

ARTIFACTS

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Volume II #29



Den of Antiquities Edition

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Small step for mankind, giant leap for Phil

Generations

By Phil Brown

SWCHC President

Greetings from the South Wood County Historical Museum. Let me take a moment to say how gratifying –and humbling – it is to be featured in the greatest little historical magazine in the Tri-City area. And how proud I am to be "ambassador" for a group as active and productive as SWCHC.

During each of the past four months, we have had an important photo identifying event at the Museum. The first two were based on the work of area photographers Don Krohn and Lawrence Oliver and the final two featured views of Wisconsin Rapids' West Side and East Side, shown through the magic of digital copying and projection.

Attendance was high. Many at these sessions were members of my all time favorite Greatest Generation. It has been a pleasure to work with those individuals born in the Roaring 20s, raised during the Great Depression, involved with WWII and who returned home to finish their education, build their careers and raise a whole generation of Baby Boomers, including me. Compared to our mothers and fathers, Baby Boomers were raised during some of the most peaceful and prosperous times this country has ever seen. Our parents paved the way for our generation to succeed.

Finally, I hope you enjoy this special edition of *Artifacts* and the events and exhibits to come at the Museum - including you know what.



About the Cover

Jumper: *Philip M. "No Fear" Brown.*

Age then: *16 in 1971.*

Photographer: *"My pal, Dave Tanner."*

Place: *Interstate Park on the Wisconsin side of the St. Croix River.*

Height of cliff: *90 feet.*

The problem: *"You have to make a running start so that you can clear the beach down below."*

Last words: *"What the heck, here we go."*

Narrative: *I left my tennis shoes on because I was a little worried about hitting the water, which I think would have been the least of my problems. I backed up and I just ran right off the end of the cliff. Hit the water, and the thing that surprised me was how deep I went. I bubbled right up like a cork. The scariest thing was looking up and seeing the cliff that you just jumped off of.*

A few years before the turn of the century...
Gone Fishin'

By Holly Knoll

In the springtime, my sister and I always knew what was coming when the rain began at night. We would be going night crawler digging! Often times while it was still raining we would gather up our bucket, put in a little dirt and go out to the backyard garden. We would shine our flashlights into the moist soil looking for the big, ugly, slimy, night crawlers. We had to be quick when one was spotted or it would crawl quickly back into the earth.

I'm sure it was quite a sight to see two little girls jumping around the garden in the rain.

When we felt we had collected enough, we would bring the bucket into the porch and wait for the fun part.

A day or two after the night crawlers were collected it was

time to go fishing. My father would grab the tackle box, fishing pole and night crawlers while my sister and I would happily grab our Mickey Mouse poles and set off.

The trek to the pond was an adventure in itself. The three of us would walk past the "money tree" as my sister and I called it because the small round leaves would rustle in the wind and look like coins. Then we had to cross the train tracks all the while looking for coal that had fallen off the train while passing earlier. Finally

we had to hike through a small wooded area that was no more than 300 yards away but to me seemed like quite the journey.

We would find a nice sandy spot which was usually on the north side of the pond. My dad would grab out some night crawlers and put them on our hooks because there was no way that my sister or I would kill a worm! My dad would then bait his hook and cast off. My sister

and I usually started out casting as far as we could and then immediately reel the line back in and repeat. After about ten minutes of not getting a bite, we would then resort to our sure fire way of catching fish.

We would walk right up to the water's edge, get our fishing poles ready and drop

the night crawler straight down about a foot from our feet into the water. There was always a school of some kind of pan fish waiting to snag onto the line. The line would immediately tug and all we had to do was slightly pull up on our fishing poles to catch them. My dad would then take them off the hook and release them back into the water at our feet. We would repeat this process again and again gleefully catching dozens of fish and believing we were the world's best fisher-women.



Holly with Mickey

But which century?

The Museum's own Holly Knoll, 25, shares timeless central Wisconsin memories.

At the Museum...

Previously Playing

In our latest editions of *Artifacts*, we discussed then-upcoming “Photo Thingies” to be held between January and April. By all accounts, the events were a success. In addition to some great stories about both people and places from our area, a large number of photographs were identified.

The photo event with the greatest attendance was the showing of the Lawrence Oliver collection of predominately rural subjects. We were lucky enough to have a large group of people from the Vesper area who were very excited to see the photos and help us with identifications. However, their enthusiasm did not end there. Numerous attendees contacted family and friends to view the group of images displayed on our website and we received numerous calls with names, dates and stories. Scott Brehm also coordinated a similar event at the Vesper Library. Since the event we have identified a large percentage of the Oliver photos. As a special thank you, we have made a copy of the collection with the identifications made and it will be available for viewing at the Vesper Library.

The history website Wisconsin Heritage Online has written an article in their current publication regarding these events in an attempt to give other small historical societies ideas to help expand their collections. Their website has been updated with this new information and we have also added to it approximately 400 images of the Krohnograph Collection.

Copies of the presentations are available in two disks, the Oliver/Krohn photos and the East/West side collections. Each disk is \$10 and available by calling the Museum at 715-423-1580.

By Lori Brost
Museum Administrator

Coming Soon: Antiquity

- May 29th marks the opening of the Museum for the 2011 season. The featured exhibit, in the J. Marshall Buehler Gallery, is the region’s largest personal collection of historical items, Phil Brown’s Den of Antiquity.

- Cranberry Blossomfest is June 23rd through 26th.

The Museum hours will be:

Thursday 1 – 4, Friday and Saturday 10 – 4 with the annual ice cream social being held **Saturday 11:30-3:30 and Sunday 12 – 4 p.m.**

- The Museum will be closed on July 3rd due to the July 4 holiday.

- July 28th through the 31st brings the 2011 Betty Boop Festival to Wisconsin Rapids area. The Museum will be hosting drawings by Grim Natwick from Gulliver’s Travels while the movie plays. A display of Grim’s poetry will also be on display. The expanded hours for the Museum during the event are: **Thursday 1 – 4, Friday and Saturday 10 – 5 and Sunday 12 – 4.**

For additional information on events and guests to the area please check our website or the festival site directly at www.bettyboopfestivalwi.com.

See you this summer – at the Den.





It's who you know.... And who *they* know!!!

It all started during the Krohnographs 'photo thingie.' When we showed a photo of a girls swim team from Wisconsin Rapids, one of the girls identified within that group was Kathleen Daly Cavanaugh. I forwarded the photo to her and she not only knew everyone on that photo, but most of the boys swim team too. Since that time, I have forwarded numerous photos to Kath for her assistance and she has been a tremendous help. For the latest that I sent, she replied that she could only identify one name, Carol Brey, and that I could contact her. I sent a copy to Carol and within days received a letter in the mail. Not only could Carol give me names, she knew the purpose of the group being together.

The photograph was taken during a round table discussion at a Model School Parent Teacher Association meeting. All in attendance were students at Wood County Teachers College who went on to become teachers themselves. They are identified as:

1. Mary Lou Henke, 2. Herbert Hetzel, 3. Mrs. Thelma Millin, 4. Lorrayne Christenson, 5. Carol Bymers, 6. Rosanna Bean, 7. Lorraine Sternitzky, 8. Wilma Manns, 9. Phyllis Nelson, 10. Alfred Fields, 11. Lois Ewer, 12. Estelle Smith.

Editor's note: the bust of Washington looks like the one now in the Museum school room. The Museum holds substantial archives from the Teachers College, also part of the recently-published history by Uncle Dave and Holly Knoll, Building for the Future: Mid-State Technical College 1907-2010.

Courting Via Trolley

By J. Marshall Buehler

Gene Johnson's article, "Courting Once Upon a Time" in the February 2011 *Artifacts* brought to mind a story told to me by my good friend and doctor – a former long time president of this organization – the well known and loved historian Doc Lee Pomainville.

Now, Doc Lee was a great story teller. His many tales had a truthful fact as their basis but the good doctor had a way of embellishing them with humor, fiction and fable. When Gene Johnson alluded to the five cent, late night street car ride after an out of town date, it immediately tickled my memory and brought to mind one of Doc Lee's stories.

Lee, in his youth, was a resident of Nekoosa, his home being just across the street from the trolley line that ran from Nekoosa to Wisconsin Rapids. His future wife lived in Port Edwards, a five cent ride to Nekoosa. Just as Gene Johnson did, Lee would take the last trolley of the evening from Port Edwards to Nekoosa.

On the summer night in question, Lee had come to Port Edwards and after treating Margaret to an ice cream soda at Ole Boger's ice cream parlor and then escorting her home, Lee found out that he had overspent his budget and lacked the five cent fare to take the trolley home.

No problem, he would exercise the 'hobo' privilege of sneaking a ride on the exterior of the car. Accordingly, he walked to the waiting shelter at the south edge of the village where all cars stopped. There were other stops but they were 'flag stops' and cars did not always stop there.

At the shelter, he hid around the corner of the building until the car started. Then he dashed out from hiding, grabbed hold of the window sill of the rear window and jumped up on the 'cow catcher.' With his head kept below the window sill, the motor man at the front of the car would not see him in his rear view mirror.

He had done it several times before, having learned the technique from his twin brother, Harold. But on this night, his little escapade was discovered. In the vicinity of the Port mill log yard, the car made an unscheduled stop. Lee kept his low profile, keeping his head below the window sill, thinking that some small problem had come up and the car would soon continue its trip.

The next thing he remembers is the motor man standing at the rear window with the motor controller in his hand and wrapping him on his knuckles. The control handle is detachable and carried from one end of the car to the other when reversing direction.

The motor man's trick worked. Lee let go, lost his balance and fell to the track.

"That s—of a b----- really wrapped my knuckles," Lee reminisced. "I fell on the tracks and my head hit one of the rails, drawing blood. The bump dazed me and I don't know how long I was out.

"I started walking home, along the railroad track until I came to the highway crossing and I followed that to my house. Walking the track in the dark is not easy. Besides, my head was aching, I was still shedding some blood and that s—of a b---- of a motor man would probably turn me in to the constable at Port Edwards if he found me trespassing on railway property when he made his return run to Wisconsin Rapids."

Upon arrival at his house, Lee confronted his father, a prominent doctor in Nekoosa. His dad listened to his son's story, then cleaned and dressed the wound. "But then, instead of sympathizing with me, he really gave me the dickens for stealing a five cent trolley ride. Dad was a stockholder in the Wisconsin Rapids Street Railway Company. What would people think if they knew his son was acting like such a common hobo?"

All through the narrative, Doc Lee had a smile on his face and a can of ale in his hand. Then he removed his hat to show me a scar on his head. Whether it was where he had hit the rail or whether it was from the time he got hit on the head with a baseball bat, well you just don't know. But that's another story.

Charter Member: Port Edwards historian Buehler has been a leading figure in the South Wood County Historical Corp. since its founding in 1955. For many years, he shared leadership duties with Doc Lee. He has been an inspiration to current SWCHC president Phil Brown.

HISTORICAL SOCIETY HONORS MARSHALL BUEHLER

J. Marshall Buehler, a past president and currently vice president of the South Wood County Historical Corp., received an award of merit from the State Historical Society.

The award was presented during the 15th annual Institute for Local History held in Madison recently.

Buehler, a chemist with Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Company, has long been interested in the history of the company and of the paper industry in Wisconsin. The award of merit was conferred upon him in recognition of his efforts in developing a museum and archives in our administration building.

Among the carefully preserved and indexed materials in the archives collection are some 2,000 photographs which provide a pictorial history of the region.

Since 1956 Buehler has contributed historical articles to NEKOOSA NEWS, and he was instrumental in the erection of the historic marker on Highway 73, near the company's Centralia hydro plant, which commemorates the origin of the paper industry on the Wisconsin River.



COMPANY HISTORIAN J. Marshall Buehler looks at an old handmade office stool which was reported to have come from the Edwards-Clinton sawmill and used in the 1840's. The sawmill was one of the predecessor companies of Nekoosa-Edwards. The stool is but one of the many interesting articles located in the archives room. Buehler was recently given an award of merit by the Wisconsin Historical Society.

*Thanks to Newell Jasperson, Cranmoor,
for recent donations to the Museum, including the above Nekoosa News.*

Bony Gilardi

By Paul Gross

Reading the stories about Bernard Gilardi (we pronounced it “Jilardi”), brought to mind many memories. Bernard’s younger brother, Raymond, who we all knew as “Ramie,” was my age. We were in school together from kindergarten at Irving School through SS Peter & Paul and high school.

The Gilardi home was located at the northwest corner of Third and Drake Streets. Due to the gradual slope of Drake Street, the west side of the property was a few feet below the sidewalk. Two steps went down to the yard level at the front of the house which faced Drake Street and the sidewalk had a pipe railing, most likely installed by the city for safety.

It was a small building with a crawl space. Every fall Mr. Gilardi would pack straw around the foundation to keep the winter cold out.

Raymond and I “played” together quite often. My home was on First Street just across from the swimming pool. My cousin, Marvin Love, lived next door to us on the north.

Marv was much older and he had a habit of giving every kid a nickname. He called me “Pale Face.” My brother was “Crappy” and I’m quite sure he gave Bernard Gilardi the nickname “Boneyard.” It’s easy to see why “Boneyard” soon became “Bony” for short.

Bony was always smiling, very clever and likeable. He was my brother Bill’s age and they spent a lot of time together.

Mr. Gilardi was a tall, slender man. It was Depression time and he was among the men who went down to the back of City Hall each morning to see if there was any work. In summer a man might be given a push lawn mower to take to a park. It took one man a full day to cut all the grass at the swimming pool. In winter the men were handed snow shovels and told to shovel city sidewalks and return at the end of the day. There were many days when there was no work to be done.

My dad was City Engineer and I recall how once in a while about 7 a.m. he’d get a call from Mr. Gilardi asking if there would be any work on that day. It saved Mr. Gilardi a walk over to City Hall.

Mr. Gilardi also supplemented his income by selling various products door to door. He sold my mother a can opener that mounted on the wall and opened the can as you turned a crank. Prior to that time, you had to puncture the can and rip it open with a rather dangerous sharp gadget. Mr. Gilardi’s device also included a grinding wheel to keep your knives sharp.

I recall when I was about five, playing with Ramie. We went in the house and they were coloring Easter eggs. I had never seen that done before, I thought that was a job for the “Easter Bunny.” Mrs. Gilardi told me the Easter Bunny needed help and asked them to do it. She gave me one of the colored eggs to take home and I recall how excited I was to tell my parents about it.

When the public schools were off, such as during state teacher’s convention, one or two of the high school kids who graduated from Peter & Paul would visit during class. Sure enough, when I was in eighth grade, I walked Bony.

Sister Veronica greeted him and asked him to draw some pictures on the blackboard. Bony took the chalk, made a few curved lines and asked, “What is it going to be?” We all pretty much guessed the same thing. Then Bony would add a few fancy lines to produce a comic character and the class would break out in laughter.

After high school, Bony got involved in the graphic arts and display business. That’s where the November 2010 issue of *Artifacts* picks up the rest of the story.

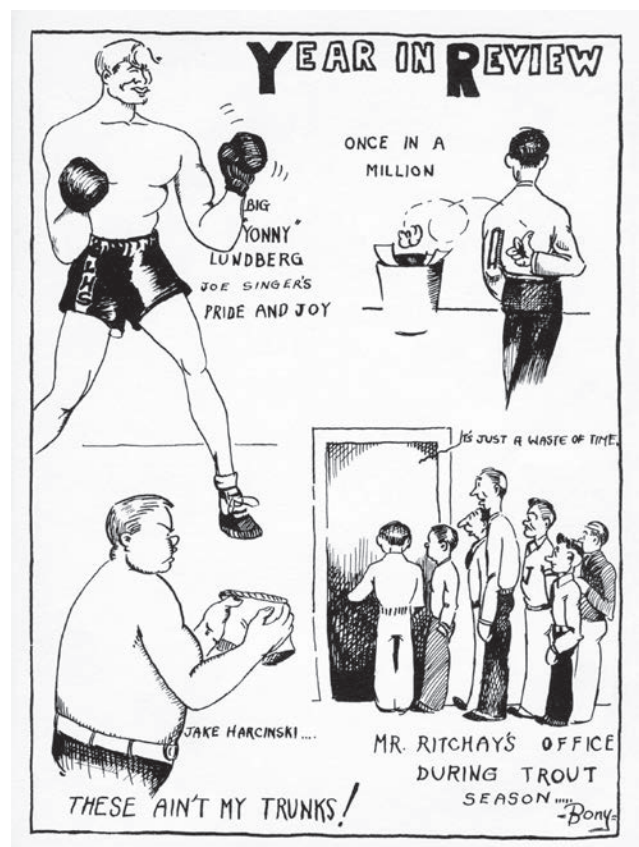
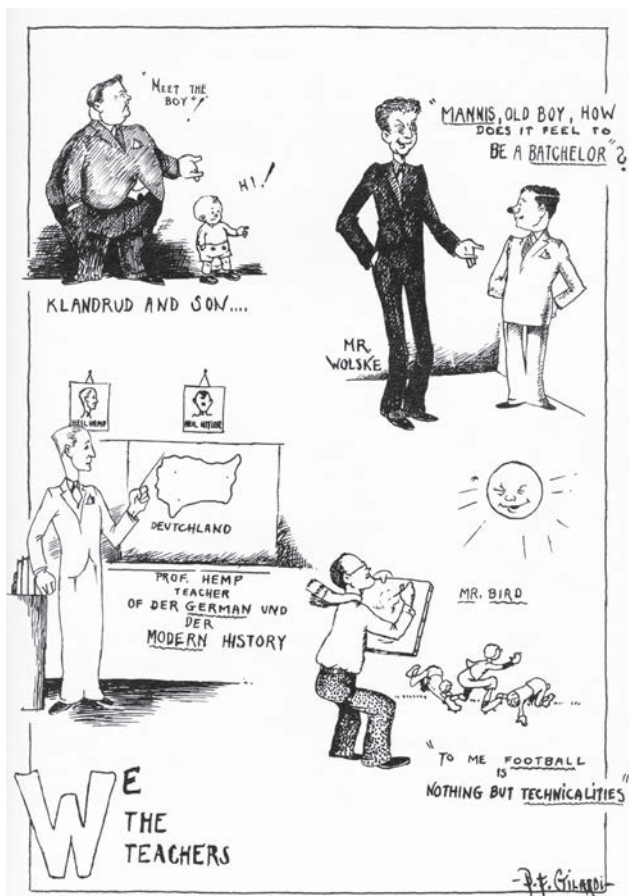
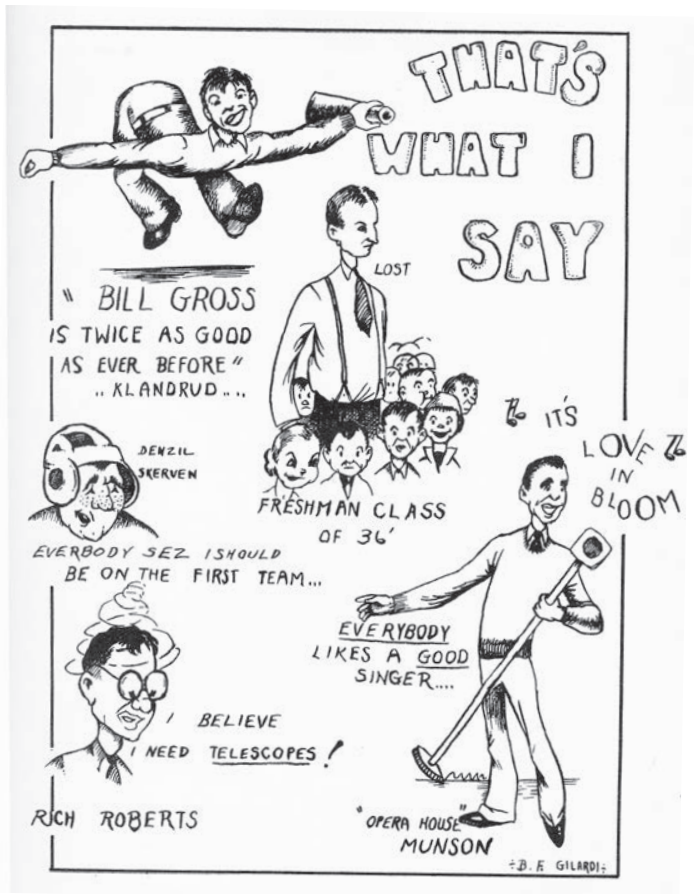
The last time I saw Bony, was in the 1950s. I was walking out of church and Bony was walking in. Before I recognized him, his hand came out and with that big smile he said, “Hi Paul.” He was still the same friendly smiling “Bony,” a fine fellow indeed.

As John Billings would say, “So that’s the way that goes.” I’m Paul Gross, thanks for listening.

Jeweler, videographer and frequent contributor Gross is among the mentors and collaborators of Artifacts 29 subject Phil Brown.



Recently featured local artist Gilardi illustrated several editions of the Lincoln High School yearbook, Ahdawagam. As previously featured, his surrealistic paintings were cause célèbre at a Milwaukee art gallery this year. As a student here, his wit and command of gesture compared favorably with his LHS predecessor, the animator who made Betty Boop a household word, Grim Natwick. Several of Gilardi's subjects were still around when editor Uncle Dave was a student, including principal Aaron Ritchay, "Prof. Hemp" and "Mr. Bird."





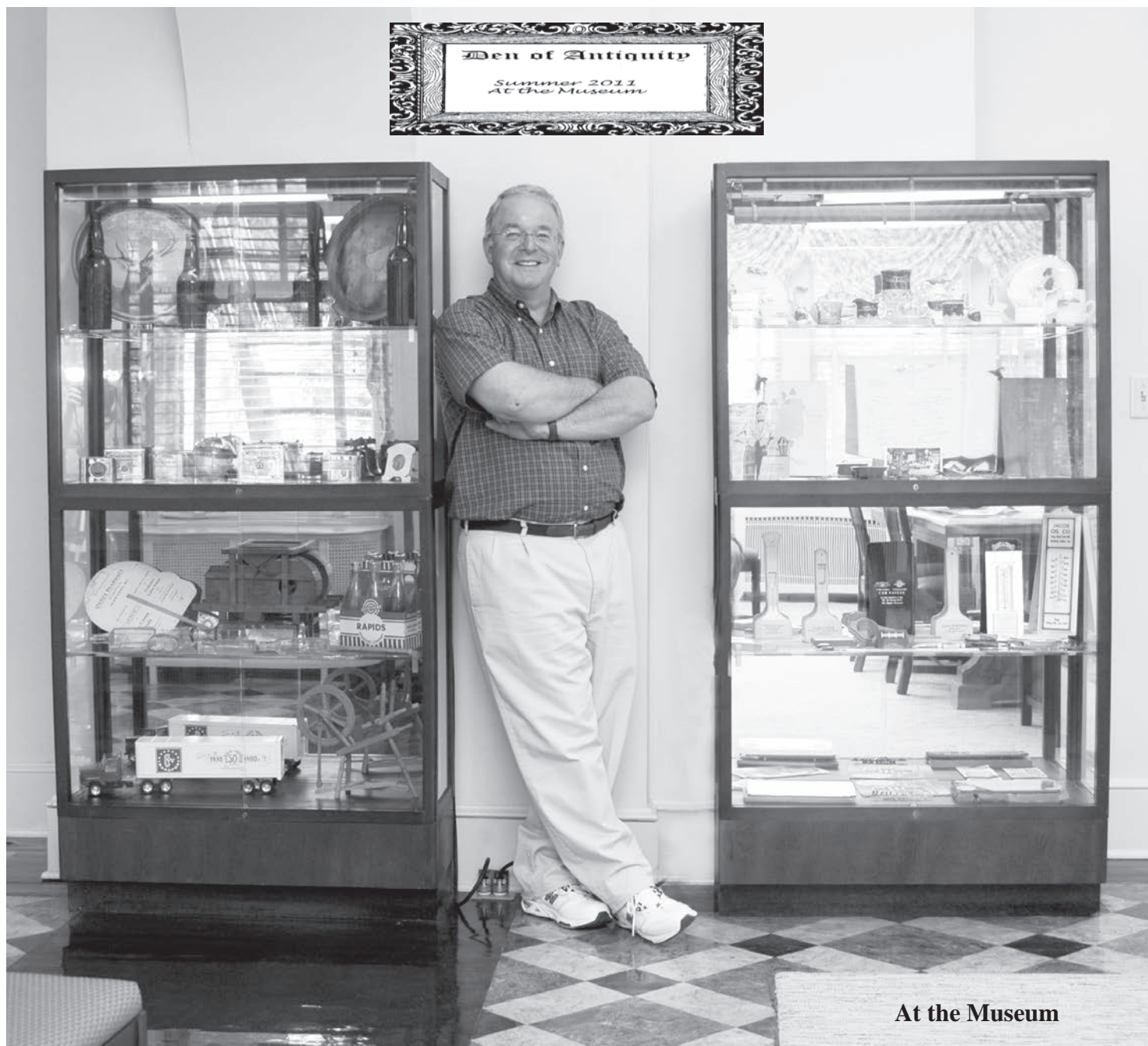
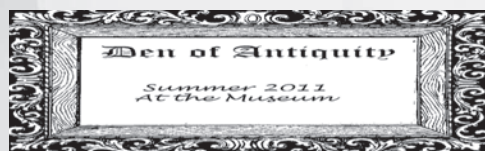
Den of Ubiquity



Den of Deductivity



Den of Inquiry



At the Museum



Den of Iniquity

Den of Perspicacity



The Collector

Why have just one when you could have fifty?

Phil Brown: One of the first jobs I had here was field supervisor with the Farm Bureau. As a cranberry grower, I found real interest in the cranberry history. Out traveling the highways and byways I would stop by and ask if I could go in their barns and check things out and they were always more than welcome. So driving to and from Black River Falls I would stop by the Normington Marsh and the Jepson Marsh. They would give me some things and I started combing through the antique shops in Black River Falls.

Of course the greatest thing would be a cranberry hand rake. There would be little one pound cardboard boxes. Recipe books. Quarter barrel crates and the half barrel crates and the barrels. I have one barrel for instance that I was able to get from a grower down near Tomah and I had to trade six cranberry barrel labels for one barrel.

My cranberry label collection is now one of the best in the country. My rake collection now amounts to maybe sixty rakes and growing.

You learn a lot in thirty years. When the growers association is contacted about an old marsh or questions relating to the industry they direct it to me and if I don't know the answer I can usually dig it out.

The name just kind of blurted out one day. The Den of Iniquity verses the Den of Antiquity. I would hate to have my Den of Iniquity advertised all over town.

I spent from '85 to the year 2000 buying, buying, buying, buying, buying. Anything I could get my hands on. I would box it up and just store it. I was a hoarder of antiquity. Anything that said Wisconsin Rapids, Grand Rapids, Nekoosa, and Port Edwards, I bought. I had people picking for me and stuff like that.

When the cranberry industry finally took a dive in 2000 I said this is probably a good point to take a little break and find out what I have.

I had a garage full of boxes, I had another area full of boxes. They were neatly put away, wrapped.

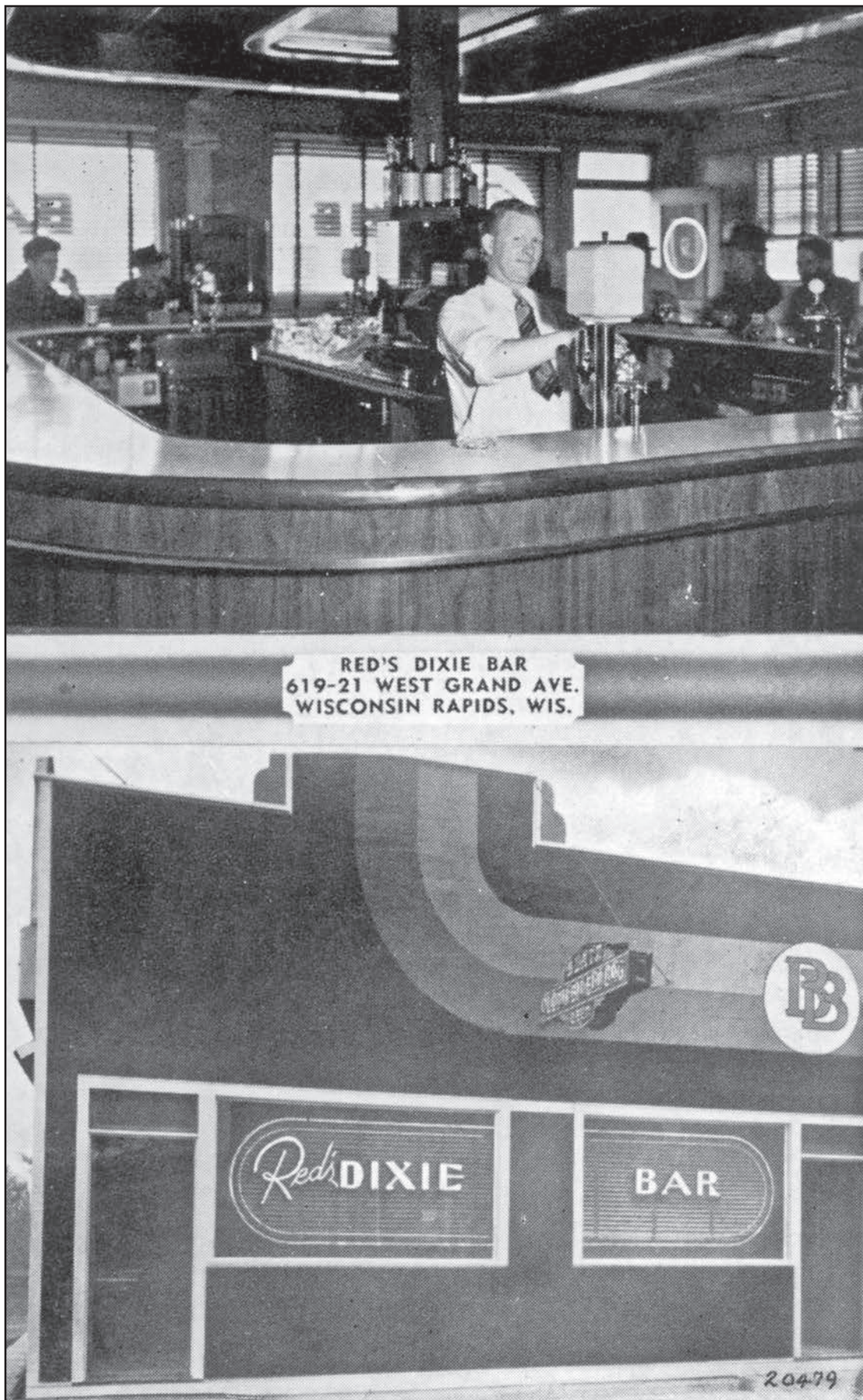
Once I started pawing into these boxes I thought, "My god, I've got to do something with these boxes." So we happened to have this nice room up above our garage. I went out and bought display cases and hammer and nails and started pounding things into the wall and just trying to get as much local history and local memorabilia on display and out to enjoy. Basically taking all of the clutter from one place and putting it into another.

In a sense I envision my Den of Antiquity to be the local House on the Rock. You are not going to find one yard stick from my collection you are going to find 50 yard sticks if they are all a little different, all a little varied. You are not going to find one souvenir spoon; you are going to find 50 spoons. Souvenir dishes, you know, the kitschier, uglier and the homelier the better. As long as it says Grand Rapids, Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards or Nekoosa it belongs in this den so people can look around and see Teske's Garage or Gus Freschette's Service Station or Polanski Service Station, McCamley's, Guarantee Hardware calendars, Wood County Bank, First National Bank.

People will look at this collection and say, "What is he thinking?"

The greatest part of my collection is the actual visual postcard collection and the old photos I have turned up. One good photo is worth a thousand words and when you can see the actual photos of old Wisconsin Rapids and old Grand Rapids it's pretty special and will be for years and years to come.



Postcards



Hotel Witter, Wisconsin Rapids, Wis.

A Fine City Needs a Fine Hotel

*So believed Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. president George W. Mead.
The Hotel Mead below replaced the Witter.*

Postcards from the

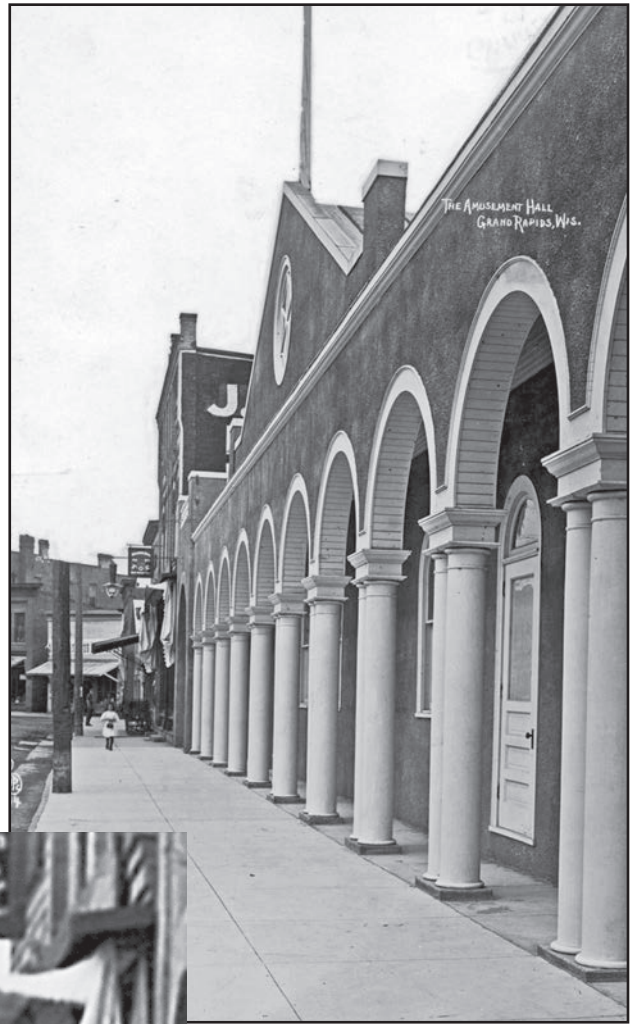


West Side



*Is it a picture of Citizens bank
or
is it a picture of the Mecca bar?*



*Uncle Dave's***PHOTO PHOOLERY**

*Is it a picture of the Amusement
Hall (Armory)*

or

is it a picture of the girl?



Hiawatha locomotives and trains were operated by the Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Pacific Railroad ("Milwaukee Road") and, beginning in 1935, traveled from Chicago to Minneapolis-St. Paul. By 1946, four routes carried the Hiawatha name, Chicago–Minneapolis; Chicago–Omaha; Chicago–Wausau–Minocqua; and Chicago–Minneapolis–Seattle. The Hiawatha is probably the train remembered most fondly by Wisconsin Rapids passengers.





The Georgy Malenkov of Local History



SWCHC president Phil Brown likes to say that a triad of local historians – Marshall Buehler, Paul Gross and Uncle Dave – are the Roosevelt, Churchill and Stalin of Tri-City antiquary. If so, what does that make the relatively youthful PMB? Certainly, a strong candidate for the future politburo of SWCHC. No one is more dedicated to our narrative and memorabilia than the transplanted son of Crocus Hill.



The 1955 Browns: Betty and Gil with, in descending order of age, David, Peter, Chris and Phil (on lap) at their at 730 Goodrich Ave, St. Paul, Minn., home, shown at right. Jeffrey would follow in 1956.



Interview with Philip M. Brown
 SWCHC Museum
 March 17, 2011

Baby Boomer

Philip MacNeil Brown was born Jan. 27, 1955, to Samuel Gilbert "Gil" Warner Brown and Mary Elizabeth "Betty" Larsen Brown in St. Paul, Minn.

In his words:

Birth order I think is really a big deal. And because of you being a number one son there were certain expectations expected of you. I was number four of five. David was born in '42, after my dad went to war. Peter was born in '44. My brother Chris was born in '53. I was born in '55 and my brother Jeffrey was born in '56.

The younger brothers were often picked on by the older brothers. Because of the birth order too, we ended up getting hand-me-downs. Somehow I ended up with a great bike that was a hand-me-down, probably from Peter to Chris to me.

Part of the Den of Antiquity will show my first bike and the bike that I wanted. Everybody wanted a Schwinn Stingray with the raised handlebars. The banana seat, the raised handlebars.

I was delivering the *Minneapolis Tribune* and needed a good bike. My older brother bought himself a brand new Schwinn Varsity 10-speed and then I got his old bike. But I needed something better than a one-speed, balloon tires fendered bike.

So I went out with some of my first money that I made as a paper boy and bought a 5-speed Schwinn Collegiate and that was what got me around the neighborhood delivering papers. I had a paper bag and I also had metal saddle bags which would hold the papers.



CROCUS HILL

I grew up in Crocus Hill, one of the nicer neighborhoods in St. Paul, part of the Summit Hill neighborhood on the bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River valley.

We knew all our neighbors. Everybody looked out for everybody's kids. If I was over at a friend's house and I was doing something stupid I would be called out on it. I would be yelled at by my friend's parents.

When we went out after school to play kickball, hide-and-seek, and kick-the-can, Mom and Dad would just tell us to be home when the street lights turned on. We played until dark. Then we usually had dinner shortly after that.

One of the youngest things we did, that we weren't supposed to do was, we rode our bikes all the way down Summit Avenue to the Mississippi River. That was a dangerous area. Along the Mississippi River bank, there were a number of caves. Hobos would possibly live in there so we had to kind of keep clear of that. But when we would take as we were supper time usually

We an upper class got all the taken care when it allowance expected receive

a week but you were expected to put some into your savings account. I was definitely not spoiled growing up and developed quite a work ethic of being able to supplement my income very nicely.

As a kid, I had lawn mowing and snow shoveling jobs. The paper route was really nice and then when I was old enough I was able to get into the local Piggly Wiggly as a bag boy.



Phil 1967

LINWOOD PARK

One of the best stories about living in St. Paul in that Crocus Hill neighborhood, we had a great Elementary school. Linwood Park Elementary School.

We were approximately ten blocks from Linwood. My mom always said they bought the house that far away so we couldn't come home for lunch.

We would walk the alleys all the way to school and ride our bikes or walk during the winter time. One of our neighbors was concerned because it was 20 below zero and Mom just bundled us up, us three Brown boys, Chris, Jeff, and Phil, and we had to walk to school.

One of the neighbors called my mom and said, "Betty, I can't believe you let the boys walk to school."

And Mom said, "Oh, they'll be just fine. I put on an extra sweater."

Coming home, we'd always take a different route. We'd stop at a friend's house. We'd stop at a little store along the way.

PAULY

At the same time, Linwood Park is where I used to play hockey as a kid. I played football and baseball.

In 1966, one of my teammates was Paul Molitor from the neighborhood. I was 11 and he was 10. I was first baseman and a big hitter. Coach Gartland and Coach Anderson awarded me the most valuable player of the team.

Of course Pauly went on to play high school baseball at Cretin and then went on to the U of M and then eventually signed on with the Brewers as a rookie. With our son, Stephen, who was born in '83, we went down to Milwaukee County Stadium and I arranged to see Paul Molitor.

They told me, "Okay, get down there early enough and he'll be out doing batting practice or fielding. When he starts heading to the dugout, call him over."

Sure enough, Molitor was out in center field shagging fly balls during batting practice and all of a sudden he starts running for the dugout and

I'm on one side and he's going to dash over to the far end, and I yell, "PAUL, PAUL, OVER HERE!"

I had to make a big scene and so here's my son Stephen and he's embarrassed as can be. He's all of about four years old, he doesn't know Paul Molitor from the man on the moon.

Sure enough, Paul came right over and we connected as old neighborhood pals, talking about Gartland and Anderson and things like that.

He said "Great to see you Phil, see you later."

As we were standing there, Rob Deer, one of the Brewers players, popped his head out of the dugout and handed a baseball to my son Stephen.

Well, Stephen backs away, says, "Oh no!" and I reach over and grab the baseball and say, "Thanks Rob."

I had a baseball. I had a baseball card and I had something else for Molitor to sign and I had a felt tip pen. So he signed them; and then the signatures all smeared.

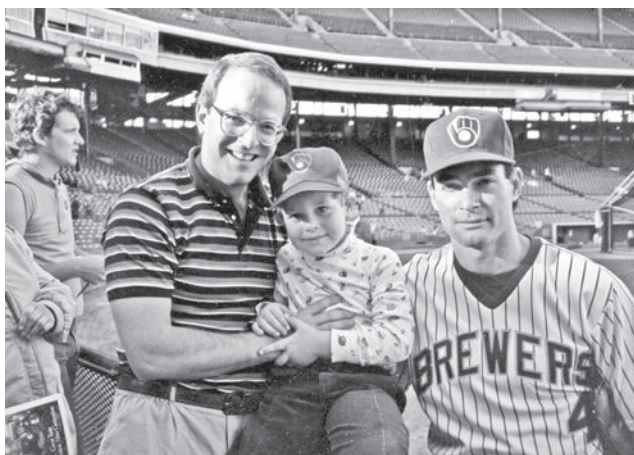
Fortunately, I was able to send everything back down to Milwaukee and Molitor signed the new stuff and I received them about a week later.

ATHLETICS

I was the biggest, strongest, and tallest in my classes. I loved playing hockey but Minnesota hockey got very rough. My career lasted until about eighth grade and then the kids got bigger, faster and stronger and it got pretty mean out on the ice. It was no longer the pond hockey we all enjoyed as kids.

But baseball was my first love. I was usually the first guy picked on the playground for softball. At Linwood Park, I was probably one of the best roofers in our little elementary school. In other words, when you hit a home run you hit it up on the roof and that was a roofer.

But once again, by the time my friends caught up with me in seventh and eighth grade, everybody



Phil and Stephen with Paul Molitor

else had growing spurts and all of a sudden it got really competitive.

We all played little league baseball but when it came to high school you had tryouts. If you didn't make the team, so be it.

FAST TIMES AT MARSHALL JR. HIGH

When I graduated from sixth grade, I expected to go to Alexander Ramsey Middle School. That was the year the city of St. Paul, in the name of integration, drew a line at Lexington. Everybody east of Lexington, which included the whole Crocus Hill neighborhood, had to go to John Marshall Junior High in a predominately black neighborhood. Rather than Marshall, a lot of my friends ended up going to private school. Once again, I was in the half of the class that made the other half look good and I did not make the private school cut.

My seventh grade year, 1967, at John Marshall was a very traumatic year. We were picked on not only by the black students but also by some of the faculty members. Some of the black faculty members looked down upon us because parents of these white kids fought that boundary line change. During that time of integration a lot of these families actually moved out of the neighborhood for the suburbs.

Though I was picked on continuously, I was a big kid for my age and I could hold my own. I used to get into a lot of fist fights, kicking fights, pushing fights. I had knives pulled on me in the stairwells. Somebody picked a fight with me and I was supposed to meet him out on the playground after school. Well, he took a pot shot at me and kicked me in the face and knocked me out cold.

The next thing I knew, one of the ladies from across the street saw me laying on this playground and came over to see if I was okay. She was nice enough to help me to my feet and kind of pointed me towards home.

Other times, we were actually chased for a couple of blocks. Once we cleared Summit Avenue we were home free. We were back in our neighborhood.

DON'T MESS WITH PEDRO

In eighth grade, I happened to have one of the best teachers I've ever had. Her name was Mrs.

Mickelson. I got the best grades I've ever gotten and somehow, someway, by the spring of the year of my eighth grade year, we all started getting along. I was befriended by a Hispanic kid by the name of Pedro Gonzalez.

His brother Benito Gonzalez was one of the meanest sons of bitches I ever met. He picked on me profusely.

Pedro would come along and he was a big quiet type. He had the dark Hispanic hair that would come down into a ducktail, big pointed boots, tight jeans – a quiet guy but you never wanted to mess with Pedro.

Benito would pick on me and would pick on the other white kids in the class and Pedro would come to our

rescue. More often than not with Pedro showing the tolerance for us white kids, the black kids and the other Hispanic kids, the trouble makers all of a sudden said, "Well, okay," and sure enough by the time I graduated from eighth grade at John Marshall Junior High School, I had the best years of my life academically, so called. Everything, was better.

At John Marshall



sch

M. Prescott, P. Riemerman, W. Gundy, D. Wil-
t. Foster, P. Brown. Second row: J. Neal, G.
az, S. Taylor, G. Soderstrom, B. Larson, T.
l. Jarvis, M. Malcom, D. Berg, D. Collins, S.
L. King, J. Garthez, G. Randle, S. Wragg.

MINNEHAHA

As it turns out, a lot of the other private schools in the Twin Cities offered nine-through-twelve and for ninth grade I ended up going on to Minnehaha Academy. Most of the kids that went to private schools like Minnehaha came from wealthy families in the Minneapolis suburbs. We were poor white kids from St. Paul. They didn't beat me up or anything or didn't chase me back to St. Paul so it wasn't that big of a deal. It certainly was a safe and a great school to go to and I had a great education.

Minnehaha had a great sports program, great academics, the whole works. I played football for a year or two until I split my chin open and decided, "This isn't any fun anymore." Played hockey, started hockey didn't make the cut. But I made the tennis team, so I played three years of tennis for Minnehaha. I lettered.

Minnehaha was in a league with some of those other Minneapolis private schools and we were up against stiff competition when it came to tennis. These guys, these guys learned how to play tennis at their country clubs. So they were tough to beat.



Minnehaha tennis team: can you find Phil?

BLOWIN' IN THE WIND

I was in the third grade at Linwood Park Elementary School in 1963 when John F. Kennedy was assassinated. We went traipsing out of the building in a happy mood because we had the day off.

When Martin Luther King was killed in April of '68, I was in the eighth grade at John Marshall Junior High School. There was a lot of hatred. A lot of bigoted, redneck people did not like Lyndon Johnson's "great society."

My parents thought the whole country was going to hell in a hand basket.

The anti-Vietnam era sprung up about '67, '68, and along came violent anti-war protests. We would go up to Summit Avenue and watch the protestors marching to the state Capitol. Then for the fun of it, we would join them. We didn't know what we were protesting. I guess we were protesting the war in Vietnam.

BOISE STATE

Once again, after I graduated from Minnehaha in 1973, I was in the half of class that made the other half look good. Back in '73 you didn't really have to apply to colleges like you do today. You just filled out an application, sent in your check and you were in.

I wanted to go out west so I ended up by the luck of the draw at Boise State College. I had heard of Sun Valley. I figured Sun Valley's gotta be over near Boise somewhere.

So lo and behold, in August 1973, my mom and dad took me out to the airport, put me on a plane and off to Boise,

Idaho, I went.

Funny thing was, I happened to immediately fall into a group of kids that just graduated in Boise, the class of 1973. So I pretty much went from one group of friends in St. Paul to a new group of friends.

Mom and Dad took care of tuition and gave me a little bit of spending money but I could hardly buy a twelve pack of beer on what they gave me for allowance – so I went to work for a really nice French restaurant that had just opened. I was doing such a good job washing dishes and working the

kitchen that they promoted me to a busboy. So now I'm out of the kitchen and I'm busing tables and helping the dishwasher at night and really showing some spunk and they said, "Hey, you know, you're the kind of kid that would make a pretty good waiter."

So they promoted me to be a waiter. I thought that was pretty cool. Now not only was I waiting on tables and getting tips and stuff like that, all of a sudden I was spending more time at the restaurant and less time at Boise State's library studying for my classes.

VAN WINKLE AWAKES

One incident pretty much told the story. I had a Psychology 101 class in the mornings, but the night before I didn't get back to my dorm until maybe 1 o'clock and kind of studied a little bit and fell asleep. I got to the big lecture hall at 8 o'clock and preceded to put my head down on the table and fall asleep.

My professor did not care for this guy sleeping and he left the lectern, walked up to my chair and pointed me out to everyone in the class. "I do not want any of you to sit in my class and fall asleep. I want to make it as interesting as possible."

I was sound asleep. I had no idea what he was doing. So finally after probably five minutes, or ten minutes, I kind of came to and was watching and listening to the lecture, probably daydreaming, and the kid next to me said, "Do you realize what just happened?" and went on to explain to me that I was made an example of what not to do in this guy's class.

That embarrassing moment was the beginning of the end of my college career at Boise State.

I continued to do well waiting on tables and helping at the restaurant and things like that. School fell by the wayside and I kept doing better

and better at my job and enjoying the bright lights of Boise, Idaho.

In the winter, I could ski during the day and work at night. They had a nice little ski resort up above the hills. Bogus Basin was the name of the ski resort.

I tell ya, for an 18, 19 year old kid that was the life. I dropped out of school and continued working.

LOST

One fateful day in March of 1974 I was up at Bogus Basin after about a three day snowfall with Jeff Lang. He used to work at Bogus Basin as a high school kid so he should have known better.

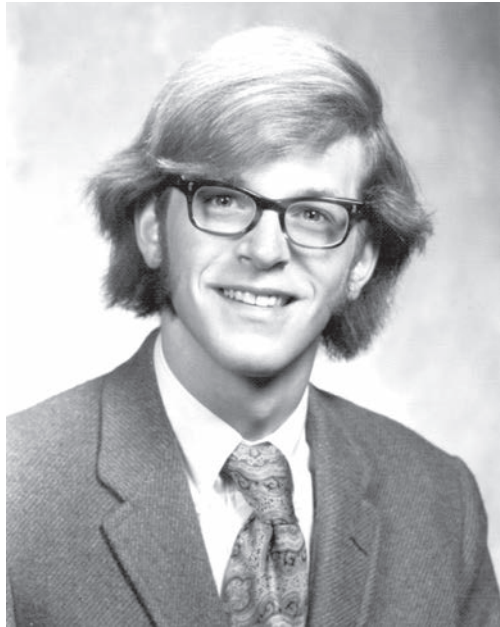
After three days of snow, the runs were beautiful powder conditions and all of a sudden I looked over the ropes and there was this big bowl of untracked powder. I said, "Look at this field. I gotta go try that".

Under the rope I went.

Jeff followed right behind me and we skied this nice little bowl all the way to the bottom. So that was pretty cool. Then I said, "Well how do we get back up?"

We thought about that after the fact. So I figured if we kind of followed this path maybe we'd come around the side of the mountain and eventually hit the trail that would take us back up to the top. We could hitchhike back up the road and get our car and head home. Well this road that I was leading us on was leading us farther and farther away from the resort.

Finally as it's getting dark and it's still snowing, we're sopping wet from sweat and melted snow. We said, "Well I think we're here for the night." We found a big patch of pine trees and I knew enough to try and mat down an area and try to make a snow cave.



High school graduation 1973

We broke branches off the trees and started a fire and kind of kept warm. As the fire would start going out we would go on another little round and pick up some firewood wherever we could, break off branches and things like that.

Finally, by about two in the morning, we were exhausted. We were still sopping wet, still snowing, blowy, cold. All the worst conditions you could imagine and at that point we said, "Well let's see if we can get a little sleep and then we'll continue this in the morning, we'll backtrack and stuff like that."

Sure enough we went to sleep, and I would say probably two hours later, we woke up freezing. The fire was out, we were still wet and cold. It was still dark.

Lo and behold we walked up to the top of a peak, looked around, didn't recognize anything.

We went down, got our skis, and back-tracked the way we thought we came. Snow had covered our trail but we were on an old logging road or something like that so we could go without too much trouble.

Finally the clouds cleared, the sun was coming through, and we heard somebody shouting for us: STAY THERE, STAY THERE and probably within fifteen or twenty minutes in comes the Idaho Air National Guard to our rescue down in the bottom of this valley. Four guys jump out of the helicopter, two guys grab me, "This is a rescue mission." They take my skis off, carry

Bogus Cracks Down

(Continued from Page 1)

the boundary rope, or skiing in bad weather," in isolated areas.

Both Lang and Brown admitted they deliberately went under ski area boundary ropes, despite the fact they knew it was against the rules. Lang, 18, had even worked two years as a Bogus Basin ticket taker.

Asked why he disobeyed the rule, Lang said, "It was just a wild urge to ski the powder."

Was it worth it?

"No."

In addition to expenses (a snowcat, two helicopters and 15 men were used in the rescue), such operations pose a threat to searchers themselves, Loughrey says.

"Someday we're gonna lose a rescuer," he stated. "These people aren't just jeopardizing their own lives by doing some dumb thing; they're endangering other peoples' lives, too."

As ski patrolman Hank Gimmet explained in agreeing with Loughrey's fears — "As we go down Dry Creek — this morning for example — we're looking up at cornices as big as this building with nice blue fracture lines, while we look down into the drainage for the lost skiers."

Whether Bogus Basin legally can charge Lang and Brown costs involved in the rescue operation remains to be seen, Idaho Atty. Gen. W. Anthony Park would give no opinion on the matter Friday.

But whatever the eventual outcome of the episode, the lost skiers were both treated for blistered feet and released from St. Alphonsus Hospital Friday. They feel a bit sheepish about the whole thing.

"We just saw that fantastic spread of powder — completely untouched — so we skied it," Brown said. "We were really foolish."



ALL SMILES — Phil Brown was cheerful as he jumped out of a helicopter after being rescued at Bogus Basin Friday. The smile disappeared when he found out about sanctions awaiting him.

me into the helicopter. Two guys grab Jeff, take care of him. They are warming us up, checking for frostbite.

I made the front page of the *Idaho Statesman* the next day with the Air National Guard Helicopter coming in for a landing in the parking lot of the ski resort. There is a chagrined Phil stepping from the helicopter.

So I jump out of the helicopter and I'm ecstatic. I've got a grin ear to ear, we're saved. We're back home. We were ready to go in our car and go home.

Little did I know that when you are rescued from a mountain you are responsible for those expenses. So Bogus Basin sent me a bill for about \$1,500 to rescue me from the mountains.

As it turns out we were the eleventh and twelfth skiers who got lost that season off the back of Bogus Basin and

they didn't have a set policy to get reimbursement for those expenses. So our lawyer friend simply said, "You cannot use these two kids as an example while you let the eleven other people off without any problems."

All they did was revoke my season pass that year. So I got off pretty lucky.

MIXOLOGY

After a while in Boise it got kind of old. I was out of school. The Fourth of July in 1974, the bartender went up to Sun Valley, Ketchum, Idaho, for a weekend and never came back. So

when we all got back from our Fourth of July break we were without a bartender. I was ready to learn my new trade and had a great time doing it. At the end of my career as a bartender I was closing the restaurant on Tuesday and Wednesday nights, which was pretty nice. I was ordering all the booze for the bar and I was doing all the bartending.

AFTON

Towards the end of '74, I realized, "Once you're a Midwesterner you're always a Midwesterner" and I got very lonely for the Midwest. I ended up going back to St. Paul in time for Christmas of '74.

Eventually I got on at a nice bar and restaurant in Afton, Minn., on the St. Croix river across from Hudson, Wis. Spent five years living the good life, bartending and things like that.

Eventually, I started working for my roommate Roger Rudolph's company. They owned a plumbing wholesale supply house.

I was running the retail end of it and he was doing some of the other parts of the job and that worked out really well.



1976

Connie Otis, who is a friend of our family, brought Mary as a guest. So we were sitting there having a great chat, Connie and I getting caught up on my older brothers. Peter was in the same class as her stepson.

Sitting across from Mary at Belwin and while I was talking to Connie, Mary all of a sudden said, "I remember you. We were at Lurk's and you were having a Lurk burger with cheese, a bag of sour cream and onion potato chips and a Special Export beer."

I said, "Huh?"

As Connie said, I had this look of incredulity because I didn't really remember Mary from July, three or four months previous. All of a sudden I said, "Oh that's right and you were there with those two other pretty girls."

She said, "That's no way to start a relationship."

A few months earlier, as I was reminded,

Mary and I had originally met at a bar in Afton. I had just come from an afternoon of tailgating at a Minnesota Kicks soccer game and had come back to Lurk's Bar for a nightcap and a hamburger. She was there with a couple of friends and we had a nice chat but it didn't really go anywhere.



1978: Phil, Jeff, Dave, Pete, Chris

ALONG COMES MARY

While we were living in Afton, the landlady, Tory Davidson, invited us to a dinner down at the Belwin outdoor nature center in the Stillwater, Minn., school district, a very nice place. Tory was a friend of Belwin, in other words a donor. Every year they would have an annual friends of Belwin dinner. So Roger and I were with Tory.

Sitting across from me at this table was this nice young lady from Wisconsin Rapids, Mary Brazeau.

I told her she stood head and shoulders above her two other pretty girlfriends that day. After the dinner at Belwin's I followed her around like a puppy dog to get her name and where she worked.

She said her name was Mary Brazeau and she worked at the First National Bank of St. Paul.

When I got home, looked in the phone book for Brazeau. How do you spell Brazeau if you're up in St. Paul?

B-R-O-Z-O? So I called directory assistance, couldn't find a Mary Brozo.

So I called the First National Bank of St. Paul and asked for Mary Brazeau and the next person on the line, there she was.

I said, "Hi. This is Phil Brown."

She said, "Who?"

"Remember me from Belwin the other night?"

I asked her out for lunch that Friday. We started dating in October of '77.

At that time I was salesman for the plumbing supply company. Mary was working at the First National Bank and I would pick her up and we actually went up to Linwood Park where Paul Molitor and I used to play baseball.

Above the field they have this big horseshoe-shaped area. It used to be fondly referred to as Lover's Lane. It's a pretty busy place Friday and Saturday nights.

That day, we had boxed lunches from Kentucky Fried Chicken and we were sitting on the park benches overlooking the Mississippi River Valley, a beautiful spring day. She sprung it on me, she said, "You know if we've been seeing a lot of each other and if this relationship's going to go anywhere and if anything ever happens to my mother I'm going to have to go back home to Wisconsin Rapids and run the family cranberry marsh."

I said, "Run the family what? Down where? Wisconsin Rapids?"

I didn't even know she was from Wisconsin.

"Oh yeah. My mom has a house on the river and it's a very nice town. My home town."

I'm from St. Paul and we have the mighty Mississippi. I couldn't imagine the Wisconsin River as being much of a river at all. Little did I know it's the hardest working river in the world, apparently.

But to a kid from St. Paul that was like the dark side of the moon. We were getting along so well that I said that day on the park bench, "Well, maybe we'd better start going down to Wisconsin Rapids and let me meet your mom and let me see what this town is all about."



Mary and Phil 1977

RIVER CITY ROMANCE

So we started coming down to Wisconsin Rapids on weekends. It was almost love at first sight.

First view of it was coming in on Highway 13 from Pittsville, up over the viaduct.

We came in to her mom's house. I imagined a little house on a little creek. Little did I know it was a big house on a big river.

The next day we went out to the marsh. Clarence Searles was the general manager. We made up some brats.

Mrs. Brazeau had a house on the marsh.

Clarence used it when he was there. Clarence lived at his house at his marsh. A. Searles and Son.

The thing I loved about Wisconsin Rapids was how social it was. When we came down on a Friday night we had dinner at the Country Club, when we actually had to wear coat and tie. The Brazeaus of course knew everyone in the place.



1979

Saturday was usually a cocktail party at somebody's house, so I had a chance to meet Mary's mother's friends, Mary's friends, Mary's cousins.

One of the first outings we had here was cross country skiing. Probably the winter of '78, maybe early '79 with Nick and Barb Brazeau and Nettesheims. Pat and Kathy Daly were friends. Bill and Nancy Brazeau were out on that ski trail. People we still see today were some of the first people we met.

We were married on June 14, 1980 right up at St. Vincent De Paul. Father Dockendorff had a very nice ceremony. I'm baptized Episcopalian. Mary of course being Catholic and me not converting to Catholicism, we had a very nice ceremony appropriate for a Catholic and a non-catholic and a big reception out at the old Bull's Eye Country Club that burned down a couple years after our wedding.

That was June 14, 1980.

BACK ROADS

After I left the plumbing supply house, I worked for a brief time for an independent insurance agency in St. Paul. So I had a kind of liking for insurance. I originally came down and interviewed for Sentry Insurance in Stevens Point. But I was lacking a college education. So, that dark cloud hung over my head.

Eventually I sold insurance for Rural Insurance for about a year and a half, did not do that well as a city kid. So my agency manager recommended me for a job with the Wisconsin Farm Bureau, the parent organization for Rural Insurance. It became probably the five best years working that this city boy ever had.

I had a nine-county area of central Wisconsin: Taylor, Clark, Wood, Portage, Adams, Winnebago, Green Lake and Marquette. I would go to these county units and tell them what the Bureau was up to, legislatively. It was a vibrant organization. We had a good active young farmer's program. We had a good women's program.

It was a great job and I got to know central Wisconsin like the back of my hand, covering all the back roads and getting to know the farmers.

COLLEGE

After about five years of doing that I was getting restless and looking for something else to do. Ten years older than I was, Barb Brazeau was just finishing up her Master's degree in Communications at UW-Stevens Point. She told me to go back and get my degree. One cold February night



1980

after I had talked to Barb, I was listening to Bruce Williams' late night radio show on the way home from a Farm Bureau meeting. Bruce was talking to a hot shot real estate agent in California who was doing very well selling real estate without a college degree.

Bruce said, “Without a college degree you’re really just setting yourself back. If you’re so smart go ahead and work on your college degree while you’re selling real estate.”

Bruce might not have convinced the guy on the radio but he convinced me. I went up to Stevens Point, got the catalog, met the people in the Communications department, found out what it would take and sure enough, in the fall of 1986, I started – at the beginning. I had absolutely no credits to transfer. The Boise days amounted to not a credit to be found.

As a 31-year-old non-traditional student, I was welcomed into the college Republican committee by all these 18- and 19-year-old freshmen. That year, 1986, Tommy Thompson was running for Governor for the first time. I had known Tommy from my Farm Bureau days because he was a State Assemblyman from Elroy, Wis. I would meet him at Farm Bureau annual meetings and things like that. We helped elect Tommy Thompson.

NON-TRADITIONAL

I would take off at 8 o’clock in the morning and go to college, do my homework up there. By the time I was home at 4:30 or 5 in the afternoon I could spend time with Mary or Stephen, who was three years old.

So it was a very lucky situation. It was also ironic because as a non-traditional student you develop a work ethic, unlike at Boise. I used to send my grades home to Mom, all “As,” from UW-Stevens Point and she would say, “Why couldn’t you do that when we were paying for your education?”

Going to summer school and taking interim classes, I met my Communications degree after three years. I had taken all my classes. I had even

worked toward a minor in history. I told my advisor, “Well, I’m ready to graduate. I took care of all these classes that I was supposed to. Boom, boom, boom, right down the line.”

“Well, Phil,” he said, “it looks like you have a Communications degree but you don’t have enough credits to graduate.”

I spent my senior year taking all the fun classes. I took film history classes from Roger Bullis in the Communications department. I tutored. I had a blast. I graduated in 1990 and

it was a really big deal, really really nice.

All the Communications guys were my friends. I think I was one of the only students in the College of Communications that had a membership at the local country club. Having a Bull’s Eye membership allowed me reciprocal agreements at Stevens Point Country Club. I would take three of these instructors and do the golf carts and do lunch and do golf all on Phil. It didn’t hurt my GPA either.

ALLISON

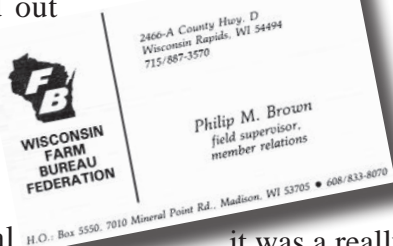
In 1990 when I graduated from college, Mary was pregnant with Allison, our second child. We were on pins and needles. She was due October 15th right in the middle of harvest.

Mary was progressing nicely with the pregnancy but in mid-August there were problems. Mary wasn’t getting very big and the baby was becoming inactive.

We called the Marshfield clinic and the nurse said, “Drink a tall glass of orange juice and

lay down on the couch for 20 minutes. If there is no movement of the baby, come up here immediately.”

Mary drank the thing, laid down on the couch for 20 minutes: no activity. We dashed right up to Marshfield.



Harvest 1979

Mary had experienced miscarriages between Stephen and Allison so we knew nothing was guaranteed. As it turns out, the umbilical cord was blocked so the baby was starving to death. At that point they scheduled an emergency c-section.

Approximately nine weeks early, little Allison was born on the 15th of August. She was 2 pounds 14 ounces and spent her first month up in the neonatal section at Marshfield clinic, St. Joseph's Hospital.

They called her a feeder and a grower. So she was responding well to the nutrition and growing normally. By the 15th of September, Mary said, "Harvest is starting soon and I have to have my daughter home."

Sure enough, Mary, Stephen, and I went up and took this class on how to tend to a premature baby. We had a little machine about the size of a book – and that was her heart and respirator monitor so if she stopped breathing, the monitor would sound.

Mary and I became two full-time parents for the first two years of Allison's life. Finally she came out of it and became a perfectly normal girl.



College graduate 1990

our careers and the different pace of lifestyle up in a big city versus the pace of life here in central Wisconsin. I knew I had finally arrived in as a lover of a small town when we were up visiting my family maybe eight or nine years after we had been living down here. We were up on Grand Avenue in St. Paul. It was a very, nice commercial street. Car dealers on it and drug stores and pizza places and grocery stores. It has become one of the hip parts of St. Paul and the Twin City area. Now we have

Gap and we have fine places where you can get lattes and fancy coffee drinks and boutique shopping and things like that.

We were up there in the mid to late '80s and the traffic was so heavy we were scared when we were crossing the street and I'm saying, "My god. What has this city come to? I was born and raised in this neighborhood and now I can't even cross the street safely."

So times have changed in the old neighborhood and we certainly became more comfortable in a small town like Wisconsin Rapids.

COLLECTING

BECOMING SMALL TOWN

So that was quite a traumatic time and it also focused on our family and our family business. I had responsibilities at the marsh but was afforded an opportunity to get involved in our local United Way and the board of the local Chamber of Commerce. I joined Rotary in the '80s. We started the Boys and Girls Club. Mary's mother, Virginia Brazeau was involved in a private foundation which eventually rolled into the Community Foundation.

Mary became very instrumental in the cranberry industry. Off the marsh, she was involved in the State Growers Association, and the Cranberry Marketing Committee.

If we had stayed up in the Twin Cities, we probably still would have been active but busy with

Collecting has always been a big part of my life. The first collection that I ever had was a bottle cap collection. In the good old days of St. Paul, we used to have a lot of corner grocery stores and a lot of people here in town remember the corner grocery stores in Wisconsin Rapids like Peterson's and Parson's. You'd go there for a bottle of pop and you would always open your bottle of pop and the cap would drop into a receptacle. I used to take my hand-me-down bike and go around and ask these grocery stores if I could have their bottle caps. I ended up with one of the best collections of bottle caps that you have ever seen.

"What are you going to do with these bottle caps?" my dad used to say.

Somebody said, "Well I've seen them used as boot scrapers."

Sure enough I took nails and a piece of board and I was able to pound my bottle caps into a thing and I think I ended up putting them out on the curb to be picked up by the garbage people.

I love baseball cards and we all collected them. For a nickel, you'd get a pack of cards and you'd get the bubble gum and you would buy, sell, trade with your friends. I got into collecting coins a little bit. That got to be too expensive of a hobby.

When I started smoking cigarettes in high school, I smoked Old Golds and they had coupons. So my friends starting smoking Old Golds and they would give me the coupons. Now you could redeem the coupons for gifts. They were kind of like S & H green stamps. I had so many people smoking Old Gold cigarettes and giving me the coupons that when it finally came to the time that I had enough coupons to get something I just couldn't part with them. I still have all the Old Gold coupons from my high school days. So collecting was a bug that I really developed at a young age.

I moved to Wisconsin Rapids in 1980 after we were married. It wasn't long after that, I want to

say about '85 or something like that, when I walked into Mrs. Fischer's Antique Shop where Gary's Coins is located now in the Mead-Witter building.

I was checking out the antiques and I came across a set of silverware that said "Daly Drug and Jewelry Company, Grand Rapids, Wisconsin."

I said, "Daly's?" We were friends with Pat and Kathy Daly and I was going to buy it and give it to them. It would be like finding something with Brown on it, kind of a special gift.

I asked, "Mrs. Fischer, where's Grand Rapids, Wisconsin?"

She preceded to tell me about Centralia, about Grand Rapids and how we became Wisconsin Rapids.

I was fascinated by that story. "You mean anything that has Grand Rapids written on it is from 1920 or earlier? That is really cool."

To say the least, I bought the thing from Mrs. Fischer. I still have them today. I did not give them to Pat and Kathy Daly and that was my first collectable of local memorabilia.

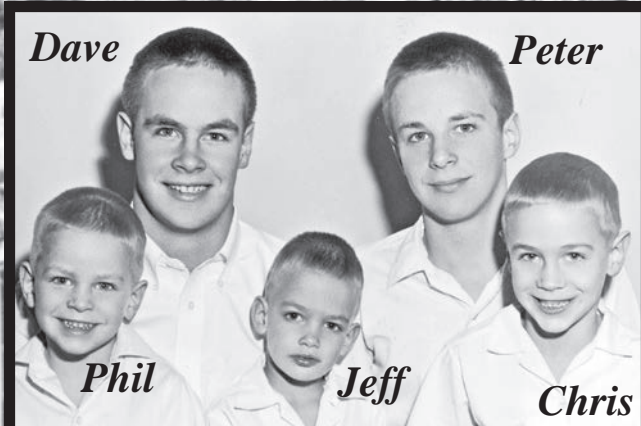


The Browns: Phil, Mary, Allison, Stephen

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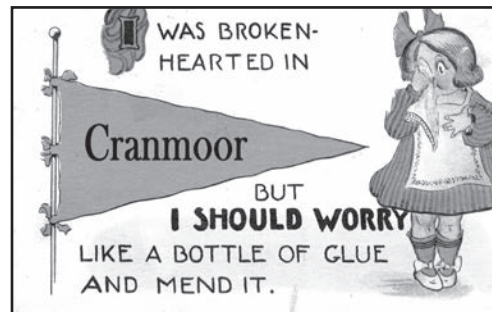
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*Postcards from
Phil Brown's Den of Antiquity
The Museum's
Featured exhibit for 2011*

*Two real cards, one fake.
Can you tell which?*

