant – all just like their human counterparts. But they were close to me – my friends.

I remember some weird things about some of those dogs –

- **Duke** – a beautiful all-white English Setter with only a black eye, had a sometimes nasty disposition. When he took a chunk out of the postman's leg – we gave him to the then US Senator, Henrik Shipstead.
- **Pepper** – a Boston Terrier, somehow learned to climb up trees.
- **Uncle Sam's Tiger** – (illegally owned when I was in the army during the Korean War) regularly STOLE BEER from unsuspecting, relaxing army personnel.
 - He also happily ate human food offered to him on a fork by my mother. My wife's mother, Grandma Sis, claimed that she "hated dogs." She would constantly sneak scraps of food to Tiger when she thought we weren't looking.
- **Punkett** – Punky, The Earl of Wentworth Ave. where we lived – a male, wire-haired Terrier, as a puppy resembled a cuddly stuffed rag doll.

- He had his own way of doing things and was not willing to be trained. We put him outside to do what dogs usually do outside. Then he came back in and promptly, proudly pooped.

- Punky also decided that our dock at Lake Manuela was infinitely long! He sprinted off the dock – into oblivion!



Uncle Sam's Tiger



Punkett



Ray and Duke



Pepper

- **Torocito (Toro)** – from the era when we owned The Casa Loco Cabin on Lake Manuela, spent hours taking rocks out of the lake, up a small hill and then pushed them back down to the lake, endlessly.

- We bought two all white Boston Terriers (should usually be black) and named them **Dr. Jekyll** and **Ms. Hyde**.

- Hyde had almost no nose, unlike my prominent proboscis, and wheezed constantly – but was very playful. Jekyll was almost an immovable “blob.” In fact, we regularly had “snoring contests” between Jekyll and Grandpa Sol. Jekyll usually won – but not always!
- All of the family wanted to sleep with Hyde and Jekyll. It took a mathematical genius to figure out which dog slept where AND in which of the five different beds on each of the 7 days of the week. Hyde and Jekyll also loved to be dressed in “people” costumes.



Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde



- **Augustus III (Gusto)** – For some unknown reason, he insisted on attacking the running “white” water in every fountain and stream or rushing water. Gusto also angrily bit the hand of Federal Judge Doty who had improperly made a menacing move toward Gusto. Judge Doty proudly displays the Gusto Scar

- **Louie** – gained notoriety one warm summer day. Aunt Marilee was sitting on a bench, enjoying the day when Louie came up, lifted his leg, and urinated all over her.

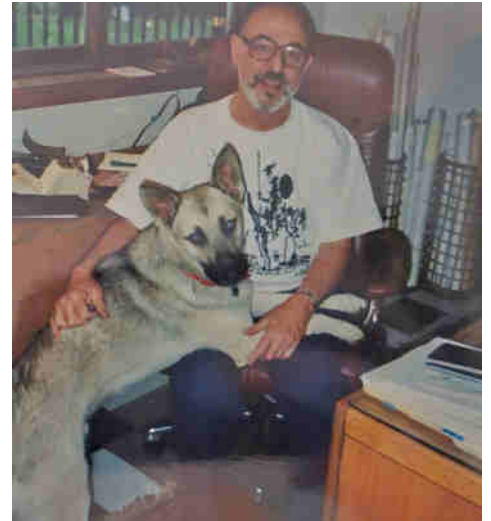
- **Zeus** – Zeus did not dislike the mailman. Instead he decided that he particularly liked the mailman’s leather bag for carrying letters. Zeus jumped into the bag every day.



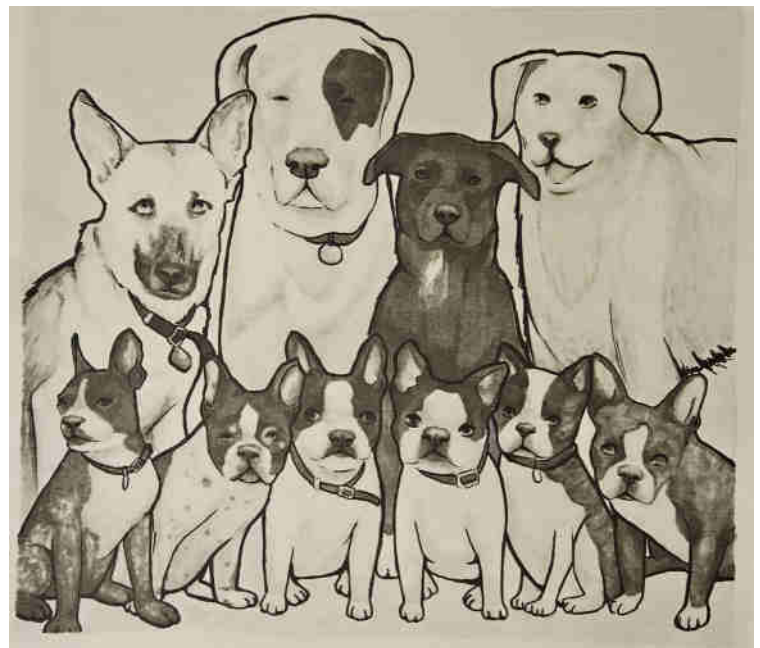
Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde



- **Sam** – the most beautiful dog! A German Shepard with bright blue eyes – surrounded by dark lines – looked like makeup.
- **Buddy** – a golden retriever, had monthly seizures – but chased a tennis ball incessantly.
- **Amery** – a black Labrador, everyone’s friend. Hated fireworks – disappeared one 4th of July in the deep woods. How to find a black dog at night, in the woods? She found her way back the next day.
- Befriended Laura Nolan when I could no longer accompany her on walks.
- Amery and I won the prize for best dressed “Hot Dog” and handler in the Loring Greenway Dog Parade.



Being 94 years old is tolerable and living in an electric wheelchair, my Lamborghini, is necessary and I have easily adapted to it; but being without a dog is miserable – Dogs have been everything for me – my partner and my enjoyment.



Drawing by Alexandra Holmgren,
granddaughter of Ray

Everyone knows that objectivity should be my middle name. I lived in the west wing of the third floor of Loring Way Condominiums in Loring Park for 10 years. By coincidence, the third floor, west wing was occupied only by dogs and necessary humans. The east wing of the third floor of Loring Way was occupied only by cats and necessary humans.

When I was asked to compare the dogs vs. the cats, I put on my completely objective hat and wrote as follows –

In the Land of Lornway

By Ray Harris

Once upon a time in the revered land of Lornway, there existed two separate, powerful and adjacent kingdoms. Threast and Threwest. As elsewhere in history, these kingdoms shared and still share a boundary providing the potential for friendship, cooperation and, certainly disputes – much like the Mason-Dixon line in America, the Maginot line between France and Germany, the ever- evolving border between Israel and the Palestinians, and the space between North and South Korea.

The inhabitants of Threast and Threwest, throughout history and even today, while living in close proximity to each other, have much in common but many more differences and distinguishing characteristics.

The Felines* of Threast vary somewhat in size and greatly in color, mostly with substantial amounts of ungainly body hair. Generally smaller than their neighboring Canines, they are also quieter and have a longer life expectancy. Felines have a suspicious demeanor and are aloof, even covert. They seldom willingly leave Threast and never allow their neighbors from Threwest to live in Threast. Felines are selfish and self-centered and have no interest in anything outside of their Feline Kingdom. They are cowardly and prefer to hide in order to avoid confrontations but are occasionally known to emit threatening sounds and display vicious claws.

The Canines^ of Threwest, on the other hand, love to venture out of their kingdom, to explore the world take risks, and demonstrate their interest in other forms of life – squirrels, rabbits, and primarily humans. Canines are especially attached to humans, constantly displaying traits of friendship, loyalty and unconditional love. Canines vary greatly in size, color and demeanor. Some are gruff, others are meek but all consider themselves protectors, providers and even therapists for their human friends. While occasionally destructive when very young, Canines are reliable and welcoming to others. The Canines in Threwest have even successfully integrated Felines as regular members of the Threwest Kingdom, something the Feline kingdom of Threast has never done.

Over the centuries, Felines and Canines, while speaking different languages, have co-existed. Although they have reputations for fighting “like cats and dogs,” (slang for Felines and Canines), much of this animosity is simply perception. Speaking of perception, the media improperly portrays positive things as “the cat’s meow,” or “cat’s whiskers” or that cats “have nine lives” and only occasionally make mention of cat house” which connotations we all recognize.

Canines are acknowledged as “man’s best friend” but are treated unfairly when negative inferences are made to being in the “dog house” or in the “dog days of August.”

Felines and Canines of Lornway are currently demonstrating their ability to co- exist in peace, maybe not in harmony, more likely an armed truce. If issues arise and peaceful living is ever in jeopardy, it may be necessary to establish a “Dispute Resolution Committee” so that disagreements and differences of opinion can be mediated without the need to create and pass bylaws and rules of behavior!

*AKA kitty pussy, Tom ^AKA puppy pooch, Fido

The author, Ray Harris, is an advocate and authority on animal kingdoms and behavior. He just happens to reside in 306 Threwest , Lornway, with his human partner, Helen Metz, and their Canine partner, Amery the Wonderdog, an acknowledged mediator, who has offered to convene a gathering of Threast and Threwest residents as a gesture of goodwill toward ongoing accord. In all humility,

I provided an **outstanding and completely accurate** comparison of dogs and cats

.An even better comparison was not written by me! I know not the author's name but I want to give him/her credit for being a genius. The following is their handiwork –

GOD CREATES DOG FOR ADAM & EVE

It is reported that the following addition to the Book of Genesis was discovered in the Dead Sea Scrolls. If authentic, it would shed light on the question, "Where do pets come from?"

And Adam said, "Lord, when I was in the garden, you walked with me every day. Now I do not see you anymore. I am lonesome here and it is difficult for me to remember how much you love me."

And God said, "No problem! I will create a companion for you that will be with you forever and and who will be a reflection of my love for you, so that you will know I love you, even when you cannot see me. Regardless of how selfish and childish and unlovable you may be, this new companion will accept you as you are and will love you as I do, in spite of yourself."

And God created a new animal to be a companion for Adam.

And it was a good animal. And God was pleased.

And the new animal was pleased to be with Adam, and he wagged his tail. And Adam said, "But Lord, I have already named all the animals in the Kingdom, and all the good names are taken, and I cannot think of a name for this new animal."

And God said, "No problem! Because I have created this new animal to be a reflection of my love for you, his name will be a reflection of my own name, and you will call him DOG.

And Dog lived with Adam and was a companion to him and to Eve, and loved them. And Adam was comforted.

And God was pleased.

And Dog was content and wagged his tail.

After a while, it came to pass that Adam's guardian angel came to the Lord and said, "Lord, Adam has become filled with pride.

He struts and preens like a peacock and believes he is worthy of adoration. Dog has indeed taught him that he is loved, but no one has taught him humility.

And the Lord said, "No problem! I will create for him a companion who will be with him forever and who will see him as he is.

The companion will remind him of his limitations, so he will know he is not worthy of adoration.

And God created CAT to be a companion for Adam.

And Cat would not obey Adam.

And when Adam gazed into Cat's eyes, he was reminded that he was not the Supreme Being. And Adam learned humility. And God was pleased. And Adam was greatly improved.

And Cat did not care one way or the other.

My love of dogs extended well beyond the written word. I took action and spent a lot of money on their behalf. So much action and money that my daughter Sarah still wonders why I spent so much time and "greenbacks" on the dogs, rather than her children.

In 2007 (noted in one of my previous blogs), I headed a group, Dog Grounds Inc., which leased a small piece of Loring Park property. I contracted at wholesale minus approximately 50% to have the contractor, Kraus

Anderson, build the Loring Park Off Leash Dog Park. I also hired a chainsaw sculptor to create a seven dog, vertical Totem Pole, as well as a steel artisan to construct the “Bridge to Erewhon” – Bridge to Nowhere – a takeoff of the famous Samuel Butler “Bridge to Nowhere.” The dog park was and is a huge success!

Now, in 2023, Dog Grounds Inc. is donating the dog park and the artwork to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board. Lisa Goodman, the 7th Ward Councilmember – on behalf of Dog Grounds Inc., read aloud at the park board meeting, **my final statement about dogs.**

My Final Statement about Dogs

Hello, I’m Ray Harris. I am 94 years old and I live in an electric wheelchair.

I’ve led a charmed life!

I’ve always been self-employed.

My extended family includes four wonderful children and their even-better spouses!

I have six out-of-this-world grandchildren

An equally important part of my family have been each and every one of my 16 dogs who were with me when we toddled together, ran for a while and then hobbled – for 92 years until the wheelchair took over. Today I’m going to share more about this part of my family. As I said, I’m 94 years old (658 in dog years). All of them are now gone. I’ll probably be gone soon Let me reminisce. Yes, I’ve had 16 dogs in my life.

- There was Duke an all-white English Setter with one black eye.
- There was Sam, a gorgeous, blue-eyed German Shepherd.
- There were two all-white, Boston Terriers named Dr. Jekyll and Ms. Hyde.
- There was Buddy – the Golden Retriever who inspired (and modeled for) the artwork being given to the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board.
- There were many more – color, gender, and backgrounds didn’t matter.
- Even though I was always self-employed, I always had a partner – my dog!

Today, I am giving in loving memory of all my dogs, my partners in life. Let me recall a few of the things I learned from them:

- When we had a good day, and were happy, we danced, romped together, and wagged our tails (my rear end) mightily.
- Even though we were bigger or stronger, we always restrained ourselves and respected everyone.
- Daily walks gave us joy and solace, rain or shine, the more the better.
- Bad days (there were plenty) – nuzzle and pretend to understand keep your ‘nothing is that bad’ perspective.
- We thrive on attention – there is never enough.
- Don’t pretend to be important. Just be yourself.
- Live simply.
- Every day is better than the day before!!! Act like it.
- Be loyal to your partner.
- Be together. Eat together – sometimes scraps and sometimes steaks, but together.
- When father time calls, we’ve lived a good life!
- We’re not afraid we are content.

Comments from the Blog

Brenda K Christian (July 26, 2023)

*Thanks for keeping your blog going, I was happy to see arrive in my email.
I enjoyed the read and hearing from you.*

Joan Shapiro (July 26, 2023)

*Ray it is obvious that you have the true meaning of life. Dogs!!!! Dogs rule and other animals watch and learn from them! Dogs are. Our teachers on this Earth We should pay attention to them for they hold the key to wisdom. Just my opinion Thank you Ray fir Sharing the Magic of Dogs.
Love joan. Aka. Joan of Bark*

Curt Johnson (July 26, 2023)

*Ray, these memories of dogs are both poignant and very much like my own. I think they are underrated companions. I had many of them, though not as many as you. The sad thing is they don't live very long. And the end of life for one is something dog lovers understand but others do not. I'll send you a photo taken in Idylwild, California a few years ago; a merchant there welcomed dogs in his establishment. We had to put one down on May22. The hardest thing I ever did. You learn to outlive them..
And you will too. But it is supposed to be difficult.*

Sally Westby (July 26, 2023)

Ray – I really enjoyed your dog memories. I was not lucky enough to have dogs during childhood and college but Jon and I had 4 wonderful dogs during our married life, Our last dog Maggie was a friend of yours and Amery's when we moved to the Loring Park neighborhood and hung out on the Loring Greenway. We are pleased to report that our grand dog Mocha is now a huge fan of the Loring Park dog park. Thanks for that and for all the fun memories

Mary Lilja (July 27, 2023)

Ray, what a wonderful gift to the city! Bravo! I enjoyed these doggy tales & photos very much today. Thanks for sharing — and for your wonderful donation. Best to you always,

*P.S. I was raised in a dog-loving family but became a cat person later in life ...
hmm, wonder what that says about me??*

Nick Koch (August 1, 2023)

*Ray! Thank you for this great edition of your blog. Thoroughly enjoyed it as well as the photos. I knew Buddy and Amery, and suspect that Tiger would have been a favorite. What a character. The story about God + Dog + Cat was great. There is a cartoon that shows a dog and cat approaching the Pearly Gates. The cat, seeing God on a heavenly throne says, "You are sitting in my chair."
Woof! Don't ever stop.*

Mid-Hennepin—A Vision for the Future

October 19, 2023

I've written blogs about dogs – about people – about buildings and about my adventures during the 94 years that I've occupied space on this planet – So far, all of these blogs have been in the past, describing things that have already happened.

This blog is going to be different – about something that has not happened – YET!

A street in Minneapolis (Hennepin Ave.) is going to be renovated. It seems that most of the citizens of Minneapolis are upset and most are expressing their anger loudly.

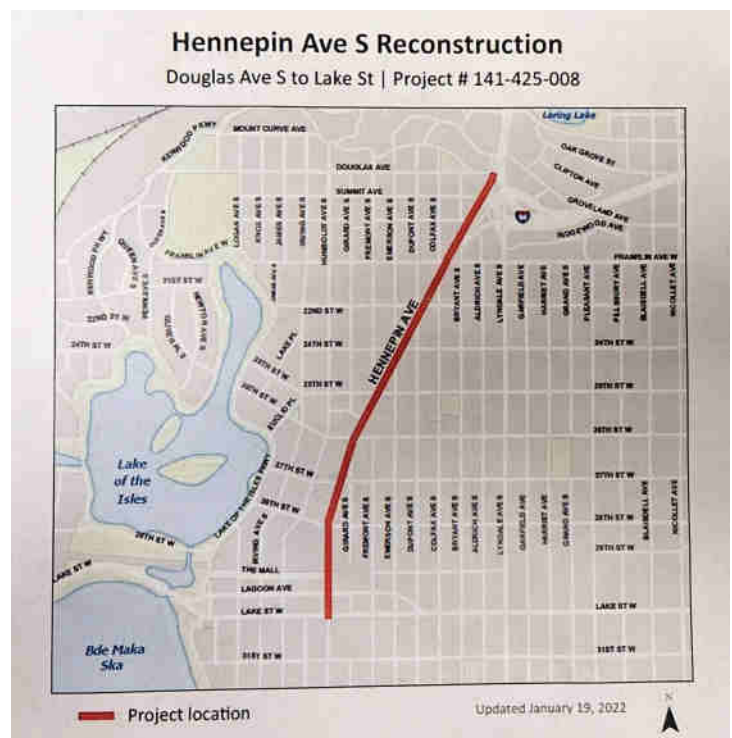
The following blog is my strong suggestion to revise and add on to the already approved renovation plan in favor of a sensible alternative. Read it – study it and support it. It's not too late!

A portion of Hennepin Ave. in Minneapolis is long overdue for a major renovation. There was and is a consensus of support – almost unanimous – that renovation is needed. Especially in the spring when the sudden and huge potholes gobble up many cars. Do you expect smooth sailing with the decision on what to do? Not a chance “the devil is always in the details”.

The city planners, led by their traffic engineer teammates, proposed increasing bicycle lanes, reducing auto lanes, increasing bus lanes, reducing parking, and increasing pedestrian usage. The controversy began, and quickly became angry and extended months into years! Citizens objected, some guided by self-serving motives, others by naïveté, others by a sprinkle of inexperience. Resistance to change was dominant at every meeting. It is impossible for the proponents of the plan to ever convince the opponents that the plan will be successful. It is also impossible for the opponents of the plan to convince the proponents that the plan will fail. Controversy continues! As my famous author friend, Will S., said “full of sound and fury, signifying, nothing!” Just like my kids when they had a mud fight in the backyard!

The city planners finally approved the plan, followed by City Council approval, and ultimately a veto of a portion of the plan by Mayor Frey. The battle is far from over. I see the plan as fundamentally flawed! Why? The plan, after removing all the fancy words, is nothing more than a connector between downtown, which has its own temporary problems, and Uptown, where the City's rebuild of Hennepin Avenue is a big part of the current Uptown experience – a disaster. The approved plan emphasizes and caters to the twice a day commuter, helping them whiz through the Mid-Hennepin area in the summer (enjoying the cool vehicle with the air conditioner blasting) and in the winter (with the heater blasting all cozy and warm inside their contained space). There is nothing to look at, just a means to ‘get to my destination!’. The adjacent residents and businesses will endure years of construction dust, noise, and detours through the neighborhoods – for what? Nothing! A connector street only!

As the plan states, the renovation is long overdue, and the improvements must serve Minneapolis for many years. We shouldn't be thinking of this as a connector street – not even for one year, rather this is an important community place unto itself and needs to be designed as such! The expenditure of our tax dollars and our employees' time must be beneficial to the citizens of Minneapolis and particularly the adjacent

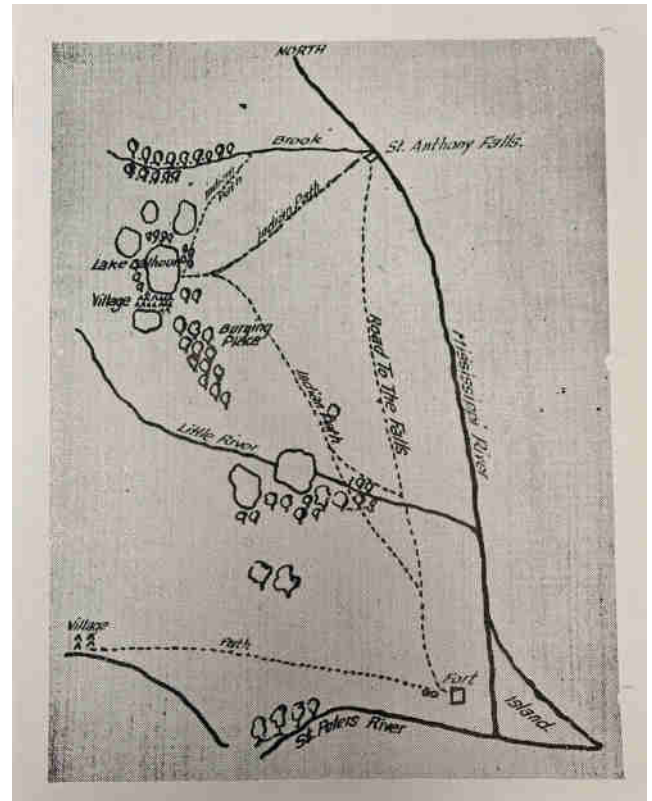


neighbors who must live with the renovated Mid-Hennepin Avenue every day, and every night, and every winter, and every summer! This renovation must enhance the neighborhood, not ignore it!

Who am I to suggest something so sensible? I am Ray Harris, a 94 year-old provocateur and curmudgeon, but with more experience on urban issues and urban development in Minneapolis than all of the planners and Councilmembers in City Hall, combined! My credentials are that I worked with Lawrence Halprin on the wonderful and highly successful original Nicollet Mall and with Paul Friedberg on the Peavey Plaza and the Loring Greenway. I built the Calhoun Square (now Seven Points) shopping center and parking ramp which I filled with 65 – mostly local, all unique – tenants. I even rode the street cars on Mid-Hennepin Avenue and now live in the Kenwood Retirement community overlooking Mid-Hennepin Avenue. While I graduated from Stanford University, my real estate knowledge came from a Summa Cum Laude with honors at Meatball Tech and a Magna Cum Laude Masters degree from the College of Hard Knocks. My experience should get you to listen!

How do we move forward? I will prepare an abbreviated proposal which will facilitate and improve the City's current plan to make it successful and acceptable by addressing more than the commuters – it will also address the adjacent community. Ordinarily, the fee for an abbreviated plan would cost an excess of \$200,000 – I will do it pro bono if the City Councilmember/Mayor will appoint a planner to work with me to capture the ideas and guide them through an approval process.

The 2023 Hennepin Avenue renovation plan needs to be more than the current plan of revising the number of auto, bus, and bike lanes. The required street work must be accompanied by an enhancement of the adjacent public spaces and services to the neighborhoods: Lowry Hill, East Lowry Hill, and Cedar Isles-Dean. Since the renovation extends approximately 1 mile from the edge of the Walker Art Center and Loring Park (Douglas Avenue) on the North to the core of Uptown at Lake Street on the South, there should be a unifying theme throughout. A common theme makes sense from a marketing standpoint and allows property occupancy and physical improvements to tie together as would an overall management plan.



The plan must respect the past, consider the present, and anticipate the future. Indigenous inhabitants walked on a path from Owamniyomni (aka St. Anthony Falls) to Bde Maka Ska (fka Lake Calhoun) – a now-paved path called Hennepin Avenue. Looking forward, that path should be an experience unto itself, not just a means to an end. It should be made to encourage strolling at all hours in all seasons, chatting with friends, and exploring nearby shops. It should be clean and safe, and a positive contributor to the physical and fiscal sustainability of the planet and community.

CIRCULATOR (JITNEY)

Since the renovation area is elongated (roughly one mile) and recognizing not all pedestrians are able to walk the entirety of that stretch (some studies suggest that people will not walk more than 200 feet, less than one block) unless attracted by something which can include an enjoyable place. The collective wisdom and also my experience suggest it would help to have an electric circulator (jitney) on Mid-Hennepin circling between the parking facilities at the south end (Seven Points/Mosaic) to the parking facilities on the north end (Scottish Rite lot, Walker Art Center, etc.) – stopping along the way for those who can't or won't walk the full distance.

This jitney needs to be a specific program that runs frequently and contains riders to this geographic area by extending only from the Mid-Hennepin edge of downtown to Uptown. The jitney will be free or inexpensive. Pedestrians can hop a ride and travel every nook and cranny of Mid-Hennepin, hop off and

explore, and VOILA! an exceptional, walkable, area. Limited on-street parking will not deter shoppers and explorers.

ON STREET PARKING

1. First, keep in mind that the most popular hours for strolling and shopping are in the evenings and on weekends which does not conflict with the busiest commuter times for bikes and cars.
2. All on-street parking will be for customers and visitors of local businesses and enforced at one hour in length (with exceptions for disabled people). Extended duration parking can be controlled by steep price increases.
3. Employees of local businesses will not use on-street parking – they can park in the bookend facilities and commute to their place of employ.
4. Adequate parking for bicycles and scooters must be available – allowing them to be strewn about (tripping hazard) or chained to other streetscape elements (can be in the way and causes maintenance and repair issues) will not be tolerated and will be ticketed with stiff penalties.

AREA WIDE MANAGEMENT

As in wholly owned shopping and commercial complexes, management will be centralized, thereby providing consistent, timely services to every business and person in the area. Snow will be promptly removed from ALL storefronts. Ambassadors will be on scene to provide a welcoming and helpful presence that also assists in providing adequate safety for everyone (in collaboration with public sector personnel). Leasing and other real estate services will also be carried out by the management company as putting a 'for rent' sign on vacant storefront and then hoping that the perfect tenant will appear never works, nor does it think strategically about critical mass. I filled Calhoun Square to 65 great, mostly local, tenants by establishing a specific tenant strategy and having in-house leasing personnel required to seek tenants aligned with the strategy. There should be a thoughtful approach to locating businesses that have connection to the past and are emerging needs for the future. This can be the place that demonstrates the needs of the community going forward.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Talk is cheap. We need to recognize the urgency! After underground work is complete at least the following will be implemented:

1. Only electric buses (including the Mid-Hennepin Circulator) will be permitted in Mid-Hennepin
2. Only electric automobiles will be permitted in Mid-Hennepin (phased in overtime).
3. Natural grass will not be permitted on any public lawn area to avoid the unnecessary use of water resource.
4. A snow melt system should be considered as a water conservation effort!
5. Solar powered lighting only
6. ...

We can use Mid-Hennepin to demonstrate our expectations for the future – as a renovated Mid-Hennepin is expected to last many years, hence the present merging into the future.

PUBLIC SPACE / HUMAN EXPERIENCE

Budgets matter. The Mid-Hennepin renovation is expected to and must serve Minneapolis for many years to be successful. The adjacent public space must not be constructed with the same attitude often applied "just rebuild it as it was" and or fixing a budget such that increasing costs start to compromise the design such that the final product appears unfinished and is totally inadequate. That dumbs a project down before a single spade hits the earth. To the contrary, the off-street public space must be an example of excellence in urban development. In fact, instead of reducing scope and longevity, increase the project lifespan and budget so the

cost can be written off over a longer number of years than usual.

Public space improvements should recognize the proximity to the adjacent neighborhoods and create improvements that can connect neighbors. Some ideas include:

1. Four Seasons – The improvements should recognize the Minnesota wealth of seasons – with inspiring activities year-round.
2. Color and Light – Minneapolis experiences night every 24 hours – colorful lights and street furniture should be strategically placed to capture imagination. Mid-Hennepin should be colorful! It seems like all municipal projects are limited to one color, drab gray, which is specified by a color-blind engineer who is only determined to see that the bottom-line budget is not filled with red ink. Mid-Hennepin must do better.
3. Pedestrian Way lighting – Fixtures of a distinctive, singular character, color-controlled lamping with variable intensity.
4. Public Art – should be obvious and plentiful. It should celebrate our indigenous roots, look to our future (youth from the local Ella Baker Global Studies & Humanities school located on Mid-Hennepin should be engaged in art projects) and the Walker Art Center could bring a local, national, and even international focus to the area.
5. Pocket parks – for art and sitting areas for relaxing – should be sprinkled throughout.
6. Trees, trees, and more trees... For shade, texture, color, twinkly lights, and, with luck, birds.
7. Sidewalks, widened and, wherever possible, cleared of obstructions, such as transformers and other utility hardware that interfere with side-by-side strolling.
8. Stages, platforms, or plazas in various sizes and design for presentation of music, performing art, etc.
9. High-tech information kiosks.
10. Benches of various distinctive designs, and occasionally configured in clusters for conversations.
11. An overarching, continuous space frame with solar panels, roof panels, lighting and speakers.
12. Storefront spaces... with a few available for pop-up stores, events, displays, etc. etc.

PROJECT FINANCES

Budgets will need to cover:

1. Street improvements and underground work
2. Bike, bus & transit routes (including the circulator)
3. Shared leasing and operations to include service district ambassador type of public safety increased real estate and sales taxes to cover)
4. Pocket parks, pedestrian furniture, lighting
5. Public art (contributing my fee pro bono allows funds to be redeployed towards art)
6. On-going public infrastructure repair and maintenance

SAMPLE IDEAS

1. Thomas Lowry Park (24th and Hennepin) could become public pocket park – more space would be available if the statue were moved to Thomas Lowry seven pools park at Douglas Avenue.
2. Kenwood retirement property could explore a more ready connection to Hennepin Avenue from its lowest level. All property owners along Mid-Hennepin should be encouraged to convert and or use their property in a manner that removes barriers, includes uses, and connects to Mid-Hennepin with intention.
3. The Scottish Rite property could explore air rights development above its parking lot
4. Ella Baker school could install pop-up along Mid-Hennepin for display or sale of student art
5. Property east of Hennepin at 24th could renovate and upgrade its lower level

6. The YWCA, which is being sold, could be more open to Mid-Hennepin – ideally a local organization would acquire this facility and make it a truly community-based activity and gathering space
7. The Mall area owned by the Minneapolis Park and Recreation Board could be reappointed as a public pocket park.
8. Portals could be installed to announce/brand Mid-Hennepin
9. Mid-Hennepin should be dog friendly with appropriate amenities
10. Public restrooms must be installed in public areas
11. Mid-Hennepin will be blank pallet – use it!
12. Retail offerings need to be primarily locally produced
13. Disabled needs are critical
14. Time walking across Hennepin Avenue must be sufficient to allow pedestrians – elders, disabled, children – to cross safely. Traffic engineering cannot be solely about maintaining vehicular speeds.

Celebrating the past, present, and future of Mid-Hennepin will occur when the area considers its local community – not just those commuting through it. We need all existing property and business owners to participate in the collaborative effort so success will be achieved (success requires that the effort is, and is perceived to be, one of total involvement of the many people in the area).

Comments from the Blog

Merry Keefe (October 19, 2023)

Love your design ideas. Wish you had control of the Nicollet Mall which is all grey, hard and boring. What's the next step???

Sally Westby (October 19, 2023)

Ray – incredible plan. Thanks so much for you thoughtful, simple and creative ideas. I look forward to seeing this happen

Joan Shapiro (October 19, 2023)

Ray I hope the mayor of your fine city listens and does everything you suggest and then please send a copy to the Mayor of Washington D C and have her follow your exact instructions Then perhaps the Capital of the USA will once again be a livable as beautiful enjoyable city Your ideas are brilliant and I believe. Quite doable Egos down Ears Up!!!! Joan in DC aka your cousin

Gregory Finstad (October 19, 2023)

Ray I like your ideas and hope they get traction. As a former Director of Transportation for City of Minneapolis I understand the complexities of your proposal and believe they are doable. I would enjoy visiting with you sometime to give you my thoughts on how to proceed with your plans. Always enjoyed working with you .

Brian Golberg (October 19, 2023)

Great ideas. Non parochial. Hopefully we might, hopefully,, desperately find some similar thinkers in the government. I will anticipate your great ideas for at least the next decade

Kurt Johnson (October 22, 2023)

What a generous offer to help our city. Over a lifetime you have demonstrated a love for Minneapolis and have improved city life by working so well with others. Our leaders would find you a joy to work with if they take you up on your offer. Hopefully they will!

Tracy Nordstrom (October 24, 2023)

Providing public toilets (that are clean, safe, well-stocked) is an absolute MUST in flourishing urban areas. Water, too, must be available at drinking fountains, water bottle fill stations, and dog bowls! Lighting and mobile seating will create the feeling of interest, joy, respite, and communicate that the public spaces are to be USED by the public. Those amenities are inviting, tell the walker, runner, visitor, "you are welcome here! take a load off! enjoy the view/amenities/people watching!" Reimagining the streetscape will be a challenge, as traditional "bricks and mortar" retail is retreating. Restaurants with outdoor seating (in all seasons, with heaters and blankets like the Scandinavian countries employ!), places to view or engage with public art, places to sit ALL are essential for good placemaking. I agree with Ray: the stewardship of Hennepin Avenue as a through-way is misguided and HURTS the surrounding community. We have an opportunity for something akin to the Champs-Elysees, a tree-lined wide boulevard that celebrates people, diversity, leisure, commerce, environment, AND transit. Let's get going!

Mike Finkelstein (October 25, 2023)

Ray – I just learned of your blog this morning and am so very grateful for you sharing your experience, expertise, intellect, wisdom, good judgement, creativity, thoroughness, care, awareness, and time. In addition, I'm in awe of not just your deliverables but the simple and complete way in which you expressed and revealed the story – I'm truly inspired and would like your thoughts on how I can help with the action needed to put this front and center.

Ps: Thank you for your leadership over the years and being a mentor.

Opportunity

October 19, 2023



For several years, I've been writing a blog about Minneapolis and about my activities in Minneapolis during the 94 years that I've resided on this earth and in Minneapolis. During this time, Minneapolis offered a wonderful quality of life.

During these years, Minneapolis also had many challenges – problems. I consider myself a problem solver and considered these problems to be challenges – opportunities.

- To reuse the Douglas School site, I built the first owner-occupied townhomes in Minneapolis (Manor Homes of Lowry Hill)
- To encourage and provide downtown living, I built the first owner-occupied townhomes in downtown (Greenway Gables) – and lived there for 40 years.
- To create an off leash play space for dogs in downtown Minneapolis, I led a team that built the off leash dog park in Loring Park.
- To assist seniors in need, I led a team that created the large full-service, senior facility (Sholom Alliance).
- To provide needed alternative education, I led a team that created Chiron Middle School.
- To overcome a 20-year zoning controversy, I built townhomes on the site where a developer had threatened to build a hi-rise tower (Mt. Curve Place).
- To create the first in-city Commercial Center in Minneapolis, I built the nationally recognized Calhoun Square Community Shopping Center.
- To find an in-city location for the Minnesota Orchestra, I found a location, purchased the property and re-located the existing tenants (Orchestra Hall).
- To avoid the demolishing of the Sears Tower on Lake Street. I led a team that acquired the Sears Tower and the adjacent 19 acres. The property was then converted into the corporate office headquarters of the Allina Health System and the very popular Midtown Exchange Retail Center.
- To tactfully accept and relocate the wonderful fountain gift from Benjamin Berger which was to be located in front of the Walker Art Center. I negotiated a move of the fountain to Loring Park – thereby preserving the acreage in front of the Walker for the spectacular Sculpture Garden.

And that's only a partial list! I'd say my Modus Operandi "converting lemons into lemonade" has been successful and served me well and as long as I'm able, I intend to continue.

Today, 2023, physical limitations prevent me from providing the leadership and energy that I have always focused on attacking a current problem – opportunity. I can still devise solutions; Now, however, my counsel and advice will necessarily require significantly more collaboration to achieve the desired goals.

Comments from the Blog

Jim Smart (October 19, 2023)

You truly are a miracle man my friend, Don Quixote! I miss you and send best wishes, love and much gratitude from the Catskills!

Your old friend and fan, Jim Smart

Melissa Mark (October 19, 2023)

*Hello! I enjoy reading your blog quite a bit – thank you for sharing your “notes”!
Both Mom and I send you heaps of good wishes*

Fondly, Melissa

Lily Coyle (October 19, 2023)

Ray, sounds like 94 = “just getting started!” I love seeing your updates and will schedule a visit, soon! I just mentioned you in a post of gratitude. Yesterday marks my twelfth year at Beaver’s Pond Press and on my very loooooong list of names of people I credit for my publishing journey, you came in second, right after Milt “Beaver” Adams. XOXOXOX

Joan Shapiro (October 19, 2023)

Ray. The list you gave is a what’s what of Minneapolis Real Estate I hope you are as proud of your accomplishments as s I am. With love and affection, your cousin Joan.

Joe “Pat” McCormick (October 19, 2023)

Ray, great to see you’re alive and kicking at the young age of 94!! Always enjoyed working with you in the Uptown area. Would love to grab a coffee (or whatever nonagenarians drink) and catch up with you.

Myrna Orensten (October 19, 2023)

Really a legacy! We need more problem solvers. Grateful for you and your accomplishments as well as sharing!

Dave Jasper (October 20, 2023)

*Ray I miss our many hours together working on the Lake-Street-Sears Project.
I am only 8 years behind you, Soon to catch you up.*

Ray's First 95 Years

June 17, 2024

Ray Harris here. Welcome to my life, so far. I have spent 95 whirlwind years on this planet, about 90 of which I have been making my own decisions of what to do and what not to do. The first five years I listened to my parents. For the most recent 90 years, I consider myself totally responsible for my actions. Yes, I often had co-conspirators that participated with me, under my guidance. I don't intend to dilute the blame. I am, however, willing to share the credit for the accomplishments – and there are many.

The following memories, all true and without embellishment, were often requested of me by others, also many were instigated by me and some just happened in my presence. Some are serious – others are hilarious. Many happened during my business career – others with my crazy family. Regardless of the source, I take the blame and some of the credit for everything that follows.

DURING MY BUSINESS CAREER

HOLY COW

Calhoun Square had agreed to host a weekend featuring Kemps Ice Cream. I led the huge Kemps Holstein cow across the Hennepin and Lake intersection and around the Uptown neighborhood. The man with the bag following the cow was not looking for the cow's oats and barley!

4-ALARM

A 4-alarm fire erupted in the building across the street from Calhoun Square. Since I control the weather, a fierce westerly wind blew the smoke away from Calhoun Square, toward Lake Calhoun. Otherwise, if the smoke had entered Calhoun Square – all of the merchandise of all of the tenants would have been ruined!

FIGLIO'S

Restaurateur Phil Roberts wanted to open a restaurant on the corner of Lake and Hennepin – the prime location in all of Calhoun Square. Other restaurants also vied for the same location. I picked Robert's Figlio's because they were the only restaurant that agreed to place their entry door inside of Calhoun Square – the others insisted their entry door should be outside facing Lake Street. Since Calhoun Square already had an Italian Deli as a tenant, Phil agreed that Figlio's would be American Nouvelle. You be the Judge!

Figlio's opened and may well have been the best and most successful place to eat and drink and meet all the important people in Minneapolis. Figlio's also paid a percentage rent for all sales exceeding an agreed upon amount. Both the landlord and tenant shared a lot of excess dollars. Over the years, Phil and I often renegotiated the percentage! "Up one eighth of one percent" usually resulted – a lot of money! I believe that Figlio's was the "Cash Cow" that allowed Phil's group (Parasole) to be so successful. Phil agreed that the closing of Figlio's was one of his biggest mistakes.

COLLEAGUES

Without a human resources VP, many great untrained people learned and created their job description – on the job! They included Myles Jacob, Barb Doncaster, Gene Tierney, Tedd Schuster, and Jackie Knight

BOUZA

Fortunately Police Chief Tony Bouza was in charge of all police duties at that time. His cooperation was essential to the success of Calhoun Square. He even allowed benches everywhere ("loiterers will sleep on them") – they didn't. Tony Bouza's wife "anti-war" Erica Bouza opened a jewelry shop in Calhoun Square.

UPTOWN PARKING

We were required to provide 250 parking spaces for the construction of Calhoun Square. Obviously that was insufficient! The City Council member (Sally Howard) suggested that we apply for a UDAG Grant (Urban Development Action Grant) – which we did. When the grant was delayed (probably partisan bickering). A trip to Washington D.C. was necessary to unclog the delay – the three musketeers hopped on a plane (Mayor Don Fraser – a Democrat Council member, Sally Howard – a Republican, and Ray). We were victorious!

Calhoun Square Management did not allow employee and monthly parking in The 550 car ramp just short term – and cheap – and almost always full. So successful that during every rush hour on 31st St. We had to hire off-duty police to help the autos exit the ramp. Parking turnover made the Calhoun Square parking ramp the model for success. Periodically, we raised the price for parking – a nickel – big money during the holiday season when each space parked 10 autos per day. $550 \times 10 = 5500$. We even reduced the width of each space (separately, by re-painting) and gained 6 more spaces. So successful that there was zero crime – too busy!

DUMP RAY HARRIS

When the city granted the approval to build Calhoun Square, every NIMBY (NOT IN MY BACKYARD) in Minneapolis emerged. “Calhoun Square will cause Hi rise buildings to fill the neighborhood,” or “Calhoun Square will be such a failure that the entire area will require urban removal.” Even a neighbor with a beautiful Irish Setter dog repeatedly said at public meetings, “If Calhoun Square is built, the vacant land will disappear and my dog will have no place to take a dump.” The opponents plastered signs on storefronts and on billboards all over the city. The sign read “DUMP RAY HARRIS. DUMP SALLY HOWARD. DUMP UPDALE.” (Udale was the opponents name for Calhoun Square).

It took 5 years to plan and build Calhoun Square. In spite of the opponents and experts who were convinced that Calhoun Square would never be built, it was and is so successful that it caused the rejuvenation of Southwest Minneapolis.

FAMOUS DAVE’S

“Famous” Dave was absolutely convinced that he was the world’s best salesman – Not so! Ray Harris was trained selling refrigerators to eskimos.” Dave was planning to put the first and only large Famous Dave’s Restaurant in the Rainbow building across the street from Calhoun Square. When we finished out-doing each other, Dave agreed to lease space in Calhoun Square for his Famous Dave’s barbecue. I won!

Dave not only signed a lease in Calhoun Square, but practically tore Calhoun Square apart and down. He wanted to (and did) make his restaurant resemble an old neighborhood in Chicago – complete with an “EL” car that traveled above the restaurant and announced its arrival – loudly and often. Regular music events occurred every night – Famous Dave’s competed with Figlio’s daily!

CLOSING DOCUMENTS

After 5 years preparing to build Calhoun Square and the only remaining obstacle was signing the myriad – hundreds of documents – A federal policy pertaining to Calhoun Square expired at midnight, December 31, 1982. The “Closing” was scheduled for December 28. A huge snowstorm descended on Minneapolis on that day, making it impossible for the dozens of people to travel to the downtown Minneapolis office for the signing of the documents.

There being no other alternative and facing a deadline that held the fate of Calhoun Square happening, we rescheduled the closing to Dec. 30 – the last possible date. Another snowstorm! Another postponement was not an option. Traffic was at a standstill. The closing had to happen! Some of the participants trudged through the snow – others skied – one drove a snowmobile! The closing began at noon Dec. 30, 1982, and continued all night. Hundreds of documents were completed! The “closing” was wrapped up and finished at 10:00am on Dec. 31, 1982. Calhoun Square could be built!

BUILDING COLLAPSE

The construction of Calhoun Square included the retention and rejuvenation of three buildings – one a three-story wood frame construction. The Calhoun Square corporate office was on the third floor of the wood building. One day we were having a meeting to discuss future tenants who wanted to be in Calhoun Square. A fitness center/gym was a prospective tenant. “We’re almost fully leased,” one person stated. I replied “there is space in the basement of this building, but the ceiling is too low for a fitness/gym tenant.” Let’s lower the floor – let’s go down and look at the space! Upon inspection we were shocked to see that ALL of the vertical wood columns were rotted and separated from the floor. This building is going to collapse – fall down – and soon! Kraus- Anderson, our contractor, immediately started to replace the rotted columns with steel ones! End result, no fitness/gym but also no building collapse!

SELECTION OF DEVELOPERS

In 1976, the City of Minneapolis and the Minneapolis School Board (owner of the land of the demolished Calhoun School) advertised for prospective developers of the site – with one requirement – must be a use of property taxes. Five responses arrived. The merchants wanted a free parking lot (no taxes). The community wanted a Community Center (no taxes). The nearby Greek Church wanted a Greek retirement home. A fourth prospect wanted to build a small, single level retail center on the old school site. A commercial center (Calhoun Square was the fifth prospect). Calhoun Square was selected.

YWCA

I was asked to serve on the Board of Trustees shortly after the YWCA building on the Nicollet was constructed and in operation serving its clientele. The new building began to have structure problems; the roof cracked in several places and some of the vertical columns showed significant displacement. The YWCA staff called in several consultants to assess the problem. The consultants concluded repairs were needed, but not to worry.

At that point the architect of the building died. Without the architect and the consultants “don’t worry about the problem” attitude, everyone relaxed except me. I felt that the new building could have major structure problems that would endanger the hundreds of daily patrons as well as the YWCA staff, and I informed the staff of my concerns. “But the consultants were not concerned,” they said. At that point I responded “you cannot endanger all of the building’s inhabitants, I will go public with my concerns unless you agree to close the building until repairs are completed.” My threat was successful and the program and building were shut down. I was right, the building would have suffered major damage. Repairs were performed and the building reopened and programs resumed many months later. Thankfully no one was injured.

DOUGLAS SCHOOL

When the Douglas school in the Lowry Hill neighborhood was closed and torn down, the nearby homeowners and the Lowry Hill organization wanted to fill the site with market rate, owner-occupied housing. They called me to assist them. We sought government financing. We were offered financing for a high- rise building, housing only low-income tenants. “The neighborhood only justifies this kind of building and occupants.” The neighbors and I were not satisfied. – believing that the area justified a much better outcome.

I contacted a couple of local bankers and received a commitment for each prospective homeowner to commit to a mortgage on their home. Victory! In an informal joint venture we built 25 market rate townhomes for owner occupants. These homes were the first attached townhomes built in Minneapolis. Now, in 2024 almost 50 years later, the homes are fully occupied and improved and in a stable neighborhood.

TEMPLE ISRAEL

Rabbi Zimmerman of Temple Israel asked me to advise her on the adjacent four real estate properties owned by Temple Israel. Some Temple members want to sell all of the property, others want a huge on-site parking lot, others want only upscale housing for Jewish members. “Help me!” I gathered 2 colleagues to help me. We produced a 100-year plan for all of the properties including low and hi-rise homes and underground parking, hi-rise office buildings with some commercial space for Temple and community services. Temple Israel approved the plan and made it a part of their long term strategic plan.

DOGS AND WATER

The construction of the off-leash dog park (in Loring Park) was complete and the dogs were ready to play. As an amenity for the dog park I sponsored, a chainsaw artist who carved a magnificent large wood sculpture of seven dogs sitting on top of each other. Dogs resembling “my dog and other dogs playing nearby”. With the help of a senior architect of the esteemed HDA Group, we added a large steel tank that would serve as pedestal to hold the large sculpture.

We expected that the tank would be filled with water to quench the thirst of the playing dogs. The dogs would drink from the trough surrounding the tank, like horses drinking water. We filled the tank and the water appeared.

However, we should have realized that dogs are quite different from horses! Instead of drinking from the trough, the dogs proceeded to urinate in it and swim in it. Total failure!

SEARS ROEBUCK

On Lake St., the empty 200,000 square foot Sears building and the adjacent 19 acres were for sale. A Chicago developer wanted to demolish the building and build a single-level center for small retail shops. Locally everyone objected. I led a local group that hoped to save the historic building and redevelop the entire property with commercial, office, and possibly, residential uses. We negotiated and signed a legally binding agreement to purchase the entire property. We began planning the entire project. Shortly, Sears decided to renege and retract their agreement to sell. We (David) decided to take Sears (Goliath) to court – to require Sears (Goliath) to honor their obligations – sell the property to our local group. The judge ruled that Sears must sell and gave the local group a very short time to pay fully and complete the purchase. With the help of the Pohlad group, we were barely able to pay within the deadline established by the judge. David won out over Goliath! Today, the property is fully developed – with offices, the corporate headquarters of Allina Health system, rental residential and the exciting entrepreneurial commercial Midtown Exchange.

CEDAR RIVERSIDE

I was retained to buy and assemble about 50 smaller properties in order to provide a site for a large development – to cover several blocks and the vacated streets. Many fascinating stories are remembered from the purchase of the properties – here are only four

- One of the properties was owned by a Madam – Hallie Cowan – “you’re not just buying real estate, you’re also buying a business” – “and I want to be paid in cash!” And she was. About 20 years later, I received a call from Hallie Cowan “I live in a duplex near 33rd and Fremont and I am moving to a retirement home”. You were so nice to me 20 years ago that I will offer to sell my home to you on Fremont.” I bought it, and my daughter Rachel and son Bill lived in it for some time.
- A divorced couple lived in a duplex – and jointly owned two large dogs. The dogs were NEVER allowed to go outside. We bought the duplex and demolished it.
- One of the smaller and older property was owned by a landlord named Arne Carlson – a future governor.
- The purchase of one of the properties required the signature of all of 12 sellers – 11 signatures later, the 12th was found in Iowa – dead.

DUNWOODY

The Dunwoody/Bennett property overlooking downtown Minneapolis, the Guthrie Theater, and the Walker Arts Center was one of the most desirable building sites in Minneapolis. The owner – a developer, wanted to build a hi-rise tower – in the middle of single family homes in the Lowry Hill neighborhood.

The entire community and the city staff and even the mayor objected. The argument continued for years. The developer even threatened to build “low income inexpensive housing.” The impasse continued. Finally I met with the owner – and negotiated a purchase of the property. Today the site is filled with large, upscale townhomes! And everyone is pleased with the results.

WHITE CASTLE

It became a tradition that when my attorney, John Thiel, and I finished a project or a negotiation – we would go to have lunch – at White Castle. Several sliders each. One day we were eating yummy, all-beef sliders – dressed in suits and ties. At the adjacent and surrounding tables were numerous usual White Castle customers – unkempt, scraggly hair – some with teeth – some without – yelling and arguing about some of the intricacies of the Zodiac.

FAMILY MEMORIES

HOUSE PURCHASE

Our family's first home was a smallish 3 bedroom home at 5004 Wentworth avenue. As our family expanded – with little ones seemingly everywhere, we were actively looking to buy a larger home – in a nearby South Minneapolis neighborhood. Our realtor, Marty Weegman, called "there's a wonderful five- bedroom home on Fremont Ave. going to be listed and sold by our company (David Bell Investment Co.) it is not listed yet but you must see it – now!" We looked and fell in love with the perfect house. We submitted a full price offer at the price the current seller was going to list the home for sale.

At the same time another realtor showed the home and a full price offer was submitted by another prospective buyer. What to do? Two full price offers for a home with a still unsigned listing agreement! Both prospective buyers urged the seller to accept their offer. Anger erupted.

Finally in an effort to resolve the heated argument the president of the real estate company said "We'll all meet and, if necessary, auction the home to the highest buyer!" Before the meeting my Realtor prepared a higher price offer and prepared to submit it. I retained the original full price offer. The meeting began – the other buyer ranted and raved that he should be selected as the buyer. The president of the real estate company listened patiently. My Realtors perspiring with anxiety and under the effects of too much alcohol – expected me to present the higher offer. All right, put your offers on the table. The other buyer was so incensed that he walked out without submitting a new offer. I submitted my original offer which was accepted. The sale was consummated and the Ray Harris family owned their ideal home!

THE FIRE

On a cold snowy night in January 1973, the Ray Harris family of 6 (+ 1 friend of my daughter's) were all asleep. I woke up coughing from smoke. The house was on fire. The instant-on television in the living room had sparked – and started to burn -the carpet and curtains were soon ablaze. The fire spread quickly throughout the first floor and soon reached the stairs, then we all awakened. I called in the fire department and sirens of approaching fire engines filled the air. We were all trapped upstairs – until ladders were set up to rescue the whole family.

After assisting everyone onto the ladders, I realized the fire had engulfed the entire 2nd floor. My only escape path was through a tiny bathroom window onto the roof of the porch – I have no idea how I could squeeze through that window. But I did. Everyone was safe. I counted people – only six! Who is missing? My daughter's friend had been placed in one of the fire engines! All safe and sound in the neighbors house. Next door, the fire was finally contained but the Ray Harris family had NOTHING! The fire and smoke had ruined everything – No toothbrushes, no clothes, no shoes – nothing. Were we being tested? Why? We were driven to my father's house nearby where we stayed until we could rent two furnished apartments in the high rise Summit House apartments. From NOTHING, we all rebuilt our lives!

HYDEE & JEKYLL

My family owned two adorable Boston terriers. At night they liked to sleep with us and we all enjoyed sleeping with one of the dogs. The problem was how to figure out which dog would sleep in each person's bed each night. 5 different beds x 7 nights of the week x 2 dogs. We needed Albert Einstein to devise the needed formula. We did solve the sleeping dogs challenge but the solution was so complicated that I can't remember it!

PUNKETT, EARL OF WENTWORTH

One day while we still lived on Wentworth Ave., we added to our menagerie by bringing home a cute, male, wire-haired terrier puppy. At that age he looked like a little rag doll. We named him Punkett, Earl of Wentworth, with the nickname of Punky. As he grew, we decided to have him trained. We should have been forewarned when the dog trainer raised the price and said male, wire-haired terriers are almost impossible to train. Punky would not be trained! We trained him to go outside, which he happily did, and then he would come inside and urinate and poop!

The final straw was on our long deck at our lake cabin. He started running at full speed, towards the end of the dock – and off the end – into oblivion! We soon gave Punky away to a friend with more patience.

JUDGE DOTY

I was walking my friendly Boston Terrier, Gusto, when my friend, Federal judge David Doty approached us. Prior to greeting us, Judge Doty bent over towards Gusto. The dog felt threatened and attacked, and took a sizable chunk out of the judge's hand. "I was just going to pet him," the judge hastily remarked. After many years of close friendship Judge Doty often reminds me of my vicious dog and that a lawsuit should have followed.

COINCIDENCE

In my early years I was climbing a tree – a branch broke and I fell out of the tree – hitting the ground – and broke my arm. About 60 years later, my grandson, Chet was climbing a tree at our lake cabin – fell out of the tree and broke his arm!

ZOO

Our house on Fremont was not called a zoo – but it might as well have been. We had two dogs, a cat, a monkey, a bat, several guinea pigs and a tarantula, AND four human rascals.

SIDE YARD

The Fremont house had a large vacant lot on the south side on which baseballs and hockey pucks flew in all directions, indiscriminately. So much so that we installed sheets of clear plexiglass over the windows – to prevent broken glass everywhere – even inside the house.

HOT WATER

We often flooded the yard for winter skating and hockey. Trial and error, we learned that hot water made the smoothest ice. Soon, I received a call from the City of Minneapolis water department -questioning the use of so much water (hot water) and were our water pipes leaking?

CHEAT

Often, especially at our lake cabin, I played many games with my children and grandchildren – crazy eights, Gin Rummy, Fantan, and cribbage! During our cribbage games I, intentionally and clearly, CHEATED. I called it "creative mathematics" – my opponents usually detected the mischief – great fun was had by all!

RAY – Guilty as Charged

DUCKS

My roommate at Stanford University, Clayton Barnett, was engaged to marry Betty Lynn. The couple invited me and our other roommate to the wedding, which was planned for the grand Muehlebach Hotel in Kansas City. The wedding was to be the social event of the year in Kansas City – a very formal event for several hundred family and friends. Two of us, Clayton's roommates at Stanford, were looking for mischief.

We found out that the married couple were going to spend their first night together in the bridal suite of the hotel. There was a decorative pond in front of the hotel – with two ducks gliding around the pool. After some

anxious moments we were able to catch the ducks and proceeded to place them face down in two paper bags. Then still dressed in our tuxedos, we climbed the fire escape until we reached the bridal suite of the hotel. We opened the window and released the two quacking ducks into the living room of the bridal suite. We then retreated down the fire escape – in a hurry. The next morning, I believe, everyone in Kansas City knew about the quacking ducks. No one, however, knew what happened to the two ducks.

BIRTHDAYS

Every year on my birthday the family (my children and grandchildren) and friends would gather. Before the gifts were opened and before any frivolity and food was consumed – an annual family tradition took place. The entire group would form a line and spread their legs. Then I would get down on my knees (when I still could get up) and crawl through everyone's legs and receive birthday spanks from each person – the spanking machine!

FRISBEE

During the spring while I attended Stanford many students considered it to be a tradition to spend many hours and days at the beach in Santa Cruz. It was a simple 30-mile/minute commute to Stanford. We would soak up the sun and sand and Pacific ocean – an early version of remote learning. While at the beach at Santa Cruz, we played a game – spinning a metal pie tin back and forth. The pie tin was stamped with the name Frisbee Pie Tin Co. The frisbee craze followed.

NO HANDS

As a teenager I had mastered riding a 2-wheel bicycle. One day, I called my mother to come outside and observe my bicycle excellence – my tricks. While she was watching – I came speeding towards her – raised myself until I was standing on the seat of the bicycle – “look mom, no hands!” and then I promptly crashed into the outside garage brick wall. Blood everywhere!

GORILLAS

My son Dan was bringing his bride-to-be to Minneapolis to meet the family. In anticipation of this meeting, I rented 5 life-like gorilla suits. With bananas in hand, we 5 gorillas showed up at the airport (this was prior to the present security precautions). Would you believe, Dan's bride-to-be still married him!

BALL GAME

When my son Dan and daughter Rachel were toddlers – they enjoyed playing an endless game which I named “fetch the ball, dad, so I can throw it again!” Finally I invented a new game – I positioned the toddlers at the top of the stairs – I was at the bottom of the stairs. I would throw the ball up to them – they would then drop the ball down the stairs – the game of “ball boop” became a thrilling activity for them while I just sat and threw the ball back to them endlessly!

THE GREEN HAT SAGA

In the 1960s I bought a hat – a green hat – originally, I think that I bought the hat in order to protect my precancerous head from too much exposure to the sun. I wore the hat whenever I was outside. The hat was, and is, undeniably ugly.

Gradually my family expressed their strong distaste for this hat. In response I wore the hat more and more, at meals, at the game table, in the car! I taunted everyone with my ugly green hat. When the entire family was going to travel to Hawaii for a vacation – I was given an ultimatum “no green hat in Hawaii.” My response was to recruit my wonderful assistant Barbara Doncaster. Barbara wrapped and mailed the hat so that I would receive it when I landed in Hawaii.

Now in 2024 – almost 60 years later, the green hat still exists – uglier than ever. My daughter-in-law, Julie, created an entire green ensemble to diffuse attention from the hat – it just enhanced the hat. The saga continues.

TWINS VS. CUBS

My son Dan lived in Chicago and was a Chicago Cubs fan. I live in Minneapolis and the Minnesota Twins are my team. Dan and I enjoyed betting on the Cubs versus the Twins. However, the Cubs and Twins are in different leagues and do not compete against each other – so Dan and I had to improvise. One year we bet whether the Twins would have a better winning percentage than the Cubs at the end of the season. If Dan lost, he agreed to wear a Twins uniform and Twins paraphernalia for one whole week – at business meetings, everywhere. Likewise, if I lost I, agreed to wear a Cubs uniform. At the end of the season, the Twins had a better win percentage than the Cubs. I won the bet! Dan wore a Twins uniform for an entire week – everywhere he went!

SAN QUENTIN

While attending Stanford University I was on the Stanford wrestling team. In addition to scheduling matches with other Pacific Conference schools, we scheduled matches with non-conference teams – A match was set up for our team to wrestle the inmates at San Quentin prison. We beat them. Afterwards, we received a tour of the prison and I was allowed to sit in the electric chair! I don't think they turned it on!

FARMER GOMER

At our Lake Manuela lake cabin, Farmer Gomer owned the farm across the road. Every time we were at the cabin, I would take all of my kids and their guests up the dirt road to see the cows being milked. One time, I alerted my wife to watch us as the crowd of little ones walked up the dirt road to the Gomer Farm. We all held each other's hands. There was an electrified fence alongside the road. I touched it and the entire group – jumped with surprise -most laughed, a few cried for a minute. All received an electrical lesson!

BROKEN ANKLE

In 1945, World War II, My father was in Ecuador and Peru on government business. I played on the University High School football team. Final game of the year and I was allowed to take the family car for the first time. My mother was a spectator at the game and saw me break my ankle. She saw me hauled off the field then I disappeared! Where did I go?Hospitals were called – nothing! Hours passed without finding me! Finally I was found. I had driven the family car to the senior class party! What else did a high school senior, football player do after the final game of the year. The party was all important!

BON VOYAGE

I was invited to the going away party of a recently married couple, Harold Zatz and his new bride Betty, formerly Betty Silverman – a very close friend of mine – in fact we regularly pranked each other with practical jokes – often slightly raunchy. The groom was a fine young man completely without a sense of humor. The party was going to be the same without a lot of fun – bon voyage a la boring. Since the couple were going to spend some of their honeymoon hiking and being very practical – I purchased a new toilet seat and attached a leather handle to the seat – voila! A unique traveling toilet seat.

It was impossible to disguise the present by wrapping it. After dinner we all sat around a table while presents were to be opened. Next to me sat the newlywed couple's Rabbi – whom I had never met – I don't think that he had smiled the entire evening. My turn came to pass my present to be opened – I was somewhat embarrassed – passing my toilet seat to the Rabbi, he immediately took the present – and roared in laughter – and said something in Hebrew – perhaps a toilet seat prayer. The somber evening turned into an evening of joy!

WEATHER

In addition to all of my other attributes, I control the weather! I even have a notepad that says “dial 1-900-weather” with my name and phone number beside it. Over the years my weather successes have been touted near and far.

For example, all of my years at Calhoun Square I was in charge of good weather at the Uptown Art Fair – with astonishing results. And my daughter Sarah was married on December 29th – to spring-like weather. My

favorite weather story, in February, the night before my son Dan was to marry his bride-to-be, from Chicago, we put on a big party – mostly for the bride’s family. At the party I bragged “Dan, I hope you appreciate the perfect weather that I have provided.” Dan responded “You arrogant ass, we wanted to go skiing.” At which point I said ” I’ll see what I can do!” The next morning came with a heavy snowstorm – almost a blizzard!

BROTHER JOHN

My brother John lived in the venerable village of North Oaks where nothing unusual or unplanned ever happens. Perhaps John thought he would never be a victim of my shenanigans. Wrong. When John and his wife Mollie departed for an extended vacation, they were probably confident that their property was safe and secure – wrong again! I filled an empty garbage can with junk – trash from my basement, or just worthless junk, then I drove the full can to John’s house in North Oaks. Next I covered the can and attached it by a sturdy and hefty chain to John’s outside front door – so that John and Mollie could not enter their home when they returned from their trip! I finally relented and much later provided the key to the lock!

SMALL WORLD

Last year I received a call from Albuquerque, NM – from the daughter of Alan “Buddy.” Anyway, Buddy was my closest friend almost 90 years ago – and I had not seen or heard from Buddy all of that time. I knew Buddy and his mother and father before any of his family was born. We had a delightful reunion when Buddy and family returned to Minneapolis for a visit.

BEAVER

When I was 9 or 10 years old, I had large group of friends. One of them looked like a beaver – so we cruelly called him “Beaver” Adams. Fast forward 75 years, I was planning to write a book; I needed to find someone to help me and a company that could produce the book. My daughter Sarah suggested an acquaintance – Susan Adams Lloyd. Susan suggested her father who was a book publisher. I wrote and published my book Welcome to Wynott – the name of the publisher was Beaver’s Pond Press – owned by Milton “Beaver” Adams.

HAIRCUT

For many years I worked in downtown Minneapolis, I always went to the same barber- named Don- I never knew his last name. Now that I am living in the Kenwood retirement community – a woman, Chris, comes in to provide hair services to the residents. Chris cut the few hairs that I have! One day she was talking about her dad Don, who was a barber in downtown Minneapolis. The same Don that I had known for so many years! A coincidence? And what are the odds that Chris would come to the Kenwood!

92 DEGREES

It was a day in late October 2022 when my daughter Sarah brought me to the emergency room at the hospital. I had a body temperature of only 92°. I was not doing well – to put it mildly my primary doctor put me in hospice (the final stage of care that almost always proceeds death) and told my daughter that I would likely pass away within a couple of weeks. So, upon hearing the prediction I decided to enjoy my final days. I quit taking pills – and began eating forbidden salt and forbidden sugar, everything and anything that I desired. I tolerated hospice care. Actually, I graduated from hospice. There are some people who think I was kicked out of hospice because I didn’t conform! Now, 18 months later, I feel fine, eat well, sleep well, and befuddle my doctor who just laughs trying to figure me out.

When I was put into hospice, my daughter – my legal trustee, properly began looking at my will. I had suggested giving some funds for something in a public space in Minneapolis. “What does that mean?”

she said. After much discussion I decided and wrote a manifesto about WATER and how it is disappearing, a worldwide problem. Minnesota (being the state that has access to a lot of water) can be the benefactor. So we have started of movement about water – all due to my being ill and placed in hospice

SURGERY

In addition to defying the odds and living longer than predicted, I have had and beaten cancer three times. One other medical rarity. I had a meeting scheduled that was absolutely necessary and could not be postponed. Suddenly I had strangulated hernia which required surgery. The meeting could not happen unless the surgery was performed on a weekend. “Let’s do it,” I said strongly and loudly. Surgery was scheduled for the weekend. Being the weekend, hospital staff was limited. Staff were not accessible to push me to the operating room! “I’ll walk there.” And I did – the surgery was performed and I was at the meeting.

BIRTHDAY CAKE

My mother was celebrating her 75th birthday. On her birthday cake i placed candle that would continually relight, and would not extinguish. Mother blew and blew – and her false teeth fell out on the table. She may have been embarrassed. We all laughed loudly!

EDIBLE

My mantra at every family gathering was “everything that is edible is improved/enhanced by either ketchup or chocolate sauce!” We had many discussions questioning that statement.

JUMP

One very snowy day while we lived on Wentworth Ave., I was shoveling snow. The house included an upper floor, outdoor deck which also needed shoveling. After I finished shoveling the deck, I noticed a huge pile of snow down at ground level. I then jumped from the upper level into the snow pile at ground level. My wife, looking out the window as I flew by, was aghast, and almost had a heart attack!

TRADITION

Every Valentine’s day I would dress up and go to the White Castle special Valentine’s party (reservations only) – with music, red tablecloths, waitpersons and a special White Castle menu. I always took a lady friend with me – to experience the occasion. The only problem was that, without fail, the ladies would not attend a second White Castle party – with me! Was the problem me or White Castle?

Too many stories to continue. Stay tuned for more!

Comments from the Blog

Brenda Christian (June 17, 2024)

Thanks for sharing your stories Ray.

Fran Davis (June 17, 2024)

So many stories! Love it!

Nancy Johnson (June 17, 2024)

loved the stories! Way to go Ray—you can't make this stuff up. I am glad you got it documented for posterity.

Sarah Harris (June 18, 2024)

*To think these stories only scratch the surface of how crazy you've been all these years!
Fun to be on this wild ride with you!*

Jackie Knight (June 20, 2024)

It was an honor to work for you; you were both brilliant to watch, and a patient teacher to learn from – those traits do not always go hand in hand. I'm so thankful for what you created, and the space you created for so many of us to grow.

He Who has the Last Word

March 31, 2026

A little weird getting something from Ray – yes? If anyone could send an email posthumously it would be him. Alas, it is me, his youngest daughter, Sarah Harris, writing this on his behalf.

So long, Farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, Goodbye

525,600 minutes

How do you measure... measure a year?

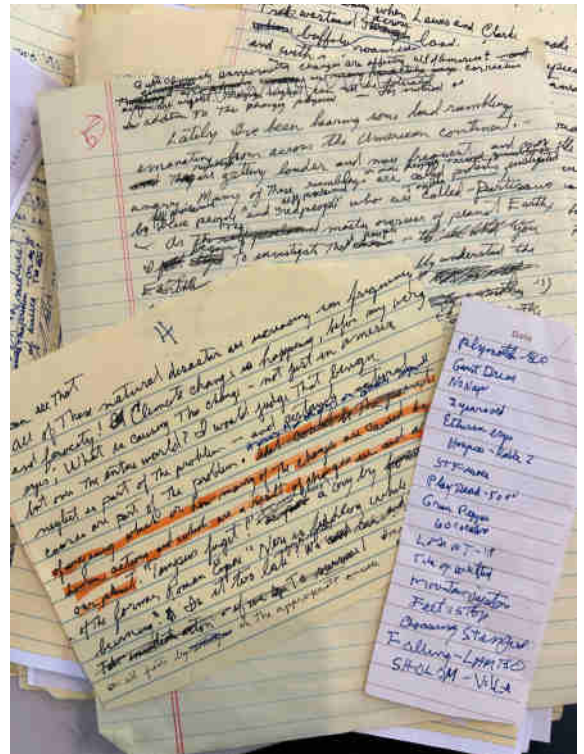
It has been so many minutes and moments since we said goodbye to our dad – grandpa, friend – uncle – curmudgeon – and visionary. As we sat down to write a blog in honor of those 525,600 opportunities to think about what he would have said, done, chuckled about, we thought it fitting to plant an enjoyable ear worm for all of us – he loved his musicals (reader's choice to spend the day with Rent or Sound of Music playing over and over in your mind)!

So, sit back, hum a tune, and enjoy some of our ramblings in the spirit of Ray.

Your Vision

At the Celebration of Life for Ray last July, we asked everyone to place a post-it-note or two on a board answering the question of 'how you will help Ray's love for the City continue in his earthly absence'? It was our expectation that we would synthesize all the ideas into major themes and report back here. We were pleased that so many of you took us to heart and posted your ideas. We were also pleased that they were very specific to your family, work, and community – they were actionable!

The specificity of responses suggested you all really gave it thought and identified ways you can make an impact – no one just 'phoned it in'. This gave us great joy and also great heartburn as we tried to find the themes without dumbing everything down. So, instead of posting the themes here, we will instead ask you to do a quick self-assessment: how are you doing with your impact? Done? If so, maybe your goals weren't "Ray" enough! Not done? Congratulations on aspiring to an Impossible Dream just the way he would have instructed! Keep chasing your windmills!



Ray's list of to-dos

As we cleaned out Dad's office, we were amazed to find a complete 'Blog' file of ideas (not amazed at his organizational skills – those were legendary – rather we were awestruck by a man who was self-described as 'only 95 years old' still having so many ideas). His remaining ideas were incredible (and almost all legible....). Beyond the list, his file also had clippings of words, quotes, and images that were inspiring to him – if you had ever been in his office, you likely saw his bulletin board with these very tokens that demonstrated how his mind was never idle, even while reading a magazine or newspaper.

While we can guess at what he would have written about some of these ideas – for others we are clueless. Here is just a sampling:

- Plymouth – 800
- Garst Drive
- No Naps
- 2 years old
- Enthusiasm ergs
- Hospice – Rabbi Z
- St. Francis
- Play dead – 50
- Green Peppers
- 6000 Calories
- Lose weight -111
- Take up wrestling
- Mountain oysters
- Feet v stop
- Choosing Stanford
- Falling – Lambo
- Sholom – Villa
- Post office
- Safety in numbers
- Perception of decision makers
- Nicollet Mall – Loring Park
- Loring Greenway
- Winter city perception
- Greenway Association
- Leadership – not ROI
- Riverwalk > Greenway
- Not ROI – returns to community
- Skyways to street level
- River – Post Office – Orchestra Hall – Loring Park
- Walker Art Center _ sculpture
- Private-public-partnership
- Downtown report
- Challenge what you think
- Friday night dinners
- Jewish
- Favorite art – stairway to heaven
- Earth's eras and periods

Feel free to share your thoughts about what he might have written about any or all of these – send us a note or write it in the comments. There is no doubt that everyone thinking about what he thought about would please him to no end!

The final blog

Almost daily, Dad and I would talk about his current in-process blog post. For the last year of his life, it was 'The Man of the Moon'. Uncharacteristically, he was struggling to get it 'right'. It's "not ready" was a common refrain. He shared several versions with me along the way. Often, he would set it aside to complete another blog that flowed easily. I always thought it strange that he couldn't complete the blog as he was such a good writer and never in doubt about what he wanted to say (can I get an 'Amen'!).

As we prepared to publish this piece in the blog, I was torn – as a Prince aficionado, I was not happy when music that was long hidden in Prince's vault – pieces that Prince thought were 'not ready' – were released by his family. And now, we find ourselves in the same position. We have decided to share his final thoughts with people he cared about because it represents a lot of his energy in the last year – even though we know that he thought it was 'not ready'. As you read this, please know that Dad would write everything on yellow pads of paper – putting cross reference numbers in margins to 'insert' paragraphs' or literally cutting and taping a new thought on top of the original, crossed out, sentences and paragraphs. His penmanship had suffered in his last years as his arthritis took hold – and while that did not stop his prolific thinking, it makes transcribing a bit challenging – especially when it is a little harder to call him and ask what he meant..... So, what follows is my best attempt to get his 'not ready' thoughts in order.

For what it is worth, as I re-read his draft – posthumously, I realize that he probably knew – consciously or subconsciously – that 'not ready' meant this would only make sense when he was, in fact, looking down on earth.

The Man on the Moon – A True American Fable (the 'Not Ready' Version)

In our universe, for many eons, the man in the moon has looked down upon all of the world and specifically America. He continues to do so!

I am the man on the moon. I'm the omnipresent authority about America, its history, its present status, and its future. From my vantage point, I monitor the positive accomplishments as well as the negative trends that affect this great country. After all, I am going around in circles endlessly and might as well provide a commentary of my observations.

First of all, let me tell you about me:

I am not made of green cheese!

It is only a fable that a cow jumped over the moon. It never happened!

It's lonely up here! Nobody around – just a lot of garbage and trash floating by.

I did have an alien visitor named John Glenn only for a short time. He promised he and his friends would return.

Enough about me! Let's talk about America. Although I've been going around much longer, I do remember when someone had the unmitigated gall to name the entire western hemisphere after himself – America! His name was Amerigo Vespacci.

I was watching when Lewis and Clark made their historic trek westward across lands already occupied (and not just by roaming buffalo). America was untamed, natural, and with a limitless future.

The creation of the east coast to west coast railroad connection opened up America. Then Wilbur and Orville opened up the skies. I could see and hear cities growing. About then, horses were no longer an adequate means of transportation for many Americans. "We need faster horses". And Henry Ford responded with a faster horse – the model T Ford. The birth of the automobile changed the lifestyle of every American. Soon, the Eisenhower interstate highway system connected all of America.

From my point of view, the American experiment seemed to be working successfully. Of all the countries that I watch over, America has been the most gifted, physically, and its people have unexcelled potential. Wait a minute, or a year, or an eon! Occasionally, I find myself covering up the sun's light, causing an eclipse! That is my way of attracting attention. Perhaps an eclipse is needed now, why? I just took off my rose-colored glasses,

and America has lost some of its luster and is encountering some expanding challenges that need immediate attention. Looking down over America, I can see the Colorado river is no longer full of surging water. Drought is evident in many parts of the country. Water shortages are obvious, except on some lush green golf courses!

Warmer weather is melting glaciers, and raising coastal water levels, threatening coastal cities, and developments nearby.

Smog is so thick over some cities that I cannot see them – I can only smell them!

Fire is ravaging large areas of western America while hurricanes and tornadoes are cutting a wide swathe through the Midwest and the east. What can be done to reduce the problem or is it too late?

I can see that all of these natural disasters are increasing in frequency and ferocity! Climate changes are happening, before my very eyes; what is causing the change – not just in America, but also the entire world? Benign neglect is part of the problem, and certainly natural causes are part of the problem. What could be the point of crying about which or how many of the changes are caused by human actions and which are a result of changes in and around our planet. Tempest Fuget! (time flies) a cry by members of the former Roman empire. Nero is fiddling while Rome is burning. Is it too late? Immediate action on all fronts is the appropriate answer. Quite obviously environmental changes are affecting all Americans and the changing physical environment.

Before we create complicated solutions to the climate change challenge, we must consider the approach that some earthlings are recommending: the 'do nothing approach' just 'go with the flow'! So what if it gets hotter than hell! Hotter than hell-I've never been there!

Lately I've been hearing some loud rumblings emanating from across the American continent. These rumblings are getting louder and more frequent and more angry. Many of these rumblings – or more properly termed grumblings – called protests, instigated by self-proclaimed blue people and self-proclaimed red people who are together called partisans. As the overseer of planet Earth, I began to investigate these people. To fully understand the legitimacy and magnitude of the problem and determine whether, as one of my earthlings once proclaimed, they are simply "full of sound and fury, signifying nothing". The red sometimes call themselves conservatives, and the blue sometimes call themselves progressives, but in total all of them are partisans and contrarians disagreeing with each other about almost everything.

I don't know what Dad would have written next – but I am absolutely sure it would have been big ideas to solve these challenges – with action at its core. He had already inspired and funded the Minneapolis Foundation to start a broad movement around the water crisis (now resting with Conservation Minnesota). What would he have demanded we do around climate change? Partisanship? And, for the man who proudly lived in the city, sent all of his kids to public schools, and proclaimed that the only thing he never built was 'a glass ceiling', how would he have added to his urgent observations if he had lived to see the policy-sanctioned 'othering' that is undermining years of progress and destroying our community? I can tell you with certainty that the Man on the Moon is rooting for us to take the baton and solve these issues!

Parting is such sweet sorrow. We will keep Dad's blog live for a little while longer and then we will draw it to a close. To ensure that his inspiration and motivation will not be lost, we will turn the entire blog into a PDF. When the PDF is available we will post it on the blog for your downloading pleasure – stay tuned for that final email 'from Ray'.

Thanks to everyone over the years who helped Dad to think big thoughts, do big things, or have big debates. You all could have turned away and instead you revved him up! He (and we) appreciate/d you all.

Comments from the Blog

Lily Coyle (March 31, 2026)

*Ah, Ray. SO prescient. Even from the moon, our red and blue division looks preposterous.
The mysterious GREEN PEPPER file probably held solution, but alas, we'll never know. XXXXOOOO*

(April 1, 2026)

*I will forever wonder what Ray had to say about GREEN Peppers, but I heartily concur that the never-ending
RED vs BLUE war must look pretty stupid from the moon. Miss you, Ray! XO*

Sally Westby (March 31, 2026)

*Thanks Sarah for continuing the blig. I sure do miss Ray.
Without him the Loring Greenway would not have turned into such a community treasure*

Alan Arthur (March 31, 2026)

Sarah – I love it! Thank you for the surprising message from Ray!

Dave Jasper (April 1, 2026)

*Thank you Sarah. I am so proud that I was able to work with Ray on the Sears project. We were good for
each other. I also am sad that my travels conflicted with the celebrations of Ray's life Green Peppers HHmmm.
The only fruit I know of that protects it's future (seeds) with space inside the protective shroud.
Perhaps an analogy but I don't see it vis a vis our environment.*

Tom Hoch (April 1, 2026)

*What a tremendous gift this is to all of us. We loved Ray's deep thinking and wit
and are so glad that these live on in you.*

Brenda K Christian (April 1, 2026)

*Thank you for taking the time to write this.
Ray was always full of thoughts, ideas and little secrets that made him uniquely special.*

Peggy Lucas (April 1, 2026)

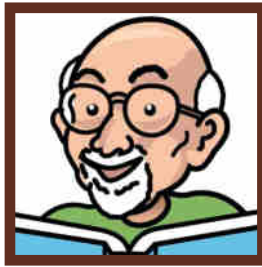
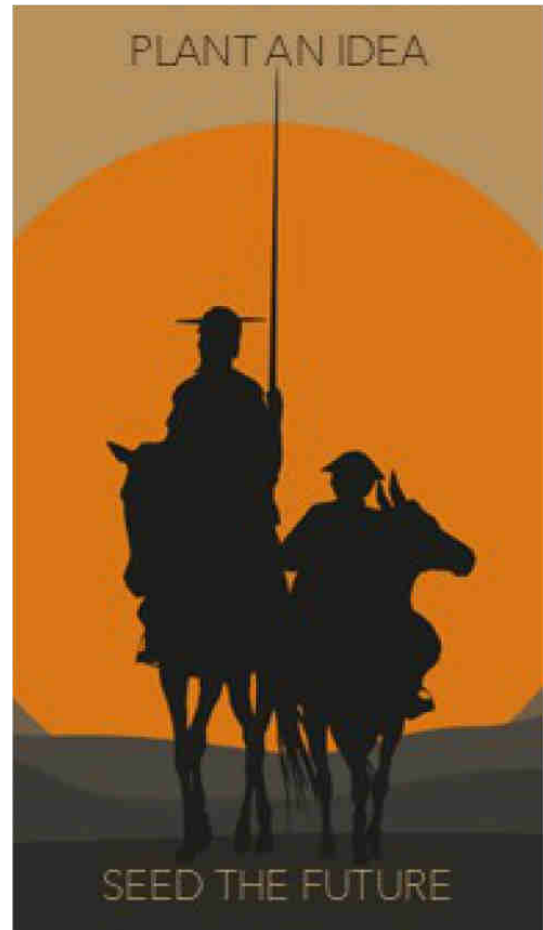
Thanks for the entertainment and the inspiration!! Totally enjoyed reading this!!

Alice O'Hara (April 2, 2026)

*Nice tribute to Ray! I have always been impressed by his commitment to our community and the fact that
he never stopped dreaming big and trying to figure out how to make the world a better place. He is truly missed.*

Mariann Bentz (April 3, 2026)

*Thank you, Sarah, for this tribute to Ray. I read it after the Artemis launch,
and I'm sure our Man of the Moon/Man of La Mancha is keeping an eye on our intrepid astronauts.
And us. What a gift he is!*



Ray's Trees

