



**August 2007**

**Volume II #14**

# **Artifacts**



**Still open for business** but not a library: the South Wood County Historical Corp. Museum at 540 Third Street South, Wisconsin Rapids. At the door of what was, in 1955, T.B. Scott Public Library is Anne Brazeau. (Photo courtesy McMillan Memorial Library.) Inside: President's Message (Buehler Dedication), 2-5; Bud Daly Interview, 6-15; Mystery Centerfold, 16-17; "Wisconsin Rapids Little League" by Chuck Hinners, 18-27; "The Brig" by Earle Garber, 28-29; "Toy Shop Steam Power" by Marshall Buehler, 30-31.  
*The Museum building, the former Isaac Witter house, is 100 years old in 2007.*

Phil Brown

## Year of the Museum Update

By Phil Brown, SWCHC president

“The Year of the Museum” has been exciting. We began with a special display commemorating our building’s 100<sup>th</sup> birthday.

In 1907, Isaac and Charlotte Witter built their beautiful home overlooking the Wisconsin River. From 1948 to 1970, we were the home of the T.B. Scott Public Library. In fact, the little girl coming out of the library on the cover photo is my sister-in-law, Anne Brazeau Hausler. Since 1970, the “Witter House” has been the home of the South Wood County Historical Corp.

On May 25, 2007, we honored J. Marshall Buehler for his 50-plus years of service by naming the “fireplace room” after him. Marshall was a little surprised by the honor; but he was not at a loss for words when he shared some treasured memories with the family and friends who were on hand.

SWCHC sponsored an ice cream social during the inaugural Cranberry Blossom Festival on June 23. It was a beautiful day and we saw many new faces coming through the Museum. Many thanks to our friends from Historic Point Basse for joining us and to Dr. Michael Mehr, Jack Wesley and Barry Jens for scooping over nine gallons of ice cream.

The Wood County Master Gardeners have been caring for the grounds of the Museum for



many years. On July 14 we were honored to be one of the stops on their annual garden walk. The gardens have never looked better and they even featured special floral arrangements throughout the building. Over 700 came through the Museum that day! Without a doubt, a record number. We rarely have 700 visitors in a year.

Our special birthday party July 15 capped off the “The Year of the Museum.” It was another picture-perfect summer day. Pure Brass provided musical entertainment on the lawn and birthday cake, ice cream and lemonade were served.

As we mark the milestones of history, it is also time to plan for the future. How can we use today’s technology to help preserve our past? This is something we will be exploring as we prepare for the next 100 years.



As president Phil Brown presents Marshall Buehler with a commemorative portrait, SWCHC board members Sarah Sigler and Page Clark display the sign for the J. Marshall Buehler Gallery.



Marshall points way to the future. Also pictured, T.B. Scott, namesake of the former T.B. Scott Public Library .





Above: Marshall Buehler and friends are attentive to remarks of SWCHC president Phil Brown at the May 25 ceremony. Note tile floor from the old library.

## Dedication Day

Right: Helen and Bob Zimmerman with Marshall. Bob is a member of the SWCHC board of directors.



Rick Clark and Marshall at the fireplace of the new J. Marshall Buehler Gallery. Shown are memorabilia from SWCHC history.





Above: Nick Brazeau, left, SWCHC board member, with Marshall. Right: board member Barry Jens and Marshall, surrounded by photographs of the Museum when it was the Isaac Witter home, and later, T.B. Scott Public Library.



Marshall cutting special cake in Museum sun room, where SWCHC Board of Directors meetings and other events are held. Also pictured, his grandson, Thurgood Dennis.

# Bud

*An interview with Francis J. Daly, Jr.*

*June 3, 1998*

*By Dave Engel*

My name is Francis Daly, Jr., but I go by Bud. When somebody calls me Francis, it's almost a sure thing they went to school with me because the teachers were always proper with proper names. The J., that's James. That was my dad's middle name.

My sisters were three years older than I was and they were unable to say Francis so they called me Bud when I was a little baby. They were twins, Marilyn and Marion.

I was born at the Wisconsin Rapids hospital, Aug. 2, 1928. I will be 70, August 2 [1998]. I'd like to add, a young seventy. I'm very active in local affairs and I think that helps people be a little more alert.

My father was Francis also. He was born July 3, 1897. He spent as much time with us as he could. However, back in those days, running a business was mostly house calls. They'd get their prospects during the day and then go call on them at night. I can remember as a boy riding out with him out in the country and everywhere else, making these house calls. Sometimes they were very long. Sometimes I was invited in and sometimes I wasn't. So I'd take a book along and read it and wait for him to give his sales presentation.

He'd come out, and I'd ask him, "Did you sell it?" If he did, he'd be real happy. If he didn't, he'd say, "I'll have to come back and call on them again."

That was the phonograph and radio business. In the early days of radio, you took the radios out and you put up a temporary antenna and then you waited until they could get a signal and hear a radio program. That was the same way, when I started out, with television. We used to try to get these TV sets out in people's homes and then we'd wait, and I'd watch mine at home. If it was coming in good, boy, I'd be right out

there, giving them the sales pitch and trying to close the deal. But if it was all snowy, (and you know how that was in the early days of television, Dave), I stayed away. They'd say, "You might as well take it with you because it doesn't work very well."



My grandma, Louise Jeffrey Daly, was one of the first school teachers in Wood County. She was born out in the town of Hansen to a Steve Jeffrey. Mary Billmeyer was a sister. John Jeffrey was her brother. John Jeffrey was John Jr.'s father; he was an attorney here in town and he lived with my grandmother for a length of time.

My grandma had four children. She was widowed at a very early age, and she had a live-in person from the rural area, that would go to the Wood County Normal. They would live-in for room and board and they'd do housework and watch the children.

*Photo: "Grandma" Louise Daly and piano-selling conveyance*

She was a pioneer as far as women doing things was concerned. She built that store building in 1922, which is gone now. She raised that family. She did well with all of them. Way back, when the store was first founded, Grandmother used to load a piano on the wagon, a horse-drawn wagon, and they would go to Pittsville, Junction City and places like that. Those were overnight trips and they wouldn't come back until they had sold the piano or the organ. They'd stay out two and three days.

And [before she built the store] she went over to ask Mr. Mead what they should do (and I think you wrote an article on that at one time). That the people kept coming in and out of Mr. Mead's office and my grandmother, and I think my Uncle Glen and my dad, were in there. They were handing Mr. Mead notes. The mill had gone out on strike but he never mentioned that to my grandmother. He said, "Mrs. Daly, if I were you, I would proceed with building that building." That there's a great future for Wisconsin Rapids.

Agnes was the oldest. She was killed in a car accident way back. At that time, it was a big Irish custom to bring the body home and have the wake in the home. I can remember my aunt Agnes with these candles around what was the casket in later years. I thought she was in bed sleeping. I thought, "What are all these people doing around here, looking at her?" That was one of my first memories.

Then there was an Aunt Nina, who was Mrs. Fred Roenius. She ran a gift shop in connection with the store. She was also a music teacher later, a very nice one. [She had a son] Jim Roenius and there was a cousin, Anne. Jim Roenius lives in town yet.

Then there was my uncle, Glen. Mary Conway, Judge Conway's wife, is Glen's daughter.

He [Glen] married Carol Steib, who is an old timer also. I think she's something like 95-years-old right now and she has a very keen mind. Her father was a druggist. Later on, he ran the water and light department. His name was Frank Steib. She turned out to be my kindergarten teacher. She's at the manor. A friend of mine gave me an 1899 telephone directory: F.L. Steib. He was in

there with his drug store. He was above Brauer's in an apartment up there, the last that I knew.

At one time, I think I knew where seventy five percent of the people in Wisconsin Rapids lived. I could go by their house and I could name them. Like going up Baker Street. [James and Carrie] Maders lived there. Mr. [James] Bogie lived there, who was the sheriff at one time, then Mrs. [Katherine] Fischer, I think was a Kellogg; she lived where Patty Orcutt lives. On up the street. Today it's so different. The houses are all being done over with this new aluminum-type siding and it changes the appearance of a lot of them.

Going around with my dad, and sitting around at that store, I did meet a lot of people. I spent 47 years in business too.

There's things that I can remember, like Third Street going up the hill over there on what they call Sand Hill. That was a sand road. I remember Mr. Neitzel with his wagon and his plaster sand, and his sand for foundations and things that he hauled, loaded it all by hand, and he had a team of horses. He'd come down through town with that team of horses. His son, Don, worked for my father for a long time. He married Ann Mengel.

Mr. Mengel came here as an employee or director of the state highway department. Then he went in to the contracting business. His son, Bill, took it over and Gary Getzin was a part of it and so was Don Neitzel. They built roads all over the country. Big Interstate projects. They were Catholics and Mr. Mengel dug the excavation part of Assumption High School. I think that was part of his getting Assumption High School on the way.

We had some neighbors by the name of Kenyon. She was Sara Germanson. She lived to be 100 years old. Her brother was the city assessor. His name was George Germanson. I used to be over there all the time. They were very nice to me. They didn't have any children. There was the old grandma, lived with them.

They had a cook stove, wood. They had a pump in the kitchen. It's at 370 Third Avenue South. It's all been modernized.

I don't know if you remember the round oak

stoves they had in the living rooms of older houses. They had the isinglass thing in there. They'd get a nice bed of coals. Mr. Kenyon would burn both wood and coal. At night, before they went to bed, they only heated part of the house. They had soapstone and they'd heat those things to warm up the bed before they got in. They were really pioneer people.

They used to bring chickens home from the market square and chop the heads off and they'd flutter around down in his garden. They had an old 1929 Ford Model A Roadster. I acquired ownership of it at one time and I think that's still around town.

They used to hike out to what we called the stone quarry at the end of Chase Street. I think John Bender and his wife owned that quarry. It's still there. They used to cut stones out of there for foundations. We'd pack a lunch and hike out there. They'd let me go with them. If I was exceptionally good, they'd let me wear an old Civil War Sword; I don't know where that came from. Boy, I thought I was really something with that.

We had a wonderful neighborhood. We had kids that really got along well together. Bob Plahmer's father was Art Plahmer, who had the Rapids Delivery. They used to deliver groceries with horses. In the wintertime, they had sleighs. He'd allow us to ride with him. I can remember them going into trucks after the horses gave out. They kept their horses up there right where the Obermeier building is today [In 1998 on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue].

Several of the Finup boys worked for Art. He was a good baseball player and so was his son. They played in the county league. They used to play at Vesper and they played at Seneca Corners and they played at Arpin. I remember my dad was a great baseball fan. We traveled around to these ball games.

Then there were Fahrners. They're still here. Jim Fahrner had Modern Cleaners. All these kids were very successful in their endeavors.

There was a boy by the name of Dick Sachs. His father's name was Carl. His mother's name was Margaret. She was a sister to Pat Vaughn.

They lived in the neighborhood.

Mr. Nobles was the mayor. His mother and dad lived in the neighborhood. There was a family by the name of Duncan. I just got a letter from this Mrs. Duncan. She lives out in Fairmont, Minn. He was a railroad agent. There were a number of Worlunds. We had a lot of kids.

I lived right on Third Avenue South behind where Stoiber's Clinic is [1998]. When I was born, we lived in a house behind there, on Seventh Avenue, and they carried me over in a wash basket to the new house. It's a colonial-type house on Third and Chase.

Mr. Walsh was a neighbor. I used to shovel his sidewalk. Fifty cents.

Then there were Ritchays, of course. John Ritchay, and Jane and Jimmy. Mr. Ritchay was principal of Lincoln High School. They lived on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue South, right across from my grandmother's. Mr. Ritchay was very good to us kids. He used to bring all the worn-out stuff, broken baseball bats, and we'd get what they called brads, and tack them back together again. Footballs, they'd be all shot, funny-shaped and everything. We always had all that stuff from Lincoln High School, after it was worn out and discarded. I don't think anything got thrown away back in those days. All the baseballs with the stuffing coming out.

Then there were Galganskis. Jim and Richard Galganski were good, substantial citizens.

There were Robinsons. Bob Robinson was a good friend of mine. He was shot down over Germany in World War II. We thought, "Oh my, he may never come home again" but he was in a prisoner of war camp. He came back and he was a storekeeper at Consolidated Papers.

We played over in what we called Nash's field, which is right where St. Mary's church is, by Jeffrey's. There was a creek that ran all the way over to Ahdawagam [paper products company]. I think that's how Canal Street got its name. It ran in there by Dana Machine and that used to be a sawmill. That was Bender's sawmill. The creek was dammed up there. The creek ran under the tracks there and down behind the Wood County Telephone company warehouse and in there

where Oscar Kronholm lived and came around by Jeffreys. In fact, St. Mary's basement has a sump pump in there that you can hear run. That was built right over the old creek there. Then it went through Stanton Mead's and came out right by Getzins'.

Stanton Mead loved that creek. When they kept putting in storm sewers and things like that, it drained that off. He installed a pump and a water faucet and had the water artificially run through his property. He loved that creek so.

That was a great place to play. I played with George Mead and Ben Eron. George, they had that old—we called it the barn—it had stables and everything. We used to build model airplanes up in one of the rooms there.

The Meads were always very nice to all the neighbor kids. George was a good guy. I still think a lot of George. I went to school with him for the first five or six years. Then he went to Hotchkiss, which is a prep school for Yale. George Mead going away was the brightest kid in our class. I've always said that George Mead was a highly intelligent, articulate guy. All the Meads were extra nice to the people they knew. I think they knew everybody.

Stanton's father was always kind of reverently called Mr. Mead. I don't think anybody called him George. I would see him on the street. He would always talk to you. The kids would say, "Hi, Mr. Mead." He always had a word or two.

His wife had an electric car. I think you did an article on that electric car. They used to come down to the West Side market square with that car.

Back in those days, Dave, few people went to Florida. Now, everybody goes to Florida. I can remember when Mrs. Alexander used to come over and visit Mrs. Goggins. Mr. Goggins was a prominent attorney around town. Mrs. Alexander had a big blue Cadillac. We used to go over and stand in awe of this Florida license plate. It was like us seeing one from Zimbabwe now in Wisconsin Rapids.

I belonged to a hunting club in later years that Stanton belonged to. Remember how we were trained to call people "Mr. Engel" and "Mrs. Engel" and all that. Heavens, I was out of the Army and everything. I still called Stanton, "Mr. Mead."

He told me, "Don't call me that any more. It makes me feel old. Call me Stanton."

Stanton was good to us. He talked with us. He was always nice. The mother was a fine lady. She and her mother and father's names were Williams. I think they lived up by Biron. I think they had a

cranberry marsh up there which Stanton had for a long time and, Gordy Dempze, I think he did a lot of the work for Stanton. I think he eventually bought the marsh.

Mr. Williams used to come and visit. We all kind of revered him.

"Hello, Mr. Williams, Mrs. Williams."

"How are you kids?" George was a good kid. He was one of the bunch. They didn't think, because they were prominent people around town; they didn't use that at all.

When I sold my business, George came over a couple of times. In fact, I sold the building to the bank, and he came over and said, "Can't you sell that as a viable business? I just can't believe you



*Photo: Bud Daly 1998 (Dave Engel)*

can't pass that on to somebody."

I said, "No, we've become a dinosaur." This new, modern merchandizing thing had taken its toll. He was concerned about that. That's the kind of a man that he is. He has deep roots here in Wisconsin Rapids.

Gilbert was my younger sister's age. He was a very bright guy too but I never had too much association with him. Then there was a sister, Mary. I don't see her real often.

Those kids always worked. They had a garden. They were taught to work.

They had a ballroom up there with a basket. George and I could go up there and shoot baskets.

We stayed pretty much east of what is now the Expressway. It was a railroad track at that time. The old Chicago Northwestern. Down to what we called the Viaduct on Second Avenue. The railroad bridge. That's about as far south as we ventured.

Of course, we went over to the swimming pool. Most of the time, walking. In high school, we walked. There was no bus. School lasted until quarter to twelve. We were off till one. Everybody in that neighborhood walked home for lunch. I didn't know there was hot lunch up there until I was a senior in high school.

The thing about the Depression, you take all these people that are my age, that lived through that thing. I think it made very strong people out of them. Everybody was poor, as I remember it, only some were more poor than others.

These mills tried to keep these people going. They'd work maybe one or two days a week so more of them could work. I think there was a great paternalism shown by the industry of this area toward their employees.

At one time, the Milwaukee railroad serviced Consolidated Papers. It crossed about where the Consolidated offices are now. It went into the mill that way. The old steam engine would come down through there. My mother'd be concerned about the soot and ashes from the engine. But these guys were really careful. They didn't try to scatter smoke all over the neighborhood.

I worked there during high school, during World War II, until about 1945. I used to work from five till nine. We worked four hours, three nights a week. Shoveling bark into the boiler house, unloading coal, hard work. We weren't executives, that's for sure, or foremen.

The Lowell School was two blocks from my house. I have a lot of fond memories of it. You remember there was a railroad track that came down through there. Went to the Wood County Grocery Company. And went behind Normington's dry cleaning plant, Wisconsin Valley Creamery. They'd get coal in.

We had some fine teachers. Mrs. Kenyon had been a teacher and so I could read, well before I ever went to school. She just took me under her wing. I went through third grade and fourth grade, each a half a year and I missed a lot. That was when they were doing fractions and division. Another boy by the name of Gordon Wegert was in those classes for a half a year. They called it skipping a grade. I don't think they do that any more. It was harmful to me. I missed the basic part of math.

At the Lowell school, my aunt, who was Mrs. Glen Daly, Carol Daly, was my kindergarten teacher. A lot of the old families had girls who taught there. I don't think at the time there were any married teachers. We had one man teacher. His name was Robert McMillen.

My grandmother, out in the town of Hansen, taught in Babcock. She taught in a lot of these schools in Wood County and she taught in Wausau before she married my grandfather.

The business was established in 1886. At the time that I closed it down, it was the oldest business in town.

Lowell was a good school. It was the newest school in town at the time. The principal was Miss Horton. She was a taskmaster and there was no fooling around. Her first name was Ruth. There was the Horton milling company up there on Fourth Avenue North. I don't know what the relationship was. I remember a church being up in there too. Leo Barrette raised the Barrette family in the old Horton house. Ruth lived in

one of Glen Daly's apartments on 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue. She died there.

As far as the teachers were concerned, they were just excellent. We really learned. We used the Palmer method, you remember that? For writing? Pull, push pull. Circle circle circle.

Then they had a playground which was all full of pea-sized gravel. That was just terrible. You'd get that stuff in your shoes. It would track all over.

We had the railroad tracks right there. We had a fence around there. Some of the kids went over. They may have been going to a store over on Grand Avenue and they cut across those tracks and one of the schoolmates crawled under the train when it was moving. His legs were cut off. Krohn and Berard's funeral coach, that was the city ambulance at that time, came down and got him.

There were three or four kids with him. Some of these kids were very aware there were the remnants of that mill pond over there. They soaked some of their clothes in water and put it on this kid's head. The bell rang and everybody went back to school. The kid was taken to the hospital and died several days later. That was one of my early recollections of somebody dying. Now, they would have had all the counselors and everything else and we just went back to school.

I can remember going to the funeral at Krohn and Berard's funeral home which is torn down now, next to the Tribune. I can still picture Miss Horton sitting there in kind of an oversized chair during the services for this young man. It was something that I never forgot. It was my first traumatic experience.

We probably were in 4<sup>th</sup> grade so that probably would have been around 1934. His name was Leroy Wittrock. They lived out on Grand Avenue. I knew a lot of the Wittrocks. They were all good, hard-working people.

We didn't go downtown much. I don't think the merchants wanted kids hanging around. We used to breeze through Johnson Hills. Then there was Bob and Mary Kerrin's Candy Shop. We used to go in there. In fact, my dad bought his Sunday papers there. They were right next

to Church's Drug Store. It was part of Church's building. When Kerrins went out, Church's expanded in there. They [Kerrins] moved into the theater complex.

That's where Speltz's music started out, where Kerrin's candy was, before they moved up to where the Book World is now.

Sweet's Grocery was kind of a neighborhood hangout. Bill Sweet was nice. He'd tolerate us. We stayed out on the lawn and sat around there. We could get a Pepsi Cola, twelve full ounces for a nickel, and then you passed it around. If somebody had a nickel and bought candy, you said, "Butts on you," and you'd share, or the next time they got some, you didn't get any. Kids were pretty nice. You had a minimum of bad words and bad feelings.

We didn't go up to the Polish neighborhood. That would be up in the St. Lawrence area. Most of the Polish kids went to the St. Lawrence school.

As far as St. Lawrence was concerned, that was not the diocese of La Crosse. That was the Polish National Church out of Chicago. They had their services, their sermons and everything in Polish up there. I'd say, into the early forties. I don't know whatever happened to the Polish National Church.

And then there was a West Side Lutheran up there. There was the Emerson School on 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue North, where CW transport was, Consolidated has some offices in there now. Then the Edison School was out on West Grand Avenue, where the fire station is. There were a bunch of kids up there that played too. Bill Putzier and Knuth and that bunch.

There were another group of kids on 8<sup>th</sup> Street by Warsinske's garage. Then there were another bunch up by SS. Peter & Paul. Things were kind of territorial but we didn't get into each other's territory that I ever remember. Nobody ran around looking for trouble. Everyone stayed in their own neighborhood. It wasn't out of fear. It was just that that's where we belonged. We were comfortable there.

[On the East Side] There was a little Greek, they called him Shorty. He blocked hats, like the Stetson hats they wore and had a shoe shine parlor.

There was what they called Penny Mike's: Mike Geoghan's on Second Street, just past Daly Drugs. He had tables with this penny candy all over it. We called him Penny Mike. Then there was Arndt's ice cream parlor. Then there was a Cozy Café in that block. Ray Lecy's father had a secondhand store in there. Then there was Klun's studio, Herschleb's bakery, Couse's restaurant. That was the East Side Quick Lunch. The West Side Quick Lunch, that was Rosekrans'.

I started high school in 1941, graduated in 1945.

I can remember all these strong speeches that were being made. I can remember that people would talk around about we were going to be in a war soon and so on. Then I can remember when the National Guard was mobilized. They were up around SS. Peter & Paul, right across the street from the SS. Peter & Paul convent and they had horses and all that stuff. They mustered up in the market square in front of the courthouse, loading up on their trucks and having their roll call. Some of them took their cars down there. I remember that one fellow was killed on a motorcycle getting down to camp, I think it was Camp Boueard, La.

I can remember Pearl Harbor. I don't think there's a person that's my age that couldn't tell you almost the exact spot they were standing. We were playing football in the street, Chase Street, and I can remember Bill Dittman, Philip's brother, coming along and saying, the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor. That was December 7 and I can't remember that there was any snow on the ground at that time.

I can remember when they started, Gabriel Heater, and these commentators at night. They'd say, "Well, there's good news tonight." Drew Pearson and all those old timers. We'd be glued to the radio; there was no television.

Then there were casualties. Every neighborhood had a person killed. A Dittman boy was killed from our neighborhood. I think

his name was Philip. That would be a brother to Mrs. Joe Nimtz. Then there was a Plowman boy killed about a block away.

I can remember when they invaded Europe on D-Day with all the church bells ringing in the middle of the night. "What's going on?" The invasion.

I can remember my dad going to Milwaukee and coming back and saying how good it was to see some smoke starting to come out of the chimneys, Allis Chalmers, and places like that. He was always convinced that World War II was the thing that really cranked up the economy again. For everybody. And I think it stayed. I don't know how long it would have taken to get out of that had it not been for World War II. It accelerated the recovery.

High school: Aaron Ritchay. He was like the Iron Chancellor up there. He was strict. You didn't mess around with Mr. Ritchay. He'd pick a kid out in Assembly and tell him, "You get out of here." He had eyes all over the place.

One time, he asked me, down to the Elks Club, and he said, "I just want to ask you a question."

I said, "Sure, go ahead, Mr. Ritchay." Still called him "Mr. Ritchay."

He said, "What do you think of me now and what did you think of me then?"

"Well, I thought you were kind of a tyrant when I was in high school. As I look back, I think you instilled a lot of character in a lot of people. Why do you ask?"

"I ask a lot of my former students and I get pretty much the same answer out of all of them. They remember me being strict but they thank me for it now. They say, 'You taught us how to behave as adults.'"

He lived in the next block. His mother and father lived with them. They were French.

We'd be walking and he'd be going to work in the morning. There'd be a puff of smoke coming out of that car as he raced down First Avenue. We used to laugh about that.

We had four railroads here in town. We had a passenger train that left here at 7:50 on the

Northwestern. It went to Fond du Lac and you could take a train on into Milwaukee. It came back at 10 o'clock at night.

Milwaukee Road left here at 2:30 in the afternoon. It went to New Lisbon, where you caught the main train to go to Minneapolis or St. Paul or Chicago. That came back at 5:30 in the evening.

Then there was a train that went south at 10:30 and that came back at six in the morning. That had sleeper cars on it, a dining car, and things like that.

I can remember the first job I ever had was at the Dixon Hotel. I fired the furnace there. Quite a while too, 1941, 1942. Bill Boehme was in the Navy. His mother ran the place. I had to take the clinkers and things like that out. I was going to a prom or some kind of a formal dance and I was all dressed up and I had let the fire go down quite a ways and I thought, well, heck this coal dust will make it go. I threw a shovelful of that in and that boiler jumped, "Boom." And it flashed back at me. I had soot all over. Oh Boy. That was something.

When the train would come in at half-past five, a lot of people walked up there. I bell-hopped in there too. It took me well over an hour to get people situated in their rooms. You'd get a dime tip, fifteen cents. One of my last duties of the day was at 10:15. I had to take the mail down and put it on the train. I think they bought that hotel from the Dixons. I can remember Bill saying he was born in Ironwood.

The war was over in Europe in May and after school was out, I was 16 years old; because I had skipped a year. I enlisted in the Army, primarily

because you couldn't get a job until you were 18. We didn't have anything to sell in the store during war time.

My dad had to sign the papers. I wouldn't say he was not a disciplinarian because he was, but if he thought something was good for you to do, he'd let you do it.

I was in the medical corps. I was in France and Germany. There was wreckage of tanks and planes all over.

We ran a big hospital in Le Havre. Most of it was getting people ready to come home, seriously hurt soldiers. We used to take about six or eight ambulances into Paris and then they'd load them onto airplanes and fly them home. Then we had hospital ships that came in too. I was there seven or eight months and they closed the hospital. Then I went to Germany. I was in a dispensary. A medical detachment.

I went to Luxembourg, Belgium, Holland. It was devastated. I can't

believe, going back to those towns like I did a couple years ago, how they're built up like downtown Wisconsin Rapids. I thought they'd never be redone.

In '47, I came back to Rapids. It hadn't changed much. I love Wisconsin Rapids. I never considered leaving. This was my home. I have to be associated with people and I have to be associated with people I know.

I went to work immediately for my dad. We had a waiting list for refrigerators and ranges.

But railroads were always my love. I became acquainted with railroad people in Wisconsin Rapids who used to allow me to ride on the



*Photo: Bud*

engine all summer long, on the Soo Line. I used to go to Nekoosa with them and back. I had a chance to go to work for the Green Bay & Western railroad and I pondered that a long time and I thought, no, I better stay here. There was kind of a heritage thing where I was going to be the third generation. My dad was very good to me. He treated me well.

He went into the appliance business in 1928. In fact, we were the oldest General Electric dealer in the United States in tenure. When we first started out, it was just like a family. All the people from GE were your friends. Then it got to be commercial. You lost that touch, it was numbers. Quotas.

In 1948, we were selling refrigerators, ranges, washers, dryers, lots of radios. Televisions about 1952. Channel 7 saved us. Then came 9, then 13.

Things became bigger. Chain stores, Penney's, supermarkets. Penney's were aggressive merchants. At one time, I had heard that Joe Hagen, the manager over there, sold more goods per square foot than any Penney's store in the United States.

Remember how things were jammed into that store. Good Lord!

Outfits like Woolco came along, K-Mart. The pace picked up. It was all over the United States.

On the West Side: First National Bank was the prominent building. Going this way, there was a little bar in there called City Bar. Tomsycks owned it. Well, there was a barber shop and a jewelry store in there. The fellow's name was E.T. Hannon. Then there was a barber shop in there, Harry Vosberg. From that, it went into a dry cleaning shop. Jim Wilson had that. He was the drummer for the Castillians. Then there was Mr. Wilcox, who had a dry goods store, ladies apparel. Then our store, then a Standard Oil station. Going around the block, the A&P. First of all, it was Bevins Ford Agency. Mrs. Bevins, I think, was associated with that. A&P came in there later. CW Transport's terminal was there on the corner of Johnson and 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Right where the drive-in bank is now. Used to park their trailers in the market square. Jake Frechette

had a filling station on the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> Avenue and Johnson Street.

Across the street, Johnson Hills, Walloch's and a little liquor store, then the Dixon Hotel. There was a hotel on the corner, the Julien Hotel. It wasn't being used; then came the city hall, then the railroad tracks.

On the other side [north] was Mr. Gottschalk's grocery store, Mr. Olson's Guarantee Hardware and Leonard Romanski's grocery store. Buzz's bar went into Romanski's, same building.

Mead-Witter Block was there. Then the River Block. There were buildings behind there. Palmquist had a photo studio there. It had an iron railing around it like New Orleans, French Style. Kaudy's had a furniture repair shop in there.

The Palace theater [now cultural center] interior was a Spanish motif. On either side, about halfway down, they had some little wrought iron rail balconies. It was kind of a stucco type of wall. Then they had a big organ in there and Ellsworth Primeau played the organ. He went out to Hollywood and worked for Walt Disney after he left here. Carol Daly played the piano over there. I think she got a quarter.

One time, we were in New York and we went down to the Bowery, my dad and I. They used to chase all the bums out of this place, it was called Sammy's Bowery Follies. They had all these old gals in there with the ostrich plumes. They must have been seventy, seventy-five years old at that time. They played the ta ra ra boom tee aye. They had these big hats and everything on. So we started talking to this one old gal. Her name was Dora. She had played at Daly's Opera House in Wisconsin Rapids.

When I was a kid, we went to SS. Peter & Paul church. It was 50 years ago that St. Mary's started. We went to church in the Wisconsin theater when they chartered it. We thought that was pretty nice. Go sit in a nice soft theater seat. It was very comfortable.

Mr. Walsh and Mr. Ritchay were the big proponents for St. Mary's. Mr. Walsh was a big benefactor of a lot of things. I shoveled his sidewalk. He was nice man, very distinguished.

I got married in 1952, 47 years ago. Alice worked in the bank. Of course, I made the bank deposits every day. Then I started making two and three deposits a day so I could go over and see her. A courtship ensued and we got married.

In the bank, I knew Wendell Miscoll, Henry Demitz, Mr. Taylor, W.J. Taylor, Frank Trier, Ward Johnson, Art Houston. Some of them were there many years. She worked there eleven years.

I've worked long and hard on genealogy. The families were quite closely associated. They all go back to Ireland and James Daly, who married a Mary MacGillycuddy [alternate spellings]. They were a very prominent family in

Ireland. James Daly was a baron or a steward to Lord MacGillycuddy. The MacGillycuddys were Anglicans. They renounced their Catholic faith. James was Catholic so the family said no. So they eloped. My great-great grandmother was banished.

After they had some children in Ireland, James came to Halifax, Nova Scotia, wound up in New York, then they came to Smethport, Pennsylvania.

He walked all the way from New Jersey. He had a partner and they had one horse between them. One of them would ride the horse ahead, tie the horse ahead until the other one caught up. They'd leapfrog like that until they got there. There were 13 children in that family. A lot of them came to Necedah. My grandfather, Frank, was coming up here. This fella from Necedah said, you're crazy. Centralia will never amount to anything.

The Irish hung together. The families were pretty clannish. The Conways, Cases.

My grandmother used to have a bunch of ladies that were relatives. They were all Irish. I can remember that they used to have me do an Irish jig for them over at my grandmother's house. My reward was an ice cream cone. I had to hop around on one foot and then the other. It was fun.

Most of them immigrated before the potato famine. About 1840. They were ahead of

the mass immigration. When I was a kid, we all had to wear a green ribbon or a green shamrock to school. As far as the festivities were concerned, I don't remember too much revelry going on. They had St. Patrick's Day parties at

different bars and restaurants, the traditional corned beef and cabbage and things like that. We always used to go over to the Dixon Hotel for things like that.

They didn't drink at wakes. That went out quite a long time ago. I think the church frowned on that in Ireland and they got that stamped out.

We didn't drink Irish whiskey or beer. Those things weren't available.

Golden Gate was a nice spot. That was a supper club originally, and a very good one. Joe Goodwin's "Golden Eagle," was a favorite place. They had good barbecues out there, served in a separate, little building. Joe Goodwin was a good Irishman; he had all kinds of yarns. He wanted a crow in the worst way. We were down fishing somewhere. There was a crow's nest in a tree. I climbed up there and got a crow for him. He had that thing around there for a long time.



*Photo: Bud Daly, 2007, at the Museum (Dave Engel)*

Tell us about this photo!





*Don Krohn, c. 1950*

# Sweet, Smooth and Sassy!

By Chuck Hinners (Part Two)



## Timeline 1957—Wisconsin Rapids Little League (WRLL)

A few key events from 1957 provide the setting for the Little League season that began to unfold in our May edition of *Artifacts*. The game summaries are believed accurate and taken from box scores that appeared in the Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune*. The author interviewed players, coaches and fans when possible.

Date	Event
January 20	Dwight D. Eisenhower inaugurated for his second term
March 18	WRLL Charter signed by League President Heilman
May 4	First of three Tryouts at Witter Field—400 boys participate
May 19	Players selected in League auction
May 21	First team practices at Witter and Howe
June 3	First game at Robinson Park
July 4	Holiday Double Header exhibition games
August 19	Braves defeat Cubs 5-4 for 1957 WRLL Title
August 19	New York Giants announce move to San Francisco for 1958 season
September 14	WRLL players attend Braves-Brooklyn Dodger game at County Stadium
September 23	Milwaukee Braves clinch National League pennant
October 4	USSR launches Sputnik I
October 8	Brooklyn Dodgers announce move to Los Angeles for 1958 season
October 10	Milwaukee Braves win World Series, beating Yanks in game 7 in New York
October 31	Toyota exports first automobiles to United States
December 20	First flight of a Boeing 707.

## GAMES SUMMARY—FIRST HALF

GAME	WINNER	LOSER	SCORE	HIGHLIGHTS
1	Braves	Dodgers	15-2	Esser 3 for 3, Dachel 8 K, Ironside first triple.
2	Cardinals	Cubs	3-1	Sydanmaa outduels Fisher in defensive gem.
3	Cardinals	Dodgers	12-11	First extra inning game, 19 total hits.
4	Cubs	Braves	6-3	Braves outhit Cubs, wild pitching costs game.
5	Cubs	Dodgers	9-3	6 in 2 <sup>nd</sup> /Dodgers 0-3, both Krumreis double.
6	Braves	Cardinals	12-0	Weinfurter first HR. Solie pitches first shutout.
7	Braves	Dodgers	8-6	Farrish homers, Late surge wins for Braves.
8	Cardinals	Cubs	4-2	Cards tie Braves on Sydanmaa gem. Flag Day.
9	Dodgers	Cardinals	5-4	Dodgers first win. Game ends on rundown.
10	Braves	Cubs	6-3	Braves claim first, Cesare beamed.
11	Cubs	Dodgers	13-1	Fisher throws first no hitter, and fans 16.
12	Braves	Cardinals	3-1	Dachel bests Sydanmaa in pitchers' duel.
13	Dodgers	Braves	7-6	Miers 4-hitter beats Braves for first time.
14	Cubs	Cardinals	6-3	Fisher fans 7, adds 3 hits to help own cause.
15	Cardinals	Dodgers	9-4	Cards 13 hits (3 Brazener doubles) + 10 errors.
16	Braves	Cubs	12-7	Braves clinch first half, Skibba homers, 4 hits.
17	Dodgers	Cubs	15-10	First game in which all players played.
18	Braves	Cardinals	8-3	Fandek beats Sydanmaa and Huber; no walks.

### First Half Standings

Team	Wins	Losses
Braves	7	2
Cardinals	4	5
Cubs	4	5
Dodgers	3	6

On July 4, over 1,000 fans packed Robinson Park to watch a double header. In the first game, the Braves whacked the Dodgers 11-8. Nineteen walks and six errors contributed to the score. In the second game, Bill Gillis hit the first grand slam homer, but the Cardinals beat the Cubs 6-5. Neither game counted in the league standings, and the second half of play began on Monday, July 8.

**GAMES SUMMARY—SECOND HALF**

GAME	WINNER	LOSER	SCORE	HIGHLIGHTS
1	Braves	Dodgers	15-3	Skibba hits grand slam, Esser adds HR.
2	Cubs	Cardinals	9-4	Cubs get 8 runs 2 hits in 2 <sup>nd</sup> for win.
3	Cardinals	Dodgers	7-3	Utech homers to lead Cardinals.
4	Braves	Cubs	7-6	Braves use 5 run 5 <sup>th</sup> , errors, to best Cubs.
5	Cubs	Dodgers	16-2	Balanced 14 hit attack by Cubs.
6	Braves	Cardinals	9-0	Dachel shutout backed by 12 hits, 3 by Adams.
7	Dodgers	Braves	7-2	Miers steady pitching, 5 Ks beat Braves.
8	Cardinals	Cubs	5-4	Metcalfe walks Cards to win.
9	Cardinals	Dodgers	8-6	Sydanmaa pitching gem, 2 hitter.
10	Cubs	Braves	10-8	3-way tie for lead, 12 Brave walks costly.
11	Cubs	Dodgers	19-6	17 unearned runs sink Dodgers.
12	Braves	Cardinals	15-2	Skibba and Solie homers, 14 more hits in win.
13	Dodgers	Braves	5-4	Dodgers win in 7; Adams Ks 9 in loss.
14	Cubs	Cardinals	6-4	Lohman HR leads Cubs to win, league lead.
15	Cardinals	Dodgers	16-0	Cards score in all innings to cool off Dodgers.
16	Braves	Cubs	4-1	Weinfurter double key in Braves win.
17	Cubs	Dodgers	18-4	Gillis HR, 15 Cub hits clinch tie for 2 <sup>nd</sup> half.
18	Cardinals	Braves	12-7	Braves' loss assures Cub 2 <sup>nd</sup> half title.

<b>Second Half Standings</b>		
Team	Wins	Losses
Cubs	6	3
Cardinals	5	4
Braves	5	4
Dodgers	2	7

Had the Braves won the second half, they would have been declared league Champions. When the Cardinals won the last game, it meant a three game playoff between the Cubs and Braves was needed. These teams were so evenly matched that it took *four* games to decide the champion!

**The “World Series” and the Mantle of Leadership**

The best of three championship series to decide the 1957 league champion was dubbed the “World Series” by parents, players and fans. Each of the three games was decided by one run. The stranger thing about the series was that it took four games to determine the champion. The second game was played for six innings until darkness interrupted with the teams tied 8-8. League President G.W. (Bill) Heilman interceded and declared that the game would be replayed in its entirety on Wednesday August 14.

G. W. Heilman, serving as league president, made decisions easily and quickly without outside consultants, lawyers, focus groups, public opinion polls or committees. G.W. was the czar and wore the mantle of leadership naturally. No parents, no players, no umpires, coaches, or fans complained and the league prospered. Over one hundred kids got a chance to play baseball because of the efforts of G.W. leading parents, managers, coaches, and volunteers. G.W. Heilman was the Rapids version of Ford Frick, Commissioner of Baseball.

**A Tale of Three/Four Cliff Hangers**

The Braves won the first game 5-4 behind Paul Witt’s steady pitching. Witt helped his own cause with a double and came around to score what proved the winning run. Witt held the hard-hitting Cubs to three hits. For the final out with the tying run on third base, Witt retired Steve Halvorson on a grounder back to the mound. Keith Fisher struck out 10 Braves and allowed just five hits in taking the loss.

In the second game the Braves jumped out to a 4-0 advantage only to lose the lead to two Cub runs in the second and three more in the third. The last scoring came in the fourth inning when the Braves scored another four runs to go ahead 8-5. They couldn’t hold the lead when the Cubs rallied with three runs in the bottom of the inning. Although the game produced 16 runs, there were only seven hits. Hardly nonplussed with the non-decision, Heilman instantly ordered a replay of the second game as the lights went out.

The Cubs avoided extinction in the third game behind Keith Fisher's nine strikeouts. However Fisher allowed eight walks and seven hits to keep the Braves in the game. In the fifth inning, the Cubs, trailing 5-4, scored twice on a combination of walks by losing pitcher Dennis Solie, two stolen bases, and a wild pitch. All this happened despite the fact that Solie struck out the side!

The Braves threw their heavy artillery at Fisher in the top of the sixth inning. Paul Witt's leadoff walk, John Butler's single and Fisher's wild pitch left runners on second and third, none out. Witt tried unsuccessfully to steal home and then Fisher reared back to strike out Craig Skibba and get Fred Esser on a popup to end the game, necessitating a fourth game.

After the game coach Wayne Skibba and Manager Jimmy Wilson were cool headed and philosophical. They also showed their music appreciation, recalling a 1935 Cole Porter tune repopularized by Nat King Cole in 1957. "Boys, shake it off, 'It was just one of those things.'"

The August 20 Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* contains the caption MEET THE LITTLE LEAGUE CHAMPS under the picture of the winning team, followed by the names of the players. The players appeared calm and serene given what they had just accomplished minutes before. The batboy for the champs ironically would play for the Cubs the next two years, but in 1957 he lugged bats not for the Cubs, but for the Braves.

*Tribune* writer Ed Hanson described the finale as a hair-raising finish befitting the talents of a TV script writer. The game was decided by an identical 5-4 score that the Braves posted in their first win over the Cubs. Bill Metcalf took a heartbreaking loss made tougher by his team's 7-6 edge in hits. Metcalf struck out six in the loss.

The Braves jumped out to a 1-0 lead, fell behind 3-1 in the top of the fourth and tied the game at 3-3 in their turn. The Cubs took a 4-3 lead in the top of the fifth. In the bottom of the inning Lee Weinfurter walked with two out and Metcalf served up a triple to Chuck Hinnert who scored on a passed ball.

The Cubs were not done. In the sixth inning they had runners on first and second with Steve Krumrei at the plate and only one out. Krumrei already had

a double in the game and appeared to hit another one off Bill Dachel. His liner down the third base line was headed for the left field corner and would have most likely chased home Steve Halvorson and Mike Ebsen. John Butler had other ideas.

Butler, who would star at Lincoln in tennis, not baseball, stabbed the drive with a backhand sweep that would have made Pancho Gonzales envious. The quick-footed Butler stepped on third to force Halvorson and whipped the throw to Fred Esser at first to get Krumrei by a half step.

Five hundred fans, kids, parents, and other players ran onto the field to celebrate. The teams exchanged congratulations for a game well played. The Braves lined up for their picture and the first season was officially in the books.

### It ain't over 'til it's over!

There would be three more games before the last out. Two games were scheduled between minor league all-stars made up of ten and eleven year-olds who played the nine and ten year-olds of the major league teams.

The final game of 1957 was held on Sunday, September 1. It would be the last game played at Robinson Park. Like the New York Giants and Brooklyn Dodgers, the Wisconsin Rapids Little League moved west for the 1958 season. While the big leaguers moved a combined 6,000 miles, the little leaguers moved 6,000 feet to their new park at the corner of Chestnut and Lincoln Streets.

The All-Star game pitted the players, all eleven and twelve years of age, who represented an "American" and a "National" League team. The Americans beat the Nationals 11-3 with a nine hit attack off Mike Miers, Eric Sydanmaa, and Bill Dachel. Bill Metcalf, the losing pitcher in the championship game, gained some consolation with the All-Star win. Upon reflection, Metcalf and his fellow all-stars would have rather kept playing, even if it meant going to Kokomo.

In 1957, Little League rules prevented first year Leagues from fielding All-Star teams in quest of the World Championship in Williamsport, Penn. The 1957 title was won by the Monterrey Mexico Industrial team. The star of that team was Angel Macias, an ambidextrous pitcher who went on to

play professionally in Mexico. Macias pitched a perfect game in the finals of the 1957 World Series to beat LaMesa, Cal., for the title.

Sadly, the Rapids players never got to test their skills against rival teams from faraway places. Personally, I think that the leadership of Keith Fisher, Bill Dachel and Bill Metcalf pitching, combined with the crushing hitting attack of Craig Skibba, Fred Esser, Gary Utech, Ron Brazener, John Butler, and Bill Gillis would have taken the first year league deep into the tournament.

*What happened to the*  
**Boys of Summer?**

**Keith Fisher** was one of the most talented players in the 1957 WRLL. He told the author he thought his 1957 season was better than his 1958 season. Fisher pitched the only no-hitter during the '57 campaign. He struck out 16 batters, leading the Cubs to a 13-1 rout of the Dodgers.

Fisher recalled playing sandlot games before 1957 with Kent and Dean Zastava, Eric Sydanmaa, Dick Trudeau, Gary Utech, John Farrish, Dennis Solie, Don Solie and other regulars at sandlot games in an empty lot at East Grand Avenue and 14th Street.

“Summer school,” recalled Fisher, was our code word for the Witter Field playground. Fisher, who lived on the east side on Oak Street between 14th and 15th streets, remembers getting up at 6:00 each morning and riding his bike two miles to the west side to play baseball with Dave and Steve Krumrei, Gary Langer, and other west-side kids before returning home and on to Witter Field for summer school.

In high school, Fisher starred in both basketball and baseball for the Red Raiders. Fisher also competed in the WIAA State Cross Country meet in 1960 as a sophomore.

After high school, Fisher was drafted by the Washington Senators and sent to the Western Carolina league where he competed in minor league baseball for two seasons. He went on to work at IBM, in charge of developing software for main frame computers, retiring in 2000. Ironically, Fisher suggests he is comparatively computer

illiterate since he had secretaries and staff people to do all of the detail work.

Fisher and his wife, the former Sally Plummer, reside in Rochester, Minn. He pitched baseball until age 35 and played basketball until he was about 50. He admits that he doesn't play very much golf but runs and walks.

**Len Ironside** has run an auto dealership with his brother Larry for 33 years in Wisconsin Rapids. Ironside remembers Russ Greenfield as a mentor to many of the 1957 little leaguers. Greenfield tirelessly pitched sandlot and pick up games for his son, Gary, and other boys who would show up Saturdays and Sundays at Witter or Mead Fields. Ironside also remembered Wally Sydanmaa, Eric's father, who was willing to help kids learn the game.

After graduating from UW Stevens Point, Ironside taught for four years at Wausau East High School. He also coached wrestling. In 1973, he moved back to Wisconsin Rapids and went into the automobile business with his father Frank and brother Larry.

As a youth, Ironside was a link to both sides of Wisconsin Rapids. Until 1956 he lived on 15th Avenue North with his family. Len recalls that his dad took two lots in trade for an automobile and built a home at the corner of 12th and Dewey Streets in late 1956. Ironside remembers many sandlot games with the east siders but also knew most of the players from the west side.

Ironside starred in wrestling and football at Lincoln High School and graduated in 1964.

**George Conway**, who tried out for but did not play in Little League in 1957, has fond memories of his experience. Conway vividly remembers the games in Brazeau's back yard (see May article) and the selection of Little League Teams. George's friend, **John Newman**, played three years for the Braves. Newman, like other Assumption students, was not able to play high school baseball since Assumption did not offer the sport.

Conway recalls that team managers and coaches were having trouble getting kids to try out for catcher. He laments not taking the opportunity when offered the chance. Conway now runs marathons, and has finished more than

100 triathlons, including 3 Ironmans. He admits that he “sucked” at baseball but is thankful for the experience and life lesson.

Conway is self-employed as a consultant to the food industry and lives in Madison, Wis.

**Gary Utech** was born in June 1945 and was just 11 years old when the season began. Since his birthday came before August 1, however, his career was limited to the 1957 season. Utech made the most of it.

Gary led the league in batting with 23 hits in 46 at bats for a .500 average. Fred Esser of the Braves followed closely at .478. Esser struck out in his last at-bat, and Utech hit safely. Had their fortunes been reversed, Esser and Utech would have traded places in their quest for the batting title. Utech remembers his teammate Nick Couse as being a great defensive catcher and team leader.

Utech pitched in two games, winning one and losing the other. He played infield but was able to play any position on the field. Later in his career at Lincoln High School, his versatility took him behind the plate as a catcher. In football, Utech was a guard and linebacker. In Utech’s senior year, Buck Nystrom converted him to running back where he was able to use his speed to advance the ball and his innate skill as a blocker to punish would-be tacklers. He also led Lincoln’s defense as middle linebacker.

Gary returned to Little League to coach his son Scott in 1978. Scott Utech went on to play baseball at UW-Madison until the school dropped the sport in the early 1990s.

Utech still resides in Wisconsin Rapids. He followed his uncle and father into the electrical contracting business and is the general manager of E-Con Electrical in Wisconsin Rapids.

In 1957, **Eric Sydanmaa** was an 11-year-old left-handed pitcher for the Cardinals. He batted .294 in the first season and would go on to capture the 1958 batting title. Sydanmaa’s team finished in third place in 1957. His pitching record was 3-6 while the Cardinals were 9-9. Sydanmaa struck out 26 batters and walked only 8 in 46 innings. His strikeout to walk ratio was the best in the league for pitchers who worked more than 7 innings. Sydanmaa continued to improve and led

Lincoln High School to several Wisconsin Valley Conference championships and to the WIAA State Tournament in 1964. Sydanmaa is retired from Pitney-Bowes and lives in suburban Chicago. He served in Vietnam in 1967-8.

The Braves were managed by **Jimmy Wilson** who ran a dry cleaning company on Fourth Avenue. Jimmy’s son **Skip** played on Lincoln High School’s team and helped his dad coach the boys. Their friend **Dave Benkowski** would assume the manager’s role in the 1958 season, but showed up at nearly all of the practices during the 1957 season. **Craig Skibba’s** dad, **Wayne**, worked for Daly Drugs, the team sponsor, but also was a coach of the team.

The Braves won seven of the first nine games and easily claimed the first half pennant. They won because they had talented athletes, but also because of the dedication of Wilson and his coaches. Jimmy had a rubber arm. He would throw batting practice until his arm tired. Then **Skip Wilson** would throw. If **Benkowski** or **Wayne Skibba** were available, they would throw batting practice as well.

**Dave Benkowski** was a fanatic about players hustling. He taught fielders to keep their eyes on the ball until they caught it. While Wilson was throwing batting practice, Benkowski worked with infielders and outfielders to chase down fly balls and hot grounders. Whenever **Wayne Skibba** attended practice he wore a flat “pancake” glove and yelled encouragement to every member of the Braves’ team. Wayne was there to console players if they caught the wrath of Wilson or Benkowski, which every Brave did, sooner or later.

If practice makes perfect, the Braves should have won all their games in 1957. They did not, simply because the other three teams were also very talented and well coached. All four managers were assisted by very knowledgeable baseball men. **Ed Murgatroyd** was assisted by **Erv Pleet** who would manage the Dodgers after the 1957 season. **Herb Wittenberg** helped **Don Arendt** with the Cardinals. Herb would later manage the Cardinals in 1958 and the Braves in 1959 and 1960.

**Dr. Orville Straub** had a large family, a dental practice and was assisted by **Jim Bach**. They managed the Cubs for three seasons and were

helped by **Roger Krumrei** who had as clever a baseball mind as anyone in Rapids.

Roger's two sons Dave and Steve went on to play college baseball at Wisconsin and North Dakota State. **Steve Krumrei** won letters in baseball, football, and basketball at NDSU and was inducted into the Bison Hall of Fame in 1983. After his college career he coached athletes at Muskego High School. In 1957, he was just nine years old but "played like he was 13" according to **Craig Skibba**. Steve Krumrei retired from the City of Wisconsin Rapids in 2003.

**Dave Krumrei** led the Badger baseball team for three seasons from 1967 to 1969. He is a founder and Chief Executive Officer of West Pointe Bank in Oshkosh. The Krumrei brothers may have been the best family concentration of athletes ever produced in Wisconsin Rapids.

**Craig Skibba** played shortstop for the Braves and his dad Wayne was one of three Braves' coaches. He was the only player to hit more than one home run in the 1957 season. His three round-trippers accounted for 30% of the league's total. Skibba was also the only player to hit a grand slam home run during the regular season. Two of his homers were grannies, the second busting the windshield of a car parked too close to home plate.

Skibba starred for four years at Lincoln High School in Wisconsin Rapids and went on to play at the University of Wisconsin, but left school later in the 1964 year. He had an earlier opportunity to sign a contract with the Minnesota Twins, but turned it down because his dad felt the signing bonus of \$6,000 was insufficient. Just a year later, Rick Reichardt of the University of Wisconsin and Stevens Point would sign an estimated \$225,000 bonus contract with the California Angels.

Skibba was a fearless hitter. He had quick hands reminiscent of Hank Aaron. His swing was smooth though powerful. He was able to focus on the ball as the pitcher delivered it. At times his focus was so sharp he could see the seams of the ball.

No Little Leaguers were able to throw curve balls in 1957. Skibba worried about being hit by the Cubs' **Keith Fisher**, the fastest pitcher in the league. Skibba said he faced his first curve ball from Garrett Gee when he was a thirteen-year old

junior leaguer. His natural reaction was to duck out of the way when Gee threw the first curve ball at his head. Gee then came back with a fast ball which Skibba drilled for a hit.

Skibba developed Osgood Schlatter's Disease in 8th grade while at Howe School and was unable to play sports for part of that year. He made a decision in his freshman year at Lincoln High School to stick to basketball and baseball and did not play football during high school. Skibba was the fastest runner on the Braves' team and likely would've been an excellent running back candidate for the Lincoln football team.

**Bill Metcalf** remembered the 1957 season as one distinguished by so many good players. At an end of year banquet, all the 12-year-olds were presented with trophies for their participation. Bob Trowbridge, a relief pitcher with the Milwaukee Braves, was the speaker. Metcalf also remembers a separate event at Assumption High School where he got to meet Hank Aaron.

According to Metcalf, the Cubs practiced a lot at the Howe School Field, near their manager, Orville Straub's, home. Metcalf also practiced pitching with his brother, Tom. One of the best pitchers in the league, Metcalf had never pitched before the 1957 season. His brother, Tom, went on to pitch for Northwestern University and finally with the New York Yankees in the 1963 season.

Metcalf remembered **Gary Utech** and **Craig Skibba** as the tougher hitters he had to pitch against. Metcalf later coached a Little League team for five years with Utech. Both Utech's and Metcalf's sons played for the team sponsored by Utech's company E-Con Electric.

After his single season Little League career, Metcalf continued pitching for Lincoln High School where the Raiders captured four conference championships during Metcalf's career. Metcalf played college baseball at Ripon College in the Midwest League. Ripon, led by Metcalf and Dave Bienfang of Fort Atkinson, won three consecutive Midwest League championships from 1965 through 1967.

Metcalf is a 1970 graduate of the University of Louisville Law School and currently practices law with his own firm in Wisconsin Rapids.

**Fred Esser** was runner up to Gary Utech for the batting title in 1957. He hit a lousy .478. Esser played in the Junior League in 1958 and the newly formed Pony League in 1959.

Unfortunately, Esser did not play high school baseball. His freshman year he spent at Sturtevant Saint Bonaventure near Racine, but returned to Wisconsin Rapids Assumption. Since Assumption did not sponsor baseball, Esser's baseball career was over. Esser told me he regretted not going to Lincoln.

Esser used a 31-inch Al Rosen bat in Little League. He said it was a lighter bat than the one he used playing sandlot, but it was the biggest bat in the Braves bag and Esser guarded it as his own. Esser's dad promised him a new glove if he made the team. The glove helped Esser as he backed his hitting as the best fielding first baseman in the league.

According to Esser, kids today couldn't compete with the '57 team because they have more sports to choose from and additional distractions not invented fifty years ago.

Esser recalled the late **Bill Gillis**, the Cubs catcher, whose mother taught at Assumption. Gillis caught Bill Metcalf and Keith Fisher, as talented as any two pitchers in a league that held its talented hitters to a .270 average.

Esser related that in one game against the Cardinals, **John Huber** hit a line drive which Esser caught in the webbing of his glove and stepped on first base for an unassisted double play. What followed was a dispute between the Cardinals' manager and umpire Vic Hagens. Esser remembers his manager, Jim Wilson, putting his finger to his mouth, to keep Esser from saying anything to umpire Hagens.

Esser worked at Consolidated Papers until Consolidated was acquired by Stora-Enso in 2000. He managed the Kraft mill and oversaw the building of several new boiler facilities at that mill. Today, Esser rides his bicycle and skis cross-country with his wife, Marcy, and remains a young 62. Oh, for you fishermen, Fred knows where the big ones are.

**Ron Brazener** played for the Cardinals and led the league in doubles with ten—quite an accomplishment for a player who was not picked

in the draft on May 19. Brazener was chosen to replace a draftee who resided outside the city limits of Wisconsin Rapids. If you remember the first baseman with the really big glove, you remember Ron Brazener.

Brazener did not play baseball at Lincoln High School. He competed in track as a hurdler, high jumper and shot putter. He also won four letters in golf, captained and quarterbacked the football team and was a two-year starter on the basketball team.

Brazener served with the Third Infantry Regiment in Vietnam and with the Old Guard at Fort Myer, Virginia. The Old Guard conducts and supports official military and Army ceremonies, memorial affairs, and special events representing the U.S. Army and the Armed Forces.

Brazener earned an MBA from UW Madison and recently retired as the Chief Financial Officer of a suburban Chicago company.

### Early Times, No Water

In 1957, athletes didn't lug bottles of designer water around with them. In fact, players weren't allowed to drink water during practices or games, since conventional wisdom held that excess water would hamper performance and cause muscle cramps. Two or three hour practices on Saturday or Sunday were normal. If you missed practice, you could expect not to play in the next game. If you missed a second practice, there would be one of the fifty kids on the two minor league teams who would be willing to take your grief in exchange for that prized uniform that you would give up.

### See How They Ran

You geeks, and you all know who you are, can read a little further to get what you came for. The 1957 league statistics appear in the appendix at the end of this article. We could not locate the official scorebook in researching this article. The final statistics in the August 29, 1957 Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* were used.

Final batting statistics for each player are presented, ranked by batting average. I also calculated slugging and on-base percentages. Additionally, I abstracted the leading five players in each statistical category of batting and pitching performance.

The pitching quotient calculates a pitcher's effectiveness by creating a fraction. The numerator is strikeouts minus the sum of runs, hits and walks. The denominator is the number of innings pitched divided by 6 (9 for major leagues). Higher PQ is better and positive PQ is very rare.

Lotus and Excel spreadsheets had not been invented in 1957. Had they been, we would now

have pitch counts and multitudes of other data to support any imaginable argument over a few beers at Buzz's. Thankfully those things were still in the future in '57 so you have to be content with what is presented. I will send anyone my spreadsheet who wants to try his or her hand at statistical alchemy as a latter day Paracelsus.



**1957 Cardinals**

Front: Leroy (Al) Lovesee, coach, and Don Arendt, manager, flanking Nick Couse holding the bat.  
 Row 2: David Bodette, Roger Fritz, John Coulthard, Dwaine Henke, Jere Rude, John Huber  
 Row 3: Kent Zastava, Eric Sydanmaa, Phil Hamilton, Ron Brazener, Gary Utech, Jay Somers, Rich Ellingson.

*The smell and feel of a new baseball bat is unmistakable and unforgettable. I can't imagine a kid gets the same thrill from the metal bats used today. Same for a fresh baseball. I knew I was in a real game because I could smell the horsehide from a fastball thrown by the likes of Keith Fisher or Eric Sydanmaa.*

*Bats retailed for \$2.40 to \$3.00 in 1957. I should know since I broke one of Sydanmaa's bats in a sandlot game and had to pony up. The tab took care of the profit from a Sunday Milwaukee Journal route.*

*Chuck Hinners*

FINAL INDIVIDUAL BATTING STATISTICS - 1957  
RANKED BY BATTING AVERAGE

PLAYER	TEAM	AB	H	2B	3B	HR	W	AVERAGES		
								BATTING	SLUGGING	ON-BASE
Utech Gary	Cardinals	46	23	8		1	8	0.500	0.739	0.574
Esser Fred	Braves	46	22	8	1	1	9	0.478	0.761	0.564
Serchen Bob	Cubs	11	5	1			2	0.455	0.545	0.538
Skibba Craig	Braves	56	24	9		3	5	0.429	0.750	0.475
Krumrei Steve	Cubs	50	21	3	2		18	0.420	0.560	0.574
Butler John	Braves	62	26	6	3		4	0.419	0.613	0.455
Adams Ken	Braves	46	19	5			4	0.413	0.522	0.460
Huber John	Cardinals	59	22	3			6	0.373	0.424	0.431
Witt Paul	Braves	52	19	5	1		8	0.365	0.500	0.450
Metcalf Bill	Cubs	55	19	4			7	0.345	0.418	0.419
Miers Mike	Dodgers	51	17	8			4	0.333	0.490	0.382
Zellmer Dick	Braves	9	3				1	0.333	0.333	0.400
Lohman Charlie	Cubs	48	16	7		1	10	0.333	0.542	0.448
Brazener Ron	Cardinals	55	18	10			3	0.327	0.509	0.362
Weinfurter Lee	Braves	52	17	6		1	5	0.327	0.500	0.386
Halvorson Steve	Cubs	37	12	1	2		4	0.324	0.459	0.390
Krumrei Dave	Dodgers	42	13	3			15	0.310	0.381	0.491
Coulthard John	Cardinals	13	4					0.308	0.308	0.308
Fisher Keith	Cubs	54	16	3			8	0.296	0.352	0.387
Sydanmaa Eric	Cardinals	51	15	1	2		7	0.294	0.392	0.379
Leder Pete	Cubs	38	11	5			2	0.289	0.421	0.325
Gillis Bill	Cubs	53	14	3		1	7	0.264	0.377	0.350
Zastava Kent	Cardinals	46	12	1	1		8	0.261	0.326	0.370
Farrish John	Dodgers	46	12	4		1	11	0.261	0.413	0.404
Solie Denis	Braves	35	9	2		1	10	0.257	0.400	0.422
Ebsen Mike	Cubs	28	7				2	0.250	0.250	0.300
Hamilton Phil	Cardinals	35	8	2	3		2	0.229	0.457	0.270
Bach Jim	Cubs	9	2				2	0.222	0.222	0.364
Dachel Bill	Braves	42	9				3	0.214	0.214	0.267
Rude Jere	Cardinals	43	9	1			11	0.209	0.233	0.370
Reitz Bill	Dodgers	48	10	5			6	0.208	0.313	0.296
Natwick Jim	Dodgers	25	5				6	0.200	0.200	0.355
Ellingson Rich	Cardinals	10	2	1			1	0.200	0.300	0.273
Gorski Chris	Cubs	28	5				3	0.179	0.179	0.258
Bodette Bob	Dodgers	24	4	1				0.167	0.208	0.167
Sparks Wayne	Dodgers	48	8	2			10	0.167	0.208	0.310
Coley Frank	Dodgers	42	7	1			7	0.167	0.190	0.286
Dietzler Del	Cubs	37	6				20	0.162	0.162	0.456
Hinners Chuck	Braves	34	5	3	1		5	0.147	0.294	0.256
Fandek Gary	Braves	14	2				2	0.143	0.143	0.250
Couse Nick	Cardinals	49	7	4			8	0.143	0.224	0.263
Johnson Larry	Cubs	15	2				2	0.133	0.133	0.235
McCarthy Dennis	Cardinals	15	2					0.133	0.133	0.133
Herzberg Jim	Cubs	8	1					0.125	0.125	0.125
Henke Dwaine	Cardinals	35	4	1			8	0.114	0.143	0.279
Heilman Bill	Braves	9	1	1				0.111	0.222	0.111
Felch Francis	Dodgers	9	1					0.111	0.111	0.111
Normington Carl	Dodgers	11	1	1			1	0.091	0.182	0.167
Ironside Len	Dodgers	45	4		1		4	0.089	0.133	0.163
Newman John	Braves	18	1					0.056	0.056	0.056
Hittner Mike	Dodgers	3						0.000	0.000	0.000
Jenkin Bob	Braves	12						0.000	0.000	0.000
Bodette Dave	Cardinals	2						0.000	0.000	0.000
Reistad Roger	Cubs	3						0.000	0.000	0.000
Dent Dick	Dodgers	5					1	0.000	0.000	0.167
Weisman Jim	Dodgers	7					1	0.000	0.000	0.125
Somers Jay	Cardinals	1					1	0.000	0.000	0.500
Cesare Dave	Cubs	4					1	0.000	0.000	0.200
Shannon Mick	Dodgers	15					4	0.000	0.000	0.211
Greenfield Gary	Dodgers	13					4	0.000	0.000	0.235
Walker Dick	Braves	3					1	0.000	0.000	0.250
Winkel Tom	Cubs	4					3	0.000	0.000	0.429
Clinkenbeard Dick	Cardinals	2					1	0.000	0.000	0.333
Fritz Roger	Cardinals	1						0.000	0.000	0.000
Aggregate		1869	502	129	17	10	286	0.269	0.372	0.366

FINAL TEAM BATTING STATISTICS - 1957

TEAM	AB	H	2B	3B	HR	W	AVERAGES		
							BATTING	SLUGGING	ON-BASE
Braves	490	157	45	6	6	57	0.320	0.590	0.391
Cubs	482	140	27	4	2	94	0.290	0.444	0.406
Cardinals	463	126	32	6	1	64	0.272	0.458	0.361
Dodgers	434	82	25	1	1	74	0.189	0.320	0.307

FINAL INDIVIDUAL PITCHING STATISTICS - 1957

PLAYER	TEAM	INN	R	H	K	W	W	L	ERA	W-L PCT	PQ
Witt Paul	Braves	9.33	2	4	13	9	1	0	1.29	1.000	-1.29
Fisher Keith	Cubs	31.33	16	18	49	28	5	3	3.06	0.625	-2.49
Johnson Larry	Cubs	16.00	14	14	19	9	1	1	5.25	0.500	-6.75
Fandek Gary	Braves	8.00	4	8	3	1	1	0	3.00	1.000	-7.50
Dachel Bill	Braves	39.33	28	34	27	18	6	2	4.27	0.750	-8.08
Dietzler Del	Cubs	7.00	6	8	4	1	1	0	5.14	1.000	-9.43
Solie Denis	Braves	27.67	25	20	39	42	4	3	5.42	0.571	-10.41
Huber John	Cardinals	49.67	41	66	29	13	5	2	4.95	0.714	-10.99
Metcalf Bill	Cubs	42.00	44	49	46	30	3	3	6.29	0.500	-11.00
Sydanmaa Eric	Cardinals	46.00	45	60	26	8	3	6	5.87	0.333	-11.35
Miers Mike	Dodgers	41.33	72	58	38	22	2	5	10.45	0.286	-16.55
Adams Ken	Braves	15.00	23	23	21	21	0	1	9.20	0.000	-18.40
Greenfield Gary	Dodgers	20.00	34	28	18	18	0	2	10.20	0.000	-18.60
Sparks Wayne	Dodgers	19.33	36	29	16	16	1	2	11.17	0.333	-20.17
Utech Gary	Cardinals	6.33	13	7	6	8	1	1	12.32	0.500	-20.84
Farrish John	Dodgers	17.00	39	26	17	20	2	2	13.76	0.500	-24.00
Reitz Bill	Dodgers	3.00	7	5	3	5	0	1	14.00	0.000	-28.00
Krumrei Dave	Dodgers	4.00	12	8	4	6	0	1	18.00	0.000	-33.00
Zastava Kent	Cardinals	3.00	13	10	0	2	0	0	26.00	0.000	-50.00
Krumrei Steve	Cubs	2.00	10	5	2	6	0	1	30.00	0.000	-57.00
		407.33	484	480	380	283	36	36	7.13	0.500	

BATTING AND PITCHING LEADERS - 1957

**AT BATS**

Butler John	Braves	62
Huber John	Cardinals	59
Skibba Craig	Braves	56
Brazener Ron	Cardinals	55
Metcalf Bill	Cubs	55

**HITS**

Butler John	Braves	26
Skibba Craig	Braves	24
Utech Gary	Cardinals	23
Esser Fred	Braves	22
Huber John	Cardinals	22

**DOUBLES**

Brazener Ron	Cardinals	10
Skibba Craig	Braves	9
Utech Gary	Cardinals	8
Esser Fred	Braves	8
Miers Mike	Dodgers	8

**TRIPLES**

Butler John	Braves	3
Hamilton Phil	Cardinals	3
Halverson Steve	Cubs	2
Krumrei Steve	Cubs	2
Sydanmaa Eric	Cardinals	2

**HOME RUNS**

Skibba Craig	Braves	3
Lohman Charlie	Cubs	1
Utech Gary	Cardinals	1
Gillis Bill	Cubs	1
Farrish John	Dodgers	1
Weinfurter Lee	Braves	1
Solie Denis	Braves	1
Esser Fred	Braves	1

**WALKS**

Dietzler Del	Cubs	20
Krumrei Steve	Cubs	18
Krumrei Dave	Dodgers	15
Rude Jere	Cardinals	11
Farrish John	Dodgers	11

**SLUGGING**

Esser Fred	Braves	0.761
Skibba Craig	Braves	0.750
Utech Gary	Cardinals	0.739
Butler John	Braves	0.613
Krumrei Steve	Cubs	0.560

**ON-BASE PCT**

Utech Gary	Cardinals	0.574
Krumrei Steve	Cubs	0.574
Esser Fred	Braves	0.564
Serchen Bob	Cubs	0.538
Krumrei Dave	Dodgers	0.491
Skibba Craig	Braves	0.475
Adams Ken	Braves	0.460

**INNINGS PITCHED**

Huber John	Cardinals	49.67
Sydanmaa Eric	Cardinals	46.00
Metcalf Bill	Cubs	42.00
Miers Mike	Dodgers	41.33
Dachel Bill	Braves	39.33

**STRIKEOUTS**

Fisher Keith	Cubs	49
Metcalf Bill	Cubs	46
Solie Denis	Braves	39
Miers Mike	Dodgers	38
Huber John	Cardinals	29
Dachel Bill	Braves	27
Sydanmaa Eric	Cardinals	26

**WALKS**

Solie Denis	Braves	42
Metcalf Bill	Cubs	30
Fisher Keith	Cubs	28
Miers Mike	Dodgers	22
Adams Ken	Braves	21
Farrish John	Dodgers	20

**W-L PCT (5 DECISIONS)**

Dachel Bill	Braves	0.750
Huber John	Cardinals	0.714
Fisher Keith	Cubs	0.625
Solie Denis	Braves	0.571

**EARNED RUN AVERAGE (25 INN)**

Fisher Keith	Cubs	3.06
Dachel Bill	Braves	4.27
Huber John	Cardinals	4.95
Solie Denis	Braves	5.42
Sydanmaa Eric	Cardinals	5.87

**PITCHING QUOTIENT (25 INN)\***

Fisher Keith	Cubs	-2.49
Dachel Bill	Braves	-8.08
Solie Denis	Braves	-10.41
Huber John	Cardinals	-10.99
Metcalf Bill	Cubs	-11.00
Sydanmaa Eric	Cardinals	-11.35
Miers Mike	Dodgers	-16.55

\*Strikeouts minus walks, hits, runs divided by quotient of innings pitched divided by 6.

## **The Brig, Home of the Castillians**

**By Earle Garber**

*In memory of Don Halverson (1913-2007)*

Bill Boehme had been in the Navy, but as far as we knew, he had not been in the brig. According to his son Richard, there was no particular reason he called the tavern in the Hotel Dixon, "The Brig." It might have been an iron railing guarding the entrance. Or it could have been the image of a jail, the way customers peered through the railing before stepping to the lower level to enter where sunlight through glass blocks lit up the dozen or so vinyl-covered bar stools.

Across the back bar, Bill, better known as "Spider," had pasted, over the decorative back-bar mirror, hand-lettered placards, "Avoid Hangovers, Stay Drunk" and Duke Ellington's famous sayings, "There are no wrong notes in Jazz," and "Music is my Mistress, She Plays Second Fiddle to No One."

The Brig was where, once we reached legal age, we learned the difference between a Martini (dry) and a Manhattan (wet), and the answer to, "Straight up or with a sidecar of beer to quell the burn?"

Proprietor Boehme, short, paunchy and bald, liked to joke with customers. Bartenders Phil Flatt and Johnny Jaecks, best known for the way they flipped the meanest canisters of iced foam, had a touch we regulars loved to watch.

Noon lunches featured Spider's collection of 78s soon replaced by 33s as they were being phased in. Spider had two well-lit jukeboxes stacked with the pops of the year. A jukebox for each speed.

The chef was Iona, Spider's wife. Fridays were special. Large fillets of walleye moved quickly from the kitchen for lunch and, in the evenings, she'd put out China and linens.

Booth-seating in the lounge was limited: six semicircular over-stuffed vinyl-covered booths and a small tile floor to dance on. As customers ventured in and passed the bar, if the lounge was full, a dining area of dark-stained wood booths and tables handled the overflow.

The Brig was our Art Gallery. Wall hangings exhibited the works of Spider's close friend, Nyles "Fuzz" Forstner. No one dared call him Nyles. Fuzz had been a designer at Preway, a local manufacturer of appliances. His artwork about dreams adorning the lounge used color-washed wood chips on dowels backed with shades of colored plywood and inked Rorschach blotches mounted in a handmade frames. The artwork and music kept the young crowd coming.

The best live jazz in the state and possibly in the country echoed through the walls of The Brig, home of the Castillians. The Hotel Dixon basement was our Blue Note, our Carlyle lounge. It was where we listened to ballads like "Always" and "Sweet Georgia Brown," "St. James Infirmary" and "Harlem Nocturne," "In the Mood" and "It Had To Be You;" and where locals sat beneath Fuzz's wall hangings and listened to Don "Gub" Halverson and the Castillians. It was for the in-crowd.

Monthly jam sessions were lead by Gub and the Castillians. Gub was a stride piano man, like Fats Waller. His left palm pumped the bass line, backing up standards, rags or Dixie, or he switched to blues down and dirty. His palms

worked like oversized grapefruit as he nodded at Fuzz, the artist and his drummer.

Fuzz was a grunter, a Gene Krupa, who beat out rhythms through his chest. One of his feet heel-pedaled the base-drum while his hands circled the snare with steel brushes while pushing high hat cymbals to each beat. Rob Kronholm, a stringy blond kid, played bass fiddle. Bald, tubby, Reggie Mosier was on trombone. Roy "Red" Haferman blew a raucous sexy trumpet. And, occasionally, Spider would pick up the sax and take a chorus or two or he'd grab the microphone

to rattle off obscene lyrics. He knew them all.

In 1944, and through most of 1945, single guys were still being called up to serve their country. That's when Gub asked two of us high school kids to take up the slack. I was thrilled. We rehearsed at the Brig and learned to improvise, to chorus. It was a learning curve to a regular job in the band.

That summer, the band was booked at the Casino on the Chain of Lakes and at Silver Lake Pavilion near Wautoma, entertaining wild and crazy bobby soxers. In fall, we traveled to the Silver Dome, west of Neillsville, to Pine River near Mosinee and the Country Ball Room in Marshfield. We did the Eagles Club at home.

On Saturday evenings throughout spring, high

school proms kept us busy while gas rationing kept us close to home. One prom at Elroy high school is a vivid memory. After we packed and loaded, Gub asked, "Can you drive?"

I nodded, having some experience driving my dad's truck. Gub handed me the keys. Red, Kron and Gub crawled in the back seat of the Chevy

coupe to nap. Fuzz and his wife June had driven their van beater. Reggie was long gone. He had taken a defense job in Kenosha and my schoolmate Hank, who replaced him, had morning artwork to do for his dad at City Sign. He begged off to sleep. That left me to

drive the car and the small band trailer.

Before dropping off to sleep, Gub pointed the way north through Elroy. I was thrilled. An hour or two into the trip, I was lost and decided to pull over. I reached back for Gub.

Crawling out of the car, we walked to the edge of the river just steps down an embankment. Gub bent down, sticking one finger in the water. He put it to his nose and, giving it time to air, said "Not to worry, we're almost home. It smells like paper."

It's over 60 years now. As I walk West Grand Avenue to where the Hotel Dixon and the Brig used to stand, the piano is banging away and I still dream about the guys who taught me to love music and about their wondrous friendship.



*Photo: William "Spider" Boehme and bartender Phil Flatt*

## TOY SHOP STEAM POWER

## Marshall Buehler

Remember these classic toys from the era before plastic Star Wars heroes and computer chip games: Tinkertoy, Lincoln Logs, Buddy L and Erector? If you do, then perhaps you also remember the names Weeden, Fleischman, Empire and Fulton. These latter names represented the more popular brands of toy steam engines. Not steam locomotives but stationary steam engines that operated on hot live steam under pressure.

I received my first "Empire" steam engine when I was about ten years old. It had the traditional boiler, piston, fly wheel and miniature steam whistle. The source of heat was an electric heating element under the boiler. Fill the boiler with water, plug it into an electrical outlet and in five minutes it was producing steam. With a shrill toot of the whistle and a spin of the fly wheel, the engine was running, ready to supply motive power to that Erector or Tinkertoy windmill. Or perhaps with a string belt drive, one could even power a small electric generator to light a bulb. The action continued until the water in the boiler ran out. But a diligent engineer kept a trained eye on the water level sight glass. His only other concern was to keep his fingers off the hot boiler.

Over the past seventy years I have collected thirty-one of these model steam engines. Some of the collection represent the modern engines that are available in sophisticated toy stores or model shops. These include Mamod from England, Wileco from Germany and Jensen from the U.S.

But most of the thirty-one examples date back to the turn of the century. Contrary to the authorities of "Antique Road Show," I have disassembled the models, cleaned, polished, painted and rebuilt them to almost original condition. After all, they are mine and I can do with them as I please.

All of them work except two. One has a tin boiler that is more rust than tin. The other has a faulty valve action. Some are heated by electricity,

some by alcohol burners and some by the more convenient Sterno heat tabs.

I recall a catastrophe with one of the alcohol heated engines. Fortunately, it was in the basement. I overfilled the alcohol burner reservoir and when I ignited the wick, alcohol started to run out of the burner. I had a puddle of burning alcohol on the table which started to run toward the edge and drip as small flames on the carpet. I found out what a mess it is to use a dry powder fire extinguisher! But thankfully, there was no damage.

I have built my collection from one engine to the present complement by visiting antique stores and garage sales. Friends, knowing of my interest, have provided me with engines or leads as to where to buy one from some one who no longer wants it.

One engine I purchased at an estate auction, the only I time I ever went to an auction.

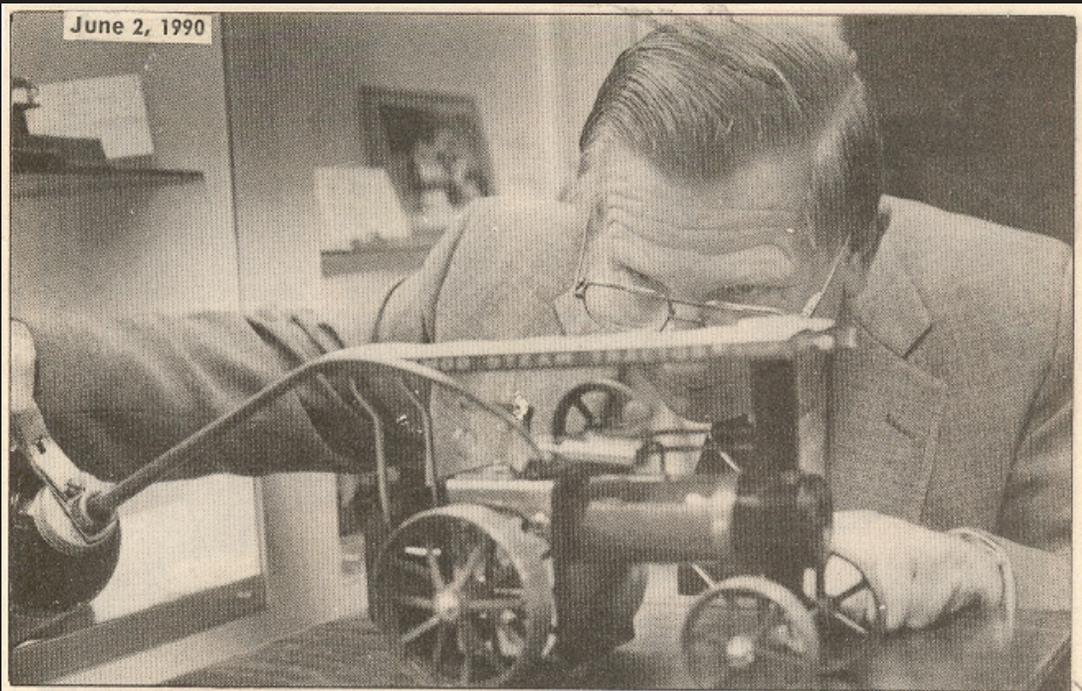
The bids were up to \$35 and I was holding that bid. The auctioneer, in his sing song, staccato dialog was asking for a bid of \$37. I thought I had to bid that amount which I did.

Mr. Barrett was very honest with me as he stated, "You already have the high bid at \$35. You are bidding against yourself." I purchased it for \$35.

One of my prize pieces is a Sterling hot air engine which uses no water. Rather, it operates on the principle that hot air expands. The expansion takes place in a cylinder that contains a piston which in turn is connected to the flywheel. If you want to exercise your brain, I have a book on how this engine operates. I've read it several times but would be hard pressed to explain it to you.

My collection has not expanded much in the past few years. There just aren't that many of these toys around except for the modern ones. I prefer the older ones made prior to World War One. Have you one that is for sale?

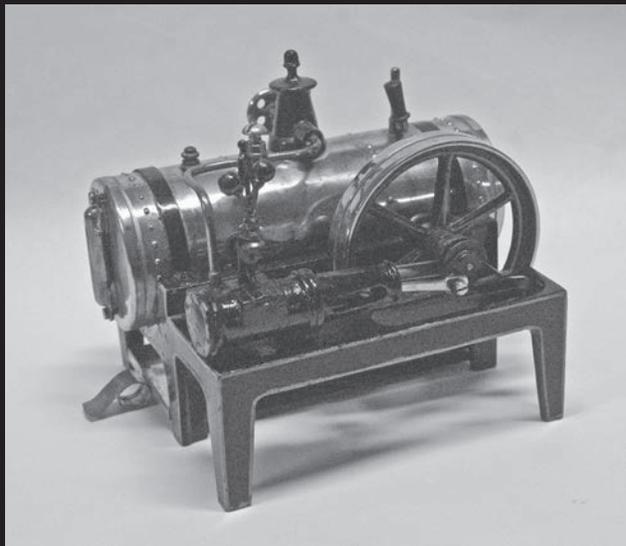
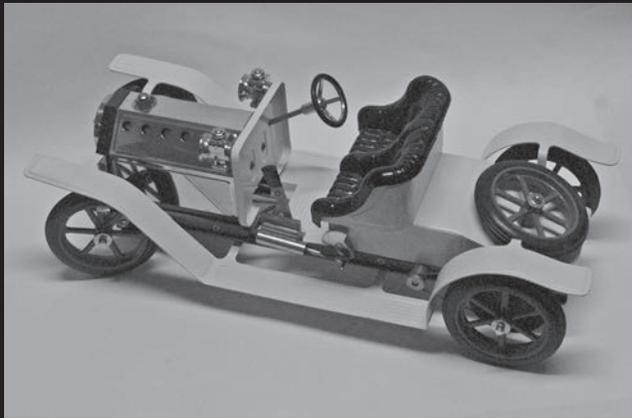




Daily Tribune/John R. Hart

**WHERE DOES THE OIL GO?:** Collector Marshall Buehler of Port Edwards, shows one of his collection of 27 toy steam engines. They will be

on display June 3-10 at the South Wood County Historical Museum. The museum is open from 1-4 p.m. Sundays and Tuesdays.



From Marshall's collection. Top left: Steam powered both miniature and full-size automobiles. Left above: Weeden classic engine from turn of century. A slide valve admits steam to the cylinder. Right: Vertical boiler with two flywheels. Facing page: Sterling hot air engine didn't use steam.

Happy 100, Museum!



According to SWCHC president Phil Brown, right, you can't eat too much cake! On July 15, he and former president, Marshall Buehler, left, joined an ice cream social and birthday party for the Museum, which was built in 1907.



This publication is a benefit of membership in the South Wood County Historical Corp., and is received four times per year. Membership is still only \$15.

Send your subscription/membership dues to The Museum, 540 Third Street South, Wisconsin Rapids, WI 54494.

All other materials to Dave Engel, 5597 Third Avenue, Rudolph WI 54475.

South Wood County Historical Corp.  
540 Third Street South  
Wisconsin Rapids WI 54494

NONPROFIT  
ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE  
PAID  
PERMIT NO. 31

To: