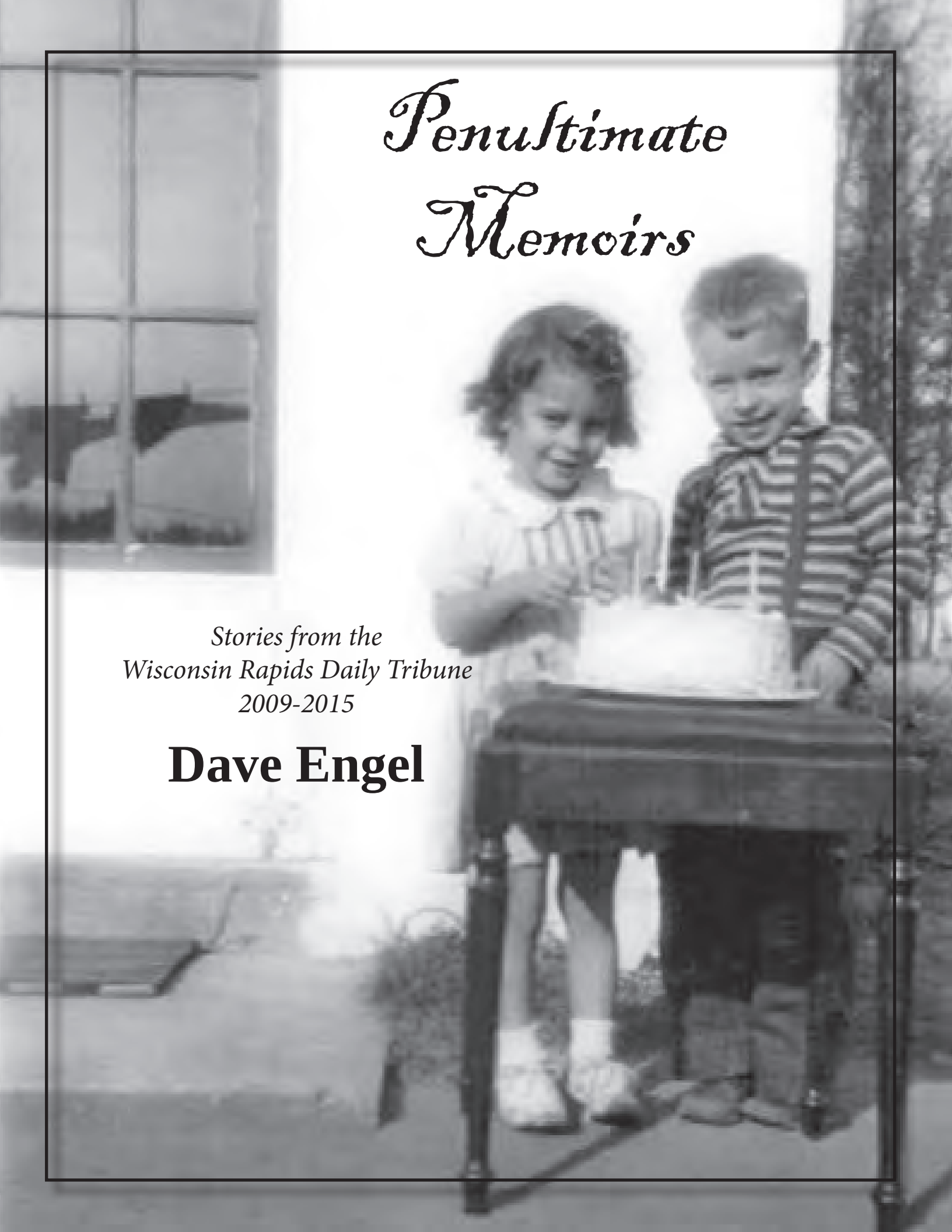
Penultimate Memoirs



Stories from the
Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune
2009-2015

Dave Engel

Penultimate Memoirs

Second-to-last of this series: *River City Memoirs* (1983); *River City Memoirs, Volume II* (1984); *RCMIII* (1985); *Age of Paper* (1986); *Home Mission: First Congregational, United Church of Christ* (1987); *The Fat Memoirs* (1988); *Shanagolden: An Industrial Romance* (1990); *River City Memoirs V* (1991); *Home Front: River City Memoirs VI* (1999); *Cranmoor: The Cranberry Eldorado* (2004); *Ghost of Myself: River City Memoirs VII* (2009); *Building for the Future: Mid-State Technical College* (2010).

The last, *Ultimate Memoirs,* will be a collection of *Daily Tribune* stories since 1980, currently unpublished in book form.

Wisconsin Rapids native commonly referred to as Uncle Dave has lived in the vicinity of Rudolph since 1972.

Director Emeritus and Archivist, South Wood County Historical Corp.; Publisher of *Artifacts,* SWCHC history magazine; *River City Memoirs* Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* columnist since 1980; Wisconsin Rapids City Historian since 1983; Founder, Historic Point Basse; Founder, Mid-State Poetry Towers.

Assisted by his wife Kathy, retired librarian, McMillan Memorial Library, Wisconsin Rapids, and Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools.

Printed on Verso Sterling Premium 80# Matte Text

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Penultimate Memoirs

Stories from the
Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune 2009-2015

By

Dave Engel

David Donald Engel (1945-), Gary Alan Engel (1950-), Donald August Engel (1918-91), Kenneth Kee Engel (1955-2007), Arline Emily “Sally” Engel (1920-99) Kathryn Sarah Engel (1946-88). White fence surrounding the Two Mile Avenue back yard marked wiffle ball home run. In flowers—ground rule double.

To Them

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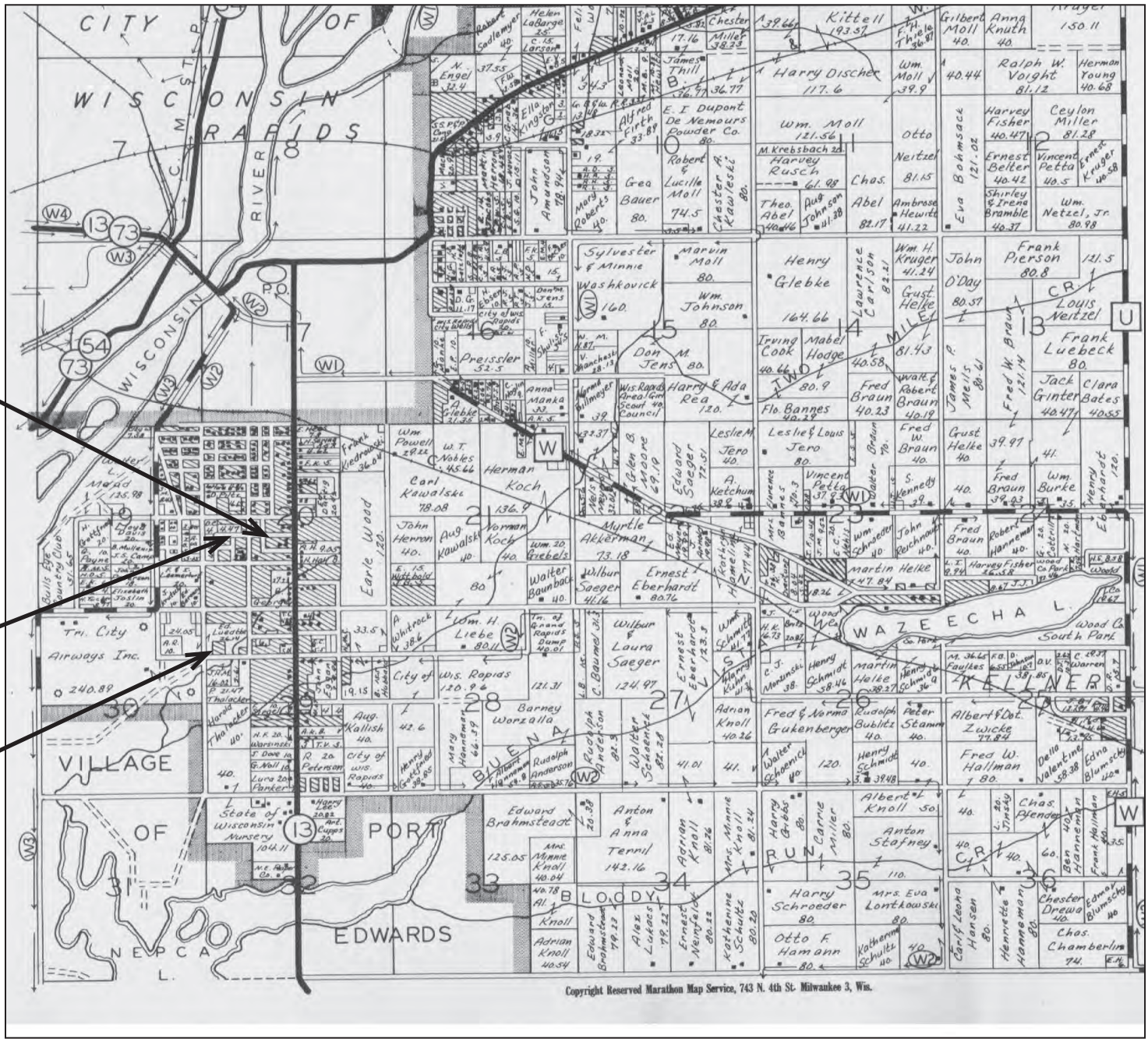
Town of Grand Rapids, 1896

Early view of "Sand Hill" and environs are marked by dotted line. Familiar names are Vaughan (farm by river), Neitzel, Daly, Webb, Giese, Spafford, Sampson, Snyder, Lutz, Brahmstadt, Herschleb, Hill, Wittrock, Hamm, McGrath. Four Mile Creek shown became Nepco Lake where it crosses Milwaukee Ave., now 8th Street/Highway 13. Two Mile school, surrounded by Stainbrook property, was a "state-graded" or country school when Uncle Dave attended in the 1950s. Most of the area in 1896 was undeveloped farm or woodland.



Subdivided, 1948

In 1945-46 the Don Engel family inhabited a second-floor apartment at 551 1/2 11th Ave. N. while Don was building the small concrete block house (#1) on Clyde Avenue, originally meant to become a garage. In 1950, having sold the block house, they moved further west on Clyde, across Lincoln Street (#2). The temporary home, owned by Stanley Trelka of Junction City, Wis., included a yard susceptible to flooding, an outhouse and inside, an oil burner known for its signature “poof poof” sound.

At the Two Mile house (#3), located in the Luedtke plat, sons Gary and Ken were born. After Don died in 1991, Arline (Sally) would live in the residence until her death in 1999, after which the house was sold.

The Village of Port Edwards has expanded into the area surrounding Nepco Lake, on a stream here called “Buena Vista,” also known as “Four Mile Creek.” At the time of this map, John Murgatroyd had not yet bought the Ridges golf course property.

Cub Scout with Pal, 1953

Penultimate Memoirs

If you know how Milladore got its name, you probably read the "penultimate" River City Memoirs column.

If this story you're reading is the "ultimate," or last in a series, the story just before it was the "penultimate," or second-to-last. Likewise, "Penultimate Memoirs" is the name of my next [this] book, signifying that it will be the second-to-last *River City Memoirs* book ever to be published.

To arrive at this septuagenarian juncture takes a lot of stories—since 1980, something over a thousand.

I've said it before and maybe too often—that the 1980s were days of glory for "River City" and for *River City Memoirs*. Then, local history articles somewhat like this appeared every week and often spanned whole pages through the forbearance of publisher-owner William F. Huffman Jr. and the editor who hired me, Joe Karius.

When Huffman sold the *Tribune* to the Thomson newspaper chain in 1983, the status of RCM was still on the rise under editor Bob "Kahuna" Des Jarlais. The next editor, Bob "Shots" Walker, relieved me of photographic duties in favor of exclusively pursuing the history beat.

Also in the prodigious Eighties, there was a semblance of community recognition when Rapids mayor James "Kubie" Kubisiak recognized me as the first and only City Historian; Historic Point Basse was founded; I actually made public appearances; and I became the first director of the South Wood County Historical Corp.

But every Narcissus needs a Nemesis and one appeared, a *Tribune* editor who yearned to deep-six me and finally succeeded, after a famously controversial tribute to the Nimrod in us, dubbed, "Got'm!" The editor, since relocated to corporate communication, found references to the Biblical Nimrod and statements like "Every Narcissus needs a Nemesis" incomprehensible, in a bad way.

Now it seems like only yesterday that then-editor of the (since-2000) Gannett-owned *Daily Tribune*, Mark Treinen, asked me to resume contributing. That was 15 years ago.

Continuing editor-wise, I was glad to indulge in brat-eating contests at Rafters games with Treinen's successor, Allen Hicks. More recently, Robert Mentzer, as my *Tribune* contact, kept me in the game through his enlightened interest.

Then there are the books. Beginning in 1983, with intermittent subsidies mainly from Dan "Philleo" Meyer of the Consolidated Papers foundation, I tried to publish one every year.

The first, referred to as "Volume I," was originally a 1,000-print run that sold out quickly, never mind the pages falling out.

The effort was furthered by B. Dalton, a bookstore in Rapids Mall that ordered by the boxful, cutting their profit discount in half for local publishers and paying in cash. At the same time, ladies of the Riverview hospital auxiliary and South Wood County Historical Corp. pitched in to help sell out a second printing of another thousand.

Now it has been more than six years since the latest collection, "Ghost of Myself: River City Memoirs VII, published by subscription in 2009.

The ultimate Memoirs will be a collection of historical material previously published in the *Tribune* that hasn't yet made it into a book. Second-to-last? That would be this year's "Penultimate Memoirs," aka *River City Memoirs Volume VIII*.

These and other topics will be covered in "Penultimate Memoirs:

Several 50-years-ago looks back in time, begun in 1989; Twins manager Charlie Manuel; Arnie Strope and WFHR; Dr. Robinson and Robinson Park; the word Ahdawagam; Lincoln field house; Consolidated papers; Witter vocational school; George Mead's mother; Bernard Gilardi; Masons; Civil War; last train to Rudolph;

Two Mile School; 32nd Division; Centralia; Buffalo Bill; John Rablin, pioneer; Neal Smith and Marilyn Monroe; John Edwards Jr., draft dodger; Fritz Peerenbohm, Nite Owl;

Don Krohn, photographer; Roberson Players; Dan Rezin and U.S. Grant; W.C. Handy and Grim Natwick;

Happy Felsch, baseball's Black Sock; Mark Scarborough, journalist; Bill Thiele, classmate; Johanna Kellogg, beautification;

Ellen Sabetta, curator; Terry Stake, WFHR; the Beatles; Dorothy Karberg's book; Callie Nason, mill manager; Wilmer, my last uncle; Native American WWI volunteers; Rapids Indian Agency; peyote gone bad; Bill Granger, author.

Founders

From my South Wood County Historical Museum office, concealed behind the door marked "Anthrax Storage," I like to time-travel back to when there was no SWCHM and the same space was an office in the local library.

Back in 1955, a team of muscular volunteers suited up for the history game. Fittingly, and because of their efforts, well-preserved documents in my file tell the story with a precision that cannot be matched by memory alone.

On March 30, 1955, Edith M. Dudgeon, "librarian," wrote on T. B. Scott Public Library letterhead to banker W.J. Taylor, 611 Witter St., that Don McNeil of the State Historical Society had stopped at the library following his talk "at [male only] Rotary" and told Dudgeon of tentative plans to organize a local historical society. Dudgeon said she was ready and eager to assist.

The following summer, Theodore W. Brazeau, from his law firm in the Mead-Witter building, wrote to Estella Farrish, the block manager. A representative of the state group was to meet with local organizers of the "Tri-City Historical Society" on July 15; Mrs. Farrish had been chosen to be a charter member.

Out went a notice of an incorporators' meeting Friday, Dec. 23, at the Brazeau offices. A charter for the organization had already arrived.

A few days later, Estella, "Mrs. John Farrish," 440 East Grand Ave., wrote to the Marshfield historical society, whose address she had found on a flyer at Villa Louis, the Prairie du Chien historical site. She wanted to know how much Marshfield charged members for dues and how to issue a membership ticket.

At the Rapids meeting, policies and rules were set down regarding membership, board of directors and committees. Members would be solicited at a public meeting in September; officers would be elected; and Taylor would report the result to the *Tribune*.

The first board of directors were:

From Rapids: Theo. Brazeau, W. J. Taylor, Estella H. Farrish, Hazel Gemberling, Carl Otto, Dr. F.X. Pomainville, Martin Lipke, Dr. Leland Pomainville. From Biron, Warren Beadle. Port Edwards: Clarence A. Jasperson, Marshall Buehler, Dr. T.A. Pasco. Nekoosa: Fern Ross Amundson.

William Scherek of the state society offered suggestions: a regular column in "the newspaper," radio programs and tape recordings of interviews for which SHSW could furnish a recorder. It was further urged that manuscripts, maps, old newspapers and photographs be solicited.

Topics chosen by board members in November 1956:

Mound Builders and Indians, Fern Ross Amundson. (Ross Lake Mounds make up our most famous archaeological site.)

Schools, Hazel Gemberling.

Lumbering and Nekoosa, Martin Lipke. (His work on the Wakelys and similar topics was seminal.)

Railroads and Port Edwards, Marshall Buehler. (He published several books and continues on the board of SWCHC.)

Paper making, Clarence Jasperson and Dr. T.A. Pascoe. (Jasperson's great-grandson [2009] serves on the SWCHC board.)

Topography, Dr. Leland Pomainville.

Topography, "Crowns" (no doubt Byron Crowns, whose *Wisconsin Through Five Billion Years of Change* remains a fundamental text.)

History of Medicine and Surgery, Dr. F.X. Pomainville and [his twin] Dr. Leland Pomainville. (Leland was the "Mr. History" who welcomed me into the SWCHC in the early 1980s.)

The courts, Theodore Brazeau. (He was the grandfather of SWCHC board member Nicholas J. Brazeau, whose stentorian baritone continues to influence historiography here.)

Newspapers and War History, Carl Otto. (The editor of the *Daily Tribune* was a WWII veteran.)

Banking, W.J. Taylor.

Roads, Dr. Peltier. (George's "green book" about the cranberry industry laid the foundation for the awesome tome, *Cranmoor: Cranberry Eldorado*, made possible by current SWCHC president, Phil Brown.)

Family histories. Rablin by Clara Rablin Nelson. Brazeau by Addie (Brazeau) Canning. Baker by Elizabeth Philleo. Hasbrouck by Ella J. Hasbrouck. Whittlesey by C. Jasperson.

Wisconsin River, by architect L.A. De Guere.

Roads, sawmills, lumbering, schools, churches, agriculture, cranberries, dairying, settlements in Wood County, war history, prehistoric times, ancient villages, Indians, French—ambitious basic topics of history here.

January 17, 2009

Everybody's

A simple note on a dimly-lit kitchen table in a typical ranch house on the edge of our little Wisconsin town: "Went to Chicago."

It was the mid-1960s. I had just left Buzz's Bar and was waiting for Mouse Hanson (not his real name) to pick me up in what was probably his playful 1950ish red Plymouth convertible.

Besides Mouse and me, on board was "Ebbie," and maybe one more guy, could have been Zeke, Zero, Nuhly, Whitey, Blackie, Blondie, Red, Hackersmith, Swede, Skee, Shorty, Slim, Nutsy, Zimmy, Butch, Pee Wee, Pickles or Butts.

As we drove, we probably shouted along to the radio, e.g. the Animals' "We gotta get outa this place," or Mr. Tambourine Man's, "Hey Mr. Tambourine Man." Or just as likely, some of us slept most of the way.

We arrived in Chicago after sunrise and Mouse decided to look up some relatives in order to help justify to his parents his midnight ride.

After a tedious drive around the maze of identical neighborhoods, he parked at a selected bungalow and told us to stay in the car. *So this is how they live here in the city*, I thought, and tried to get some shuteye.

Around mid-morning, we found our way downtown to the Loop and a street we thought had known better days but now boasted a Bohemia of beggars, bums, Beats and buskers.

Actually, no buskers.

And there were us. Like so many boys from River City, wanting to be bad, we found our way to a dream-come-true, a burlesque parlor "strip joint." Definitely out of touch on the faraway stage, paraded a series of well-rounded females, who teasingly removed their garments. At the end, they twirled tasseled "pasties" and marched off.

It was less sexy than we had hoped, feeling rather furtive and fatigued in grungy theater seats, keeping company with derelicts wearing real and figurative trench coats and pulling their own Pee Wee Hermans. But we were happy to have accomplished a high number on our teenage bucket list.

Too young to get served in Illinois bars, we headed out, perhaps in late afternoon.

Only to come to an abrupt halt. We had run into a police barricade and had to watch the procession pass by. Turns out, our inconvenience was history being made, a history very much unlike that being created by us wiseacre north country honky punks.

History was dignified. It was resolute. It was dedicated to a higher cause. History was on a mission, heroic, regardless of disapproval and danger, frowns and kicks, bullwhips and shotguns, Jim Crow and Jack Daniels.

History had a dream, that one day all persons would be as they presumably had been created: equal.

History was a parade of mostly African-Americans who, at the time, were called and called themselves "Negroes."

We had a laugh as we waited at the crossroads to be on our way.

"Oh, it's a civil rights march."

I had read about demonstrations taking place across the densely-settled areas of the U.S., but didn't expect to come face to face with one.

I don't know exactly what event we saw; but I thought and still like to think that I had seen Rev. Martin Luther King Jr. himself, leading the way to an oracular promised land.

Following the drinking gourd north, we stopped for one of Milwaukee's finest in a quiet bar accepting of minors. But we were tired and had miles to go back up to meet the dawn in lily-white River City.

It wasn't more than a year or two later, back at Chicago, that I boarded the Union Pacific passenger train headed for college at Laramie, Wyo., to study America. In the lounge adjacent to the coach car's rest room, I laughed and joked all night with an African-American disk jockey from Detroit on his way to California and felt pretty good about both of us.

On my first night in Laramie, I headed for the Buffalo Bar, where I met a black former linebacker for the University of Wyoming, then a football power.

With the linebacker as escort, I found my way to West Laramie, on the Latino side of the tracks, and was invited into a clandestine public house that served drinks for a fee all night. It was run by African-Americans and was called, "Everybody's."

But that night soon seemed like a dream as, after numerous closing times at the Buffalo, Cowboy or Fireside Lounge, I drove around to West Laramie, looking for Everybody's, the joint that never closed, but, to my astonishment, never finding it again.

My Civil War Soldier

First memory I can put a date on: as my mother holds me up to look at her grandmother dead in the coffin, I say, "Can I touch?" and Mom nods, so I put my stubby soft finger on the hard face of fate: cold. It was March 1951.

She was my great-grandmother, Emily Wurl Thiel, born in 1861, just before the Civil War. Now I realize that, to be connected to that ancient consternation, either Grandma Thiel was extremely old; or I am; or maybe both.

The Un-Civil War Between the States might be the worst event ever to happen to this country. More of our people were damaged; more of our property was devastated; and more of our hopes dashed than at any other comparable time.

Though remote from any battlefield, even our Pinery society here was put on the back burner mid-1860s, while a large proportion of the young men either headed for the hills to avoid the draft or enlisted in what at first could seem like an adventure-in-waiting. Got pretty quiet along the Wisconsin, absent lumberjacks, log drivers and sawmill operators, not to mention Water Street drunks and brawlers. Along with similar projects, the big dam at Nekoosa, already under construction, was canceled. The Rapids newspaper office closed as the editor went off to fill his abolitionist promise. Families waved farewell and waited for the infrequent letter to come from the field. "Please say you're alive"—or *were* alive, a couple months past, when the words were put together by firelight in a faraway wilderness.

My great-Grandma Thiel, the little lady in the coffin, who was at the time of the Civil War little Emily Wurl, never had a chance to know her father much, the soldier who was my great-great-grandfather.

He was Ludwig Wurl, born 1823 in Prussia, and come to America` with his brother, Christian Frederick Wurl, about 1851. Like so many German immigrants, Ludwig was said to have had an excellent education. Again, like others of his ilk in the old country, he worked for the government, as a "clerk."

Ludwig's early peregrinations brought him first to Tennessee, then to Dodge County, Wis., and finally to the township of Ellington in Outagamie County, where he purchased the usual 80 acres. He cleared the timber in 1858, the same year he married the mellifluous Wilhelmine Schultz.

Ludwig was fond of hunting and an excellent marksman, so they say—sporting qualities that may have served him well when he enlisted in Co. F of the First Wisconsin Cavalry in 1864. Honorably discharged not long before his unit was disbanded, Ludwig, 41, died of illness on board the hospital ship Jennie Hopkins, July 4, 1865.

You would think that his 31-year-old widow would have suffered miserably and struggled to survive, but a later account said she "displayed much business tact in managing the affairs of the farm to yield them [her family] a comfortable income."

The family consisted of two girls, Welmie (Velma) and Amelia (Emily, my great-grandmother) and the boy, Louis, born in 1859. He was five years old when his father left for the Civil War.

By the time Louis Wurl died in 1940 at 80 years of age, he had been town chairman, assessor, Outagamie County Board chairman and county sheriff. Appleton *Post-Crescent* news clips from the 1920s note that he arrived in New London to arrest a woman accused of poisoning her husband and, at another time, returned from the Keweenaw Copper Country of Michigan with "a prisoner sought since 1894."

Louis' mother, Wilhelmine, did not remarry. She died in 1923 at age 90, having outlived her husband, Ludwig, by 58 years. Her death came at the Seymour, Wis., home of her daughter, "Mrs. John Thiel,"—Emily, the same old lady I told you I touched after she died.

There is a military cemetery in Quincy, Ill., on the Mississippi River, down by St. Louis. There, I have photographed a couple batches of young girls, my daughters, at the plain white headstone.

"Your great-great-great-grandfather," the same Ludwig Wurl, who, according to the military, had enlisted Sept. 8, 1864, and died within the year. He had been carried off the hospital ship and buried at the closest convenient location.

If it were far from the home where his family went on without him to live life after long life, so be it. As the old Krauts may have put it, *Ruhe in Frieden tapfere Soldat!*

February 11, 2009

Democrat Landslide 1958

A familiar formula. Voters anxious for change, any kind of change. A repudiation of the incumbent Republicans, landslide for the new guys. Not since Hoover seemed to fiddle at the onset of the Great Depression and Franklin D. Roosevelt was elected in 1932, had the Democratic Party done so well.

It was the non-Presidential election of 1958, and the Democrats were looking at 60 or more Senators and a similar proportion in the House of Representatives.

World War II general and U.S. President Dwight D. Eisenhower would be faced by a record third Congress controlled by the opposite party—as the public and pundits seemed to like it.

In classic Republican fashion, Eisenhower interpreted the 1958 vote as an endorsement for increased federal spending, a dangerous trend he determined to fight. At the same time, "Ike" said he had always managed to get along pretty well with Congress and was confident that Democrats as well as Republicans were motivated by what was good for the country.

Because Eisenhower would be out of office in two years and was approaching retirement, it was believed that Vice President Richard Nixon would be the one to take charge of "rejuvenating the disorganized Republican party."

According to a *Daily Tribune* editorial, the Republican party had lost ground in each election since its resurgence in 1952. The *Milwaukee Journal* said there was not much difference between the two parties but "the people" were anxious for change.

Benefiting from the Democratic trend was Illinois native William Proxmire, the first Democratic Senator elected in Wisconsin since 1932. He had won a special election to replace Republican Joseph McCarthy and had just defeated Roland J. Steinle in November 1958.

"Riding the crest" with Proxmire was State Sen. Gaylord Nelson of Madison who became the first Democratic governor since 1932 by defeating incumbent Vernon W. Thomson.

Nelson was an attorney from Clear Lake, Wis., and a state Senator for 10 years. He conducted a campaign much like Proxmire's, traveling almost nonstop on handshaking and speaking trips, during which he contended Republicans had mismanaged state affairs.

The only state Republican office holder "to stand against the surge" was Secretary of State Robert C. Zimmerman, who was following the lead of his father, Fred Zimmerman, former governor and secretary of state.

Two important Wood County residents also emerged victorious. Marshfield's Melvin R. Laird, a Republican, was elected to a fourth term in the House of Representatives. Laird defeated Gresham attorney Kenneth Traeger with 60 percent of votes, losing only Portage County.

The closest race was for lieutenant governor, in which incumbent Republican Lt. Gov. Warren P. Knowles was defeated by Philleo Nash, a White House aide under former President Truman. Nash was former Wisconsin state party chairman and a Wisconsin Rapids cranberry grower. In an interview during the campaign, Nash called campaigning, "gratifying and exhilarating." He said it was his first try for public office but that he had experienced politics during World War II as a research specialist in the analysis of racial tensions with the Office of War Information under Roosevelt's administration and later in Truman's.

Nash said his most memorable occasion was viewing President Truman's 1948 speech on civil rights to a crowd of 75,000 in Harlem, the first time a President had ever delivered a speech there.

On the local level, Arthur H. Treutel, Wisconsin Rapids, became the first Democratic assemblyman to be chosen from this county in 46 years, defeating incumbent Arthur J. Crowns, Jr. who was seeking a third term. The Republicans won all other contests for county offices.

Treutel, 61, a Wausau native, had been in the insurance business here from 1932-1955 when he lost his eyesight and sold his agency. Later he completed the occupational therapy course at the Minneapolis School for the Blind.

In the election year of 1958, I was 13 and in eighth grade at Grove School. To me, the most important ballot result was the vote of the town of Grand Rapids, to retain the office of constable rather than to establish a police force.

Had the constable's function been abolished, where would I have found a market for chipmunks? As longtime readers know, in the "Got'm" '50s, the nickel per rodent bounty kept me well supplied with packs of BBs for the next brave safari into Swamp Valley.

February 25, 2009

Recession 1958

Industrial production? Down.

Unemployment? Up, to the highest level since the beginning of World War II.

Imports? High, causing an alarming deficit in the balance of payments.

Defense spending? Huge.

Consumer spending? Down. U.S. auto sales off 30 percent from the previous year and unemployment in Detroit at 20 percent.

Business failures? Up, dramatically.

When? Fifty years ago.

In 1958-59, what to do about the "Eisenhower recession?"

Public pressure for the Federal government to "do something" increased daily. True to type, Democrats wanted increased public expenditures like the New Deal of FDR and the Republicans wanted tax cuts.

Here in River City, our three major industries, Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. and Preway, a maker of appliances, were riding out the storm in relatively good shape.

Consolidated

The paper company with world headquarters in downtown Wisconsin Rapids was meeting the challenges of stiff competition in a recession year, according to vice president Ira F. Boyce, who said sales would exceed 1957's record 71 million by 9 percent.

Though Consolidated was selling more paper than ever before, it was operating below capacity, having just built a big new paper machine at Biron; so shifts had to be cut as if there had been a loss of sales. It seemed everyone in the industry was increasing production to make up for lower prices through volume.

Because of the recession, magazine advertising had declined, meaning fewer pages printed. And, wages were up. Boyce said Consolidated had faced the need in advance to sell the production of the Biron machine, through aggressive selling, and running on Sunday, which cushioned the 1958 fall.

Perhaps surprisingly, Consolidated's offspring, Consoweld, "operated contrary to national trends in the plastic laminate business" with volume up over 40 percent from 1957 to 1958.

Nekoosa-Edwards

Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co., with world headquarters in Port Edwards, was also coping better than many competitors with similar problems.

"Nekoosa" had record annual sales of $39 million in a year of stable employment, according to John E. Alexander, president and general manager. However, the "profit squeeze" and the higher costs of labor, raw materials and freight, added up to a 17 percent drop in earnings. Also lowering profits were expenditures required to modernize the company's Potsdam, N.Y., plant, to which a paper machine had been moved from Nekoosa.

The labor force, said Alexander, was stable at 2,200, including Potsdam. In fact, Nekoosa had hired 46 students to work during the summer. Like Boyce of Consolidated, Alexander saw aggressive merchandising as the key to success.

Preway

The appliance manufacturing company formerly known as Prentiss-Wabers was represented by J.O. Ellis, president, who said record sales and high profits of 1957 were not matched in 1958. Even so, at about $12 million in sales, Preway experienced its second highest year ever. To match extra-high numbers of 1957 would require the replacement of "non-recurring government business," such as expired military contracts, while a "decrease in business tempo" made it impossible to stay at that high level.

The company had paid off notes of $600,000 and was refinancing with Mutual Benefit Life Insurance Co. of Newark, N.J., for $800,000.

No additions were in place to the product line though it was announced that a dishwasher bearing the Preway name would be distributed in the near future, completing the "kitchen package" of gas and electric ovens and surface units, refrigerator-freezers, cabinets and cookstove ventilating hoods. The mobile home industry continued to be an important customer for Preway including a small travel trailer that had recently introduced a built-in oven and a surface unit.

In 1958, said Ellis, came the death of L.J. Plenke, vice president in charge of production and labor relations. Receiving management-level promotions were Wesley Snyder, Glen Yeager, Harold Sultze and Harold Akey.

Familiar names all, lucky to be associated with three big locally-owned companies, in a worse than average year, still doing pretty well for their community.

River City by the Centuries

Summary attached to North Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission plan.

River City: Extractive 1800s

In the early 19th Century, Grand Rapids, predecessor of Wisconsin Rapids, was well positioned. Here, canoe travel on the Wisconsin river was interrupted for a portage, making it a good place for commerce to begin.

With the organization of Wisconsin Territory in 1836, lumbermen built sawmills and sent rafts of boards and shingles downstream to market. Soon, hardwoods and less-marketable conifers replaced the depleted white pine as a raw material for pulp mills and wood products manufacturers. Flour mills and a brewery also took their place along the "hardest working river."

The villages of Grand Rapids on the east bank and Centralia on the west closely imitated the homes from which their founders came, notably in upstate New York. In the adjoining acreages, immigrants who followed, some directly from northern Europe, established full or part-time dairy farms, especially north of the river. In the southwest bogs, commercial growing of cranberries burned out and was reestablished late in the 19th century.

Paper City: Industrial 1900s

In 1900, Grand Rapids and Centralia merged as "Grand Rapids," changed in 1920 to "Wisconsin Rapids." Sawmills and relatively-new pulp mills were complemented by paper mills and the headquarters of Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., for several decades the world's leading producer of enamel-coated printing paper.

South on the Wisconsin was Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co., headquartered at Port Edwards with a similar mill at Nekoosa. For the most part, Nepco was, like Consolidated, locally owned and operated.

Numerous smaller manufacturers were not dependent on a riverside location. "Consoweld" combined paper and resin in countertop laminate and "Preway" made stoves and other appliances. At the east end of the Consolidated dam, Sampson's canning company occupied the old Lutz brewery.

Largely because of its industrial base, Wisconsin Rapids became a hub for four railroads and two trucking firms: Central Wisconsin Transport and Gross Bros. Shoppers supported a busy downtown on West Grand Avenue and the East Bank. The local department store, Johnson Hills, expanded into other cities. There were three movie theaters and an "outdoor" on south Highway 13. Headlining a long list of taverns and restaurants were Wilbern's on Eighth Street South and Hotel Mead on Grand Avenue. In mid-century, the 1931 Lincoln field house was second only to that at the University of Wisconsin and the 1970 McMillan Memorial Library stood as a monument to culture.

A full complement of Protestant and Catholic churches was established and, for a short time, a Jewish synagogue.

Grand Mall: Post-Industrial New Millennium

Being "River City" ain't what it used to be. No longer a transportation hub, the area has been bypassed by several major highways. In the 1980s, Preway, Consoweld and both trucking companies closed. As Consolidated and Nepco were absorbed into multinational companies, main offices were eliminated, employment reduced and the Port Edwards mill was shut down.

Meanwhile, commerce moved from "downtown" along the river to the nearby enclosed Rapids Mall and further, to the "Eighth Street" strip, both competing with the more robust developments at Plover and Stevens Point, 15 miles to the east.

Despite economic setbacks, Wisconsin Rapids, seat of Wood County, continues to be [2009] above-average in its schools, cultural centers, historical societies, civic organizations and city government and is the unofficial world headquarters of cranberries. In step with the times are Renaissance Learning, an educational software developer, and Solarus, the local telephone company-become-digital provider. NewPage and Domtar continue to employ significant labor forces at their local paper mills.

Benefiting from the legacy of 20th Century prosperity, the Community Foundation of South Wood County focuses on supporting entrepreneurial reinvention while the Mead-Witter Foundation operates a new papermaking museum.

After two centuries worth bragging about, the rest of the third may depend, not on geography, but on intangibles such as innovation, perseverance, luck and the quality of persons who want to continue to live here.

April 2009

Tribune 1959

You lose your good job for one that comes with low pay, weekend work and no benefits. That would be me coming to the *Daily Tribune.*

As a former English instructor, it was time to practice what I had teached. My experience with journalism was limited to reading it and, as a paper boy, delivering the Sunday *Milwaukee Journal*, then about the size and weight of a dead otter.

When I visited with *Tribune* editor Joe Karius in 1980, the squarish-half of the building held printing press, backshop and darkroom. In the "round part" were the WFHR radio station and the *Tribune* circulation department on the first floor and the *Tribune* ad and editorial departments on the second.

It was busy and exciting, but soon I learned the paper was navigating a bit of stormy weather. Cash-flow had been disrupted when publisher William F. Huffman Jr., whose family had owned the *Tribune* since 1920, supported a bottle-return bill; in response, local supermarkets refused to buy ad space. At the same time, a new competitor had taken up quarters across the river: the free "advertiser," with cheaper rates for ads and no news copy.

"Young Bill" Huffman proved a stiff and enigmatic figure who slipped through the newsroom around 4 p.m. on his way to his office, from which he did not emerge until everyone else had gone. When I wanted to communicate, I slipped a note under his door.

The staff had already learned to use computers by the time photographer Craig Felts proudly showed me the new digital camera. "But there are no negatives," I worried.

Today, the *River City Memoirs* "50-years-ago" timeline revisits 1959 when the building still housing the *Tribune* [2010] was under construction.

The old quarters up the street had been vacated. WFHR office and broadcast facilities and the joint WFHR-*Tribune* business office were operating out of a temporary location in a former apartment house adjacent to the present site and to Krohn-Berard-Ritchay funeral home.

Even as new *Tribune* headquarters was being completed, a threat greater than grocer infidelity had reared its ugly antennae: television. Would this big box medium lead to "the sad day" when newsboys and newsstands would have no papers to deliver or sell, as had happened during recent labor strikes elsewhere?

And could other media fill the gap? According to the 1959 *Tribune*:

•Radio cannot illustrate the day's news.

•TV is impractical on the bus or train to and from work.

•Neither radio or TV furnish a "memorable printed record for study or comparison."

•Magazines miss the spontaneity of a fast-breaking story.

"Your newspaper reports and interprets current issues. It keeps you aware of matters that affect your job, health and safety, children's education and future. It helps make your community a better place in which to live, work and play. It relaxes and entertains you in a score of ways. And, most important, your newspaper guards your freedoms."

Through the years, the *Tribune* and WFHR had been "fortunate in growing with the fine Central Wisconsin communities which we serve.

"Undertaking this large project demonstrates the faith we have in the future of the South Wood County area," Huffman, secretary of the Tribune and WFHR companies, had said, when he announced the start of the new building.

"Equally important, we earnestly desire to improve the newspaper and radio 'products' we deliver. Thus, we may better inform our fellow citizens of events in our own progressive communities, in the great nation of which we are a part and in the world beyond.

"Mankind is still pioneering on the unknown frontiers of the world in which we live, and even now is beginning to explore past the limits of this terrestrial globe into the vast reaches of space.

"Through it all, we also earnestly desire to provide with newspaper and radio the leaven of entertainment which gives balance to our reporting of the exciting and ever-changing times."

I joined the *Daily Tribune* out of necessity; but now, after three decades of publishers, editors (including Allen Hicks, a favorite) and deadlines (like this one, met at the 11th hour), to compose "a memorable printed record for study or comparison" remains a unique privilege.

Creeping Charlie

Though you had to appreciate him, Big Daddy wasn't perfect. The old guy could be smug, controlling, paternalistic and he sometimes smelled like rotten eggs. But in his middle years, he became, like your own Uncle Dave, increasingly avuncular. Now that he's gone, we see how much we owed to him.

The other day, I showed Isherwood, the homely Plover philosopher, the neighborhood in which I "grew up."

"I have to revise my whole idea of you," Isherwood remarked. "I thought you were just another city kid." No, I was an edge-of-town kid.

To the north were people and "downtown." South, across Two Mile Avenue from my former home, was nature: not only Murgatroyd's famous pond but many square miles of picturesque woodlands.

For this personal preserve, thanks go to Big Daddy. For all those years, he was monarch of these woods, streams and lakes, just as he owned, at Nekoosa, Port Edwards, Wisconsin Rapids and Biron, the dams and factories whose distant smokestacks towered at intervals and emitted great white clouds of…mostly steam, or so they said.

Big Daddy was "the paper mill." Big Daddy was Nekoosa Edwards Paper Co. and Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. He was a shadow DNR controlling huge tracts of forest all over Wisconsin's "up north."

Big Daddy. If I seem beholdin' to "the man," maybe it's because I'm naturally obsequious.

Or maybe because my family owed its living to my dad's paper mill job; the excellence of my high school was due to the paper mill; a couple of my books were subsidized by paper mill grants; and the nonprofit institution in which I maintain an office owes its existence to paper mill money.

But Big Daddy had his own reasons for keeping the woods safe from democracy. Secondarily, he didn't want trouble, so he preferred to keep other owners at a distance. Primarily, he wanted to grow trees, the raw material of paper, which meant he periodically harvested the best and brightest in what some called the "cathedral of pines."

The intrusions were real-world reminders that one must resist the temptation to call "the woods" a paradise, though they were my private Idaho, where a kid could leave the political junk of boyhood behind to follow real Indian trails to the primordial "Swamp Valley," where the One Mile creek and the Two Mile joined their lazy meanders to Nepco Lake.

"The airport" at Two Mile Avenue and First Street South, by contrast, was a playground of historic decrepitude. Its emblem was the ancient windsock tattered and blowing in the wind. Not long before, at the end of World War II, the property, in the midst of paper mill lands and built to serve the industry, had hosted a POW camp for captured German soldiers. In the 1950s, it played host to nighttime rituals that left its pavements littered with cigarette butts, broken bottles and unmentionables.

What a blessing that Big Daddy owned so many acres for so long and kept them as free country for young Crocketts and Boones like me and my pals. How unusual, I told Isherwood as we drove narrow and winding Nepco Lake road, that, although next door to Eighth Street, Swamp Valley is still pretty much unspoiled [2009—spoiled by 2015].

Lamenting good old things gone is the lot of the socially-engaged commentator. A few years ago, I was forced, as budding city historian, to chronicle the razing of one old building after another.

The aftermath of the sale of lands by the paper mills may be the occasion to weep for the woods. For the moment, however, I prefer to resort to a complicated, and perhaps baffling, scientific analogy.

Do you know the weed, Creeping Charlie?

It's out now, the pretty little devil with purple flowers that they're always harping about on public radio. It came with our European ancestors. Charlie, aka ground ivy, is a perennial weed and an aggressive one. It has invaded the South Wood County Historical Museum lawn and my own town of Rudolph property.

Charlie acts like we do, historically. After establishing a foothold (settlers), crushing opposition (indigenous peoples) and building a stable mass (downtown), Charlie will abandon its center (Grand Avenue) and move outward (Eighth Street), before moving outwards again (new Highway 54 to Plover).

With Big Daddy (paper mill) out of the way, Creeping Charlie (land developer) is flexing his rhizomes for the invasion (subdivision) of Swamp Valley. Thus humans, like Charlie, attempt to imbue every patch of vacant land with our spicy fragrance.

June 2009

Thinking Big 1959

Seemed like a lot of bad news. As spring turned to summer 1959, I "graduated" from 8th grade at Grove school and, meanwhile, the little people were up to their tricks.

Consequently, a 30-year-old woman from south of Seneca Corners was in poor condition at St. Joseph's Hospital, Marshfield, after being clubbed in the head with a .30 caliber deer rifle as she was sleeping. Her brother-in-law, a guest in the house, who had recently been released from jail for drunkenness and traffic violations, did it, while her husband worked at Sanna Dairies, Vesper.

Another Vesper man and a Stanley couple died near the south edge of the Nepco Lake bridge on Highway 13, after, Sheriff Tom Forsyth and Traffic Officer Dave Sharkey concluded, the Vesper man attempted to turn his car around on the highway and the crash occurred.

A Nekoosa man was killed when an auto driven by his wife at a high rate of speed went out of control and rolled end for end, coming to rest on its top in two feet of water east of Babcock. The force of the crash may have caused the pile of junk stuffed in the back seat to shift forward and pin the victim in the front seat.

A rural Wisconsin Rapids boy, 16, shot and killed his 14-year-old sister as she slept in a chair because he feared she would reveal his earlier sexual assault. The jury was sequestered in the sheriff's quarters above the jail in the courthouse, a six-room apartment which sheriff Forsyth was not using. The prosecutor was district attorney Morgan Midthun, assisted by attorney John Potter. A defense was provided by Leon Schmidt Sr.

Judge Herbert A. Bunde said he had no sympathy for the murderer and sentenced him to 25 years in the state prison at Waupun, a term that would have ended 25 years ago when the man was 41.

(Note that we don't have time today to get far into the "dangerous and demoralizing situation" that Justice of the Peace Robert J. Magirl charged was the product of the Wisconsin Rapids police department and chief R.J. Exner.)

Donald Nystrom, 17, testified at a public hearing of the police and fire commission in the Wood County Courthouse auditorium that, during the winter of 1955-56, he was with a group of boys throwing snowballs at automobiles. Unfortunately, one of the missiles hit a car operated by Officer Charles Cernik who was in uniform but driving his private car on his way home from work

Cernik accosted the boys in a violent manner, Nystrom said, using "wild accusations and very profane language." Evidently embarrassed to quote the "vulgar words," the youth was granted permission by Lloyd Chambers, acting chairman, to use the word "blank" in place of any profane expression.

Nystrom then testified that Cernik told one of the boys in the group that he ought to have a size 9 shoe up his "blank" and be kicked around the block several times. Officer Cernik testified that he had no recollection of the incident

But so much for the Lilliputians; now for the Brobdingnagians and their sizeable deeds: thousands of acres given by our two major philanthropists.

Port Edwards papermaker and president of Tri-City Airways, Inc. John E. Alexander said the Tri-City Airways property in the town of Grand Rapids was available to the public for an airport but that he would leave final selection of a site to elected members of the governing bodies of Nekoosa, Wisconsin Rapids, Port Edwards, Biron and the town of Grand Rapids.

The 240 acres with a hangar-administration building dated to about 1929 and was used as a warehouse in 1959. Construction of paved runways large enough to land aircraft the size of DC-3s and facilities to service such aircraft were expected.

At about the same time, a much larger donation of 20,000 acres was accepted from Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co. by the Wisconsin Conservation Commission.

The land in the Little Eau Pleine River valley had been intended for a giant reservoir to be named after the company's longtime leader; but plans fell through and so it was that the George W. Mead Wildlife Area was able to celebrate its 50th Anniversary this year [2009].

Volume VII: Hail Mary

In the last seconds of the last quarter of the last game, this is the last chance. Launch the long bomb and hope for the best.

For analogy, refer to recently re-retired [2009] New York Jets quarterback Brett Favre, much given to letting 'em fly. The burly narcissist is, to this antiquarian, something of a leaker, not committed to the long haul. History is for tough guys. Favre is half the age of many on our history team, who will continue to strive until the fat lady sings—without the unseemly rewards that accrue to professional jocks.

A more proper role model for us is the head headknocker of history, the real rocker, Diedrich Knickerbocker. His *A History of New York from the Beginning of the World to the End of the Dutch Dynasty* is usually cited as the inspiration for the *River City Memoirs* series of books and was quoted in the first volume.

"What important beings are we historians! We are the sovereign censors who decide upon the renown or infamy of our fellow mortals—we are the benefactors of kings—we are the guardians of truth—we are the scourgers of guilt—we are the instructors of the world—we are—in short, what we are not!"

Since then, a lot more *Tribune* articles like this one have been written on that motto and some books have been published.

•*River City Memoirs.* "Volume I," sponsored by Consolidated Papers Foundation Inc. Five more volumes followed, the last funded by the Community Foundation.

•*The Age of Paper*, about the founding of the Consolidated paper company and the industry here.

•*Home Mission*, the story of the local First Congregational/Church of Christ.

•*Shanagolden: An Industrial Romance*, about the Nash family and the Nekoosa Paper Co. enterprise, written with long-time judge and former Ashland county resident Herbert A. Bunde.

•*Just like Bob Zimmerman's Blues: Dylan in Minnesota*, 1997.

•*Calumet: Copper Country Metropolis*, 2002, with Gerry Mantel.

•*Cranmoor: The Cranberry Eldorado*, with Phil Brown, current SWCHC president, proprietor of the Den of Antiquity and Cranmoor town clerk.

•*Jack the Hugger*, a footnote to the "Copper Country Metropolis."

Meanwhile back at River City Lambeau, it's still the fourth quarter and, frankly, we're behind again. Time to send up that Hail Mary mentioned earlier. The bomb is a book, and it will indeed be the longest one at more than 300 pages. Provisionally titled RCM VII, the new collection is not for sale and never will be.

Trying to sell books here is a fool's game. Call it the "Fish Fry Fenomenon," in which fancifully frugal folks think nothing of spending $50 or even $100 taking the family "out for fish." But $20 for a book: no way.

With these community values in mind, yet needing to bring together 10 years of stories, the author recently announced in the local history magazine, *Artifacts*, that he was about to publish just one single copy of the book for his own library. The cost to him would be 40 fish fries.

But then along came Jones. You know "the world's biggest Packer fan?" The guy with a Packer license plate, whose house is painted green and gold and whose basement is a shrine to numbers "15," "66," "92," and the formerly-revered, "4." In *Memoirs* terms, that fan is my old buddy, Daniel (Philleo) Meyer, who said, "Let's make it happen," and donated $500. A pledge of further support soon followed from SWCHC president Phil Brown.

That is why more books than one will be published though the number is yet to be determined.

The only way to get River City Memoirs VII is to give $100 or more to the South Wood County Historical Corp., 540 Third St. S. The contributions will become part of a publication fund directed to this project. In the unlikely event that the fund exceeds the cost of publishing RCM VII, that money will stay with the historical society for future publications.

For each $100, donors will receive a complimentary copy, just like on the public TV doo-wop pledge drive.

Now you have heard about it for the last time.

Unless you are a member of the South Wood County Historical Corp., in which case you will get the story again in *Artifacts*.

[*Ghost of Myself: River City Memoirs VII* was published as described. It is no longer available.]

River Rats and Rockets' Red Glare 1959

The two men had worked late.

Around midnight, Jack Chinn, mechanical supervisor of Consolidated's Rapids division and Hugh Bernie, coating department superintendent, were about to get in their cars outside the mill when they saw a red streak zoom across the sky in a northerly direction, followed by an explosion.

Meanwhile, inside the Consolidated offices along the Wisconsin river, switchboard operator and watchman Ed Knuth heard a loud blast and went to investigate; he smelled the smoke of explosives and called police.

Unbelievably, some kind of rocket had crashed through a window and exploded in the third story office of John Natwick, pulp superintendent for Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co.

The Consolidated employees didn't know it but the worst generation was at it again.

"Something went wrong."

That's how Robert Wettstein, 19, explained it—why the rocket hit the mill.

With his buddies, Robert Liska, 20, and Gerald Bassler, 18, he had attached balsa wood fins and dynamite fuses to rocket kits purchased from firms in Colorado and Texas, much as they had, half a hundred times before at the old airport; but new construction there had eliminated the venue.

The three rocketeers had set off the first rocket near the Elks club and watched it head upriver past the Grand Avenue Bridge, expecting it to land in the river.

Losing sight of it, they drove around for a while before picking up a second rocket from Wettstein's home. This time they went to the library (now the SWCHC Museum) parking lot, lighted the fuse and drove to the west side of the river to watch. The second rocket also headed upstream and seemed to have landed in the area of the municipal swimming pool on 1st Street N.

So much for innocent amusement. Meanwhile, another gang, the River Rats, a dozen or so young hoodlums, 14-16 years old, sporting specially-designed shoulder patches, were headquartered at a camp further up the river on Long Island. Their felonies and misdemeanors were discovered by the Wisconsin Rapids police under Chief R.J. Exner as a result of an investigation into the burglary of the Winegarden Restaurant, 1441 1st St. N.

Loot from the restaurant hidden under a loading dock behind the Frank Gill Paint Co. plant, 160 2nd St. N., included $46 in coins and several boxes of candy. At the island camp, police found obscene books and magazines, remains of cabbage and carrots taken during night raids on neighborhood gardens, an empty beer barrel and parts of stoves manufactured by Preway, Inc.

The boys admitted to holding parties on the island (and gave the names of girls who had taken part); stealing butter, vegetables, torpedoes, fuses, gloves, switch keys, cigarettes and pieces of machinery from Green Bay & Western Railroad cars; entering the bath house of the municipal swimming pool and taking wrist watches; stealing gasoline from Jacob Oil Co., 310 1st St. N.; and joy riding in a car owned by White Bros. & Norman, Inc. contractors.

Why did they do it? One member said he was on board because he did not want to be called a "baby."

Now consider the way the worst generation got around. One Sand Hill member had been fined for the following defects to his "jalopy."

Faulty foot brakes; no emergency brake; turn signals not in operation; no arms or blades on the windshield wipers; faulty muffler; no horn; speedometer not functioning; one head light; one tail light; no shifting lever (car could not be reversed); no bearing on steering column (steering wheel flops around); no outside door handles; no rubber pads on clutch or brake pedals; tires on front wheels with "not a trace of tread."

The driver was unable to pay the fine and was released on bond.

As for me, I was a 100-pound freshman having just turned 14, headed for Lincoln High School, filled with fear and trepidation, hoping to avoid "initiation" by upperclassmen or getting stuffed head-first into a trash basket by Brazeau and company.

Even more scary was the dominant figure of LHS. He was the short, sturdy cigar smoker who was likely to bang a River Rat up against a locker and squeeze him until he squealed for mercy—coach and teacher since 1920 and principal since 1927, Mr. Aaron A. Ritchay.

History: Ghost of Myself Made Me Do It

The upcoming book of *Tribune* stories I described last month now has a name: *River City Memoirs VII: Ghost of Myself.*

"River City Memoirs," stems from the history major I almost was at Point college and to the 80 per cent of readers who prefer me that way: the gray-bearded, prosaic, fact-filled factotum, "Uncle Dave." The bulk of my stories have been in the history category. They are my gift to you.

The reason I didn't finish a major in history is that I couldn't remember the first seven (or was it nine?) U.S. colleges in the order they were founded, providing early evidence that I wasn't a match for that nit-picky world. So I took the path more traveled by those with bad memories for details and some prospect for big ideas to the department of English, a discipline (or lack of discipline) where ghosts are popular and so is the concept of "myself."

Thus, the English major half of the book title and that part of the book, "Ghost of Myself," goes out to the 20 per cent of you who appreciate me under my Mid-State Poetry Towers beret. Providing a *raison d'être* for columns like this is your gift to me.

Both the History and English people have witnessed me struggling to explain this dichotomy for a long time, as in this passage, published well before the New Millennium: "When David, his unbuckled overshoes snagging, tramped along the ridge of snow banks from Two Mile School in the spring of 1953, the ghost of himself was with him, taking notes for later reference."

And/or: "When Dave leaned on a lamp post, smoking Salems and watching hot rods drag up Grand Avenue, he was not alone." But so much for the English major side of life.

For History, I took a look at the 1959 *Tribune* (fifty years ago), and sampled references that are part of the disappeared world the ghosts of my generation had lived in. Like the Rapids Theater/Theatre. It was just behind my lamp post on Grand, on that particular night featuring the "Mysterians," in which scary space monsters chase shapely human females.

Next door, the Friendly Fountain, where good girls didn't go, and Perry's Sport Shop, where bad boys bought baseball gloves, boat cushions and Chinese slingshots. Kitty-corner upstream on 2nd Street was the Sugar Bowl restaurant and candy shop. After midnight in the 1960s, I watched a righteously gargantuan rat gallop from the vicinity of the Sugar Bowl across the deserted street, no doubt flushed out by the radar cooking inside. It was one of those moments I knew would come back to haunt me.

The same person owned the Sugar Bowl restaurant and the Rapids Theater, second in quality to the Wisconsin on West Grand that advertised the always palindromic Ava Gardner in "The Naked Maja." A post-show snack could be had at Wilpolt's restaurant, offering the "biggest egg whip in captivity."

The biggest screen in 1959 was to be found at the Highway 13 "outdoor," with Jerry Lewis cavorting in "The Geisha Boy." On Buck Night, an entire carload of hijinks for one dollar.

For the worst generation, there was Clarence and Helen Molepske's Riverside Bar, where I, a few years later, was to join friends for festive Saturday nights.

In a typical send up of the fads of youth, the 1959 *Tribune* lampooned a cultural phenomenon we now know actually did signal the collapse of conventional moral values. "Beatniks in case you don't dig the term are a curious collection of queerly dressed convention-haters in full flight from the world and in fresh pursuit of art. They express themselves by flailing bongo drums and by painting and writing—and sometimes, apparently, just by sitting in bathtubs."

We had one beatnik in town. When he was absent, his neighbor and I explored his "pad." Later, a couple of his abstract art pieces ended up in the SWCHC Museum. Also still around are my own bongo drums.

But it's time to tie up the ghost. I once wrote, "It is an evening in July 1945 and the world is taking a turn."

But it was actually October 1995, and I was, English-major-like, figuratively looking over my father's shoulder, in a small "hotel" above a downtown Wisconsin Rapids tavern, where he penned a letter to his wife, my mother-to-be, who was in Manitowoc, Wis.

The attempt to explain the way I felt about all this hastened my hiatus from the *Daily Tribune*. "You're getting pretty far out," the editor told me.

Next thing you know, it was, "Got'm" and a one-way ticket to never-never land. Spooky, ambiguous, stuff. That's what English majors do.

Charlie Manuel, Twin

Should have known something was up when I got a voice mail from Mike Jensen at the *Philadelphia Inquirer* newspaper. Said he had been referred to me by the mayor's office.

With polite urgency, Jensen asked if I could e-mail a photo of someone named Charlie Manuel (pronounced MAN-you'll) and/or a team shot of the Wisconsin Rapids Twins of 1967 or 1983. Not into baseball since the Braves left Milwaukee, but I knew I heard the name Manuel somewhere.

Within a day or two, Manuel was quoted saying some pretty interesting things about our town, including those in a story by the same Mike Jensen who called me.

"I used to love Wisconsin Rapids," said Manuel. "I could fish at night, especially when the game was over. I'd walk right outside the locker room and there was a river about a block away."

Also close by were taverns, where Manuel favored a particular Wisconsin brand. "I used to say Old Style was my lucky beer. When we'd get on a roll, we'd be winning. I'd be doing Old Style."

Manuel was a resident here, first in 1967 as a player for the Wisconsin Rapids Twins of the Midwest League. Already in his fourth year in Class A at age 23, he led the league in several categories, allowing him to move on.

After an undistinguished career in U.S. baseball, Manuel became a celebrated home run hitter and hell-raiser in Japan before taking a major pay cut to sign on as a scout and coach for the Minnesota Twins. He returned to Rapids in 1983 to begin his first managerial job.

Possibly, according to him, the only manager in the minors driving a Cadillac, Manuel was put in charge of the team, all younger than 25, with no coaches to assist, traveling the Midwest in a beat-up bus with the bathroom sealed off, rear seats replaced by folding chairs, a constant card game going and "an old biker" putting pedal to the medal.

At Witter Field, said Manuel, "I used to mow the field. I put the lines down. Put in the pitching rubber and the home plate.

"I had this pitcher one night pitching a game early in the season and he come in, he was swearing at me, he said, 'I'm telling you, home plate's crooked.'"

Manuel "got real unsettled" and admitted it was he who had put home plate in. "I go out the next day, we started measuring it out with a string." It was off by 18 inches.

Rookie manager Manuel had some rules: Don't wear shorts on the road; don't be late; don't drink in the same bar as the manager unless there is only one bar in town.

Manuel's desk was in the middle of a locker room that has been compared to a dungeon. A former player said Manuel punished offenders by flushing toilets and scalding them in the two showers.

The *Inquirer's* Jensen said that, if an opposing hitter swung late, Manuel would "croon" from the dugout the song, "Don't get around much anymore."

Manuel frequently was ousted from games for bad behavior, calling upon the umpire to "settle things" later and providing a show for the 10 or 20 fans in the stands. He challenged his own team to a fight but nobody stepped up.

When a brawl cleared the benches, Manuel told the players they were going to forfeit the game so they should go home. Later, he drove by Witter Field and saw the lights on. The team had paid a fine, and Manuel rounded up enough players to take the field.

At a Florida game, one of his ex-Rapids players waited for Manuel to walk by and yelled from the fence that he had once played for him. The manager gave him a surly so what?

"What's wrong with you?"

"What's wrong?" Manuel retorted, "We just lost a damned baseball game."

It was the same Charlie he had left 25 years ago in Rapids, the player said.

This story should have been written a year ago, when Charlie Manuel, former manager of the Wisconsin Rapids Twins, first led the Philadelphia Phillies to the World Series championship as their manager.

But hey, the Phillies are finishing up the Word Series this year against the New York Yankees. And Charlie Manuel, he's there again, having a good time just like he did back in our own peculiar River City.

Arnie Strope, Voice of Rapids

From Arnie Strope came one of my favorite quotes. On his morning radio call-in program, Kaffee Klatsch (we say, "coffee clutch"), the local personality was getting worked up over the number of calls offering bags of autumn leaves for pickup. To Arnie, the callers were deadbeats looking for a free way to dispose of trash. "Next thing you know they'll be giving away dead cats."

Arnold William Strope, Sept. 27, 1922—Nov. 14, 2009.

His long career at WFHR-AM, Wisconsin Rapids, began as an unpaid trainee in May 1941 and went on to include board engineer, operator announcer, program director, community relations director, operations manager and assistant general manager. At the same time, Strope was producer/engineer for the Wisconsin Network's Badger Football broadcasts, working many of those years with announcer Earl Gillespie.

In the 1980s, I saw Arnie every day at the *Tribune* building in which the radio station was then located. He was a bit of a celebrity and a big guy with a hitch in his giddyup, due to a wooden leg.

With his shirt-tail nephew, Jim Mason, I interviewed Arnie in March 2007 at his Wisconsin Rapids home.

Arnie said he grew up on a farm five miles from Pittsville, six miles from Vesper, seven miles from Arpin and south of Bethel on Bethel Road. He attended Pleasant Corners school prior to entering Pittsville high school as "a bashful little boy off the farm."

High school took care of some of that.

"Even though I came from the country and was not with those kids in town, if there was birthday party, I was there; they invited me.

"I probably only had one pair of pants to my name. I had to go home and clean up and press my pants and go back to the party, but I always did and I was always part of the group."

Arnie got into radio by way of two bloody accidents.

He was splitting big logs in the woods with a maul and wedge when a wedge chipped and the sliver of steel pierced his leg. The Pittsville doctor didn't worry too much about it, but infection set in and it hurt more and more. Arnie found himself up in Marshfield to get the steel out, all the while giving the girls a hard time as he went under.

Even in St. Joe's, it wouldn't heal. After five unsuccessful surgeries, Arnie woke up without that part of the leg and immediately felt better. After a long recuperation, he managed to play bass horn in the school marching band.

In 1940, Arnie graduated from Pittsville high and started at Point college, but he landed in Marshfield again due to a fatal traffic accident on old Highway 13 that killed his best friend.

As part of his rehabilitation from all this, Arnie, who had intended to become an electrical engineer, moved to Rapids to live with his aunt and got a job at radio station WFHR. His weekly $5 was paid by the State of Wisconsin.

WFHR, located upstairs in the Nash hardware building, was owned by William F. Huffman Sr. and Arnie reported to George Frechette.

The radio station, which had just started in 1940, was experiencing a labor shortage because of World War II. In order to save the station the cost of hiring someone new, he figures, Arnie was inducted into on-the-job training to be an announcer. "I was there probably almost a year before I even opened my mouth. I didn't want to. I was scared. And when I started, I made more trips down the hall to the bathroom you wouldn't believe."

In 1942, the Wisconsin Network was formed to broadcast University of Wisconsin Badger football, and WFHR was the "sister or big station." Arnie was in the right place at the right time.

Beginning in 1942 and continuing until 1988, Arnie, as engineer, went to every Badger football game in and out of state, seeing "a lot of miles, a lot of football."

He started at 18 years old and retired at 65 from a career spanning 47 years. "At one radio station," he said. "No one will ever do that again, I don't think."

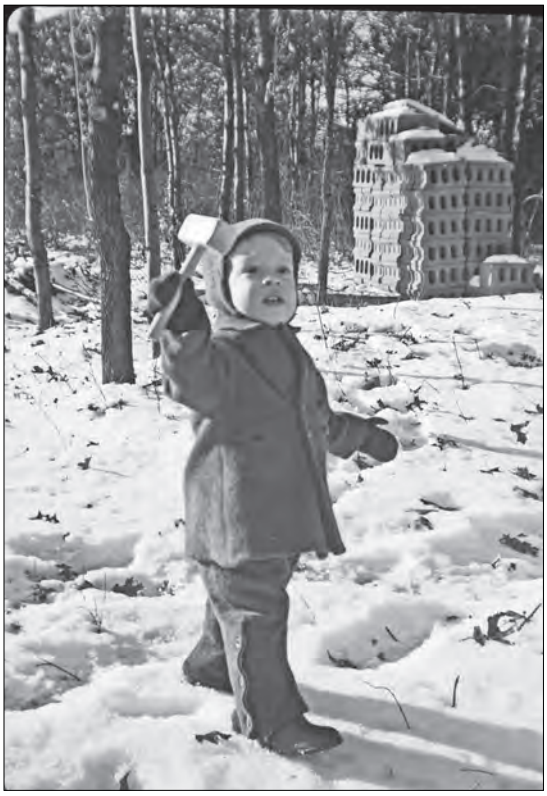
See more about Arnie in February 2009 Artifacts, a publication of the South Wood County Historical Corp., 540 Third St. S.

1945: 11th Avenue North

Don, Arline (Sally) and David

1946: Clyde Avenue East

Second home, Clyde Ave. East, a concrete block structure meant to be a garage when the actual house was built. Instead, another house was built a mile south in the posher burbs.



Little House In the Woods

If you've ever left your beloved homeland for the wilderness, if you've ever had two kids in less than two years, if you've ever built a house or two...

Don enjoyed the adventure, Sally not so much. The kid seemed to like it all right.

Arline, David, baby sister, Kathryn Sarah
Born Nov. 9, 1946

Looks like a 1941 Chevrolet.

1948

Clyde
Avenue
East

Earn $2000 a Month Smoking Fish

Recycle that watermelon rind. Fuel your car with wood. Special homemade cheese foldout.

Quaint counsels from ages past, from a barely believable back-to-the-land, back-to-the-basics farming-for-self-sufficiency-on-a-5-acre-homestead time. Droll headlines from a dreamland called the Seventies when good folks tried to dodge the behemoth known as the Establishment, the Man, and the Masters of War.

One thousand dollars a month home typing business. How to sex an egg. Build a concentric yurt.

Another box from the Memoirs attic—old magazines.

This particular publication, like many others, evokes a vigorous tilting at windmills but with a difference; you built the machinery yourself out of old Edsel bumpers.

Mother Earth News. If you, like Uncle Dave, were a loyal subscriber, you learned a lot of good but goofy stuff about how to shuck the usual monetary ambitions in favor of value-driven toil. The words "build" and "make" were standard fare.

Make your own spinning wheel for $2.50. Make your own building blocks for 3 cents each! We built a house for $200. Build a bucket shower. Make your own toothpaste. Build a solar still. Make Yukon pemmican. Build your own hay wagon. Sorghum molasses: make it yourself.

How to cook organ meats. Live in a greenhouse. Live in a sheep wagon.

The fine old art of chinking. Feedback on dehorning goats? Growing comfrey, the miracle homestead crop. Put a covered fish pond in yer backyard. "We live in a tipi…and cook with the sun." What a rototiller can do for you. We fought the building code… and won. How to live on nothing. The incredible wood burning refrigerator. Growing seriously miraculous onions.

Yep, back in the day, your own Uncle Dave caught the Mother Earth buzz.

He made "from scratch" yogurt, cheese, beer, wine, bread, granola, and tofu; tended livestock, including goats, rabbits, and a chicken; practiced organic gardening and planted ginseng. He had comfrey growing out of his earth shoes. Loved Jøtul stoves, Troy-Bilt rototillers, solar heaters, wood splitters, cold frames and hot beds. Repaired his own VW Campmobile.

Stopped eating animals not personally slaughtered, except shrimp, which he still refers to as "vegetables of the sea." Revered "the land." Recycled. Built a modest energy-efficient house with south-facing triple-pane windows and insulation stuffed between every nook and cranny. Subscribed to *Harrowsmith, Country Living, Dustbooks, Organic Gardening, Last Whole Earth Catalog, North Country Anvil, Countryside and Small Stock Journal.*

Admired earth poet Gary Snyder and snapped a photo of him reading *Dairy Goat Journal* to oldest daughter. But Uncle Dave found he was so busy simplifying, there was no time for the complex demands of a literary career. Found that a typical folk-task costs more than it returns, that folk life had been diminished by the virtual life, a transformation more lucrative than the back-to-the-earth movement.

Uncle found there comes a time to sew, reap and to throw out the *Mother Earth News*. Somewhere out there in survivalist-ville may be folks thinking like folks thought when a folk was a folk. Indeed, a version of the magazine continues, as illustrated by this web-based description: "The most popular and longest running sustainable-lifestyle magazine, MOTHER EARTH NEWS provides wide-ranging, expert editorial coverage of organic foods, country living, green transportation, renewable energy, natural health and green building. Lively, insightful and on the cutting edge. MOTHER EARTH NEWS is the definitive read for the growing number of Americans who choose wisely and live well."

Let me tell you about an exciting home business.

Make hundreds of dollars a year writing and publishing homegrown, home-town stories. It's a big fat joke like everything nowadays. Growing onions on the homestead has been ditched in favor of reading deadlines in the satirical magazine, *The Onion* (which would have made good mulch back in the day.) It has become apparent that everything we believed was ridiculous. Any earnest bit of dirt-grubbing, hammer-handling, make your own build your own…

Well it begs for the question, "What have you been smoking?"

Clearly the answer is, "Fish."

The Famous Forgotten Dr. Robinson

Not many take the trouble to read it but it's there in plain sight, the story of Dr. Robinson, who donated the east-side park of the same name.

It came to my attention because of reminiscences by Ed Severson in the November 2009 South Wood County Historical Corp. publication, *Artifacts*, of a lively 1950s neighborhood playground. My best memories of the park with the noble pines are of Grove School picnics in the 1950s and free all-day music fests in the 1960s.

Anyone who wants to know more can do what I did: read the historical marker.

Frederick Byron Robinson worked his way though Mineral Point Seminary and the University of Wisconsin, where he received a degree in 1878. He graduated from Rush medical college after which he practiced in Grand Rapids (now Wisconsin Rapids) for seven years. Meanwhile, he traveled to Heidelberg, Vienna, Berlin, and London.

In 1889, Robinson was appointed to the "chair" of anatomy at Toledo Medical College. He also held professorships at Illinois Medical School and Chicago College of Medicine and Surgery. In 1894, he married a co-worker, Dr. Lucy Waite.

Robinson died at River Forest, Ill., and was buried in Middlebury Cemetery, Iowa County, Wis.

Other sources add details to the park sign's tale. The good Doc was born in 1854 or 1855 in a farm near Hollandale, Wis. The 1870 U.S. census finds him at age 15 in Iowa County, Wis., town of Moscow, where he and his numerous brothers are farm laborers. The parents are both from England.

Later, F. Byron taught school at Ashland, Wis., and Black Earth, Wis., entered Rush Medical College, Chicago, and became a professor of gynecology and abdominal surgery at Illinois Medical College. Between 1891 and 1910, Robinson, according to a 1967 *Daily Tribune*, achieved world fame for his studies in anatomy and gross pathology, most notably those on the great sympathetic nerve known as the abdominal "brain," until then only a conjecture.

Most important to us, in 1908, as reported in the Sept. 3, 1908, *Wisconsin Valley Leader*, "Byron Robinson, now a great specialist of Chicago, a former townsman who retains a high regard for this city and its people, presented the city with 19 acres of land lying just this side of the cemetery for park purposes."

Robinson also owned other property here that was later sold by his wife, Lucy Waite Robinson. Robinson, whose great deeds were accomplished mostly in Chicago, was in Stevens Point in September 1909, to address a meeting of the Northwestern Wisconsin Medical association, "Five hundred Abdominal Autopsies."

In 1910, the year of his death, Dr. Robinson and wife donated 1,500 books for the "Robinson Waite Library" at the University of Wisconsin, giving them one of the most complete collections anywhere on anatomy and the history of medicine. Dr. Robinson established a scholarship to be used by men and women in the anatomical, physiological and pathological study of the sympathetic nervous system.

Among his legacy of big words is an enduring medical term, "Robinson's Circle," naming the ureto-ovarian circle of arteries "anastimosing" (networking) the abdominal aorta, common iliac, uterine and ovarian arteries. Like a brain, sort of.

Lucy Waite Robinson was also a notable achiever. After taking her degree in medicine, she studied in the clinics of Vienna and Paris for two years and became a German and French scholar. Many of her articles appear in medical journals. She became medical superintendent of the Mary Thompson Hospital for Women and Children, Chicago, an institution that employed female doctors and surgeons when other opportunities were closed.

In some cases, male surgeons came in to assist at Mary Thompson. When Grand Rapids resident Stella Emmons was operated on in the Thompson Hospital, the surgeon was our own Dr. Byron Robinson.

A clipping sent by Paul Gross regards the vagaries of fame as shown in the adventures of a bust of Dr. Robinson, "an internationally famed physician and surgeon who practiced medicine in Chicago around 1900." And died March 23, 1910. An inscription on the bust said it was "a gift to his students."

It seems the bust had been at the University of Chicago until the institution moved. Years later, a doctor recognized the likeness in an antique shop, purchased it and donated it to the American College of Surgeons.

So the esteemed Dr. Robinson "lives on" in his bust, the Robinson Circle, the historical marker and Robinson Park.

Ahdawagam Again

Lately, I was reading *So Ole Says to Lena: Folk Humor of the Upper Midwest* by James P. Leary, and found, in the chapter, "The Indians," a word that looked familiar and one I had wondered about before. Bear in mind that the spoken native words were first written down by French-Canadians and then brought into English, often by those who understood neither the native language nor French.

Leary related a folk tale about the famous trickster, Wenabazho, who was drinking some anniibush or anniibiishaaboo, when he decided to throw some "adaawaagen." Could it be our "ahdawagam" which we claim denoted a "two-sided rapids?"

An Ojibwe-English word list available via the World Wide Web provides a couple similar definitions: "adaawaage: he sells" and "adaawaage: he borrows." Another source translates adaawangen as trade, trader or trading post, about the same thing.

At rapids such as ours, French traders and native trappers, often carrying a load of furs or "adaawaagen," had to get out of the river to carry canoe and contents around the rough water; so why not do some business? Hence "fur for trade" at portages.

When we of the two-sided village use the word in 2010, we usually refer to the Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln high school yearbook, first published in 1913. An early issue sports an Indian head cover by Grim Natwick, the 1910 Lincoln graduate who later animated the movie figures of Betty Boop and Snow White.

Also in 1913, the local Oberbeck Brothers Manufacturing Co. changed its name to Ahdawagam Furniture Co. under new manager George T. LaBour from Grand Rapids, Mich., who had grown up in that city's furniture business. Despite the connection with the bigger Rapids across Lake Michigan, Ahdawagam furniture was touted as a home institution financed by home capital. The name had been changed to make it "individual," mainly to prevent future shipments and mail from being confused with the same Grand Rapids, Mich.

This furniture company action was considered preliminary to changing the name of the city itself as many advocated. Among the choices proffered were The Rapids, Rapids Grand, Great Rapids, Rapids City, Consolidated Cities, Wisconsin City, Power Rapids, Power City, Central Rapids and Ahdawagam.

As explained in 1913, "Ahdawagam is a Chippewa Indian name and means literally, 'Two Rapids' and is the name given by the Indians to this point on the river. While it might be simplified and made a little smoother by dropping out the 'h' in the name, this is not a matter that there is any reason to quarrel over."

When I interviewed him in 1980 or so, Frank Walsh, a man well acquainted with Ahdawagam furniture, told me he had, like LaBour, come from Grand Rapids, Mich., though a year later, in 1914, to work in the accounting department of Consolidated; but that president George Mead soon sent him in 1917 to "the Ahdawagam," which was converted in 1918 from furniture to paper products.

Later known best as a Catholic philanthropist, Walsh returned to Grand Rapids, Mich., to be married, and brought his wife in 1915 to live here. In 1917, the "angel of death" took their baby and in 1920, his wife, Agnes, died of influenza-caused pneumonia. Walsh would survive two more wives before we spoke.

In 1918, another organization took the now-trending name for the Ahdawagam Camp Fire, a girls club founded by Elisabeth Herschleb. Its use would be followed later by Boy Scouts and others. A project involving the "Ah-dah-wa-gam" chapter of the D.A.R. sent "comfort bags" to Indian soldiers at Camp Douglas, Wis., for which the *Daily Leader* published thank you letters from James Brown and John White Eagle of the 3rd Regiment.

In 1920, Ah-dah-wa-gam D.A.R., with the help of some horses, moved a red 2.5-ton granite boulder donated by W.H. Carey from Boles Avenue, near the plant of Carey Concrete. Dedicated in 1923 with a suitable inscription, it was placed in the riverside park adjacent to the west end of the then-new Grand Avenue bridge.

The rock, dated 1919, has found its way across the double Rapids to a similar spot in Veterans Memorial Park, where it bears witness to the loyalty and patriotism of the Winnebago Indians and to World War I soldier-casualties, Foster Decorah, Robert Decorah, Jesse Thompson, Mike Standingwater, Dewey Mike, Nelson R. De La Ronde and James Greengrass.

Badminton

Jewel of River City, the Lincoln field house, also known as fieldhouse, Field House, Fieldhouse or "the high school gym."

When Lincoln (now East Junior High) was built in 1931, the field house portion of the complex was considered second in size and quality only to that at the UW-Madison. It played host to school and public events that included grade and high school level basketball games, high school assemblies, indoor track meets, political rallies (remember Nixon?), big band concerts and Harlem Globetrotter games.

But the site of the second state badminton tournament? Yes, there was a first, at West Allis, in spring 1937.

In December of that year, badminton classes were held at Lincoln field house. On the list of students were numerous prominent locals, identified in a *Daily Tribune* photo: Del Rowland, Bill Brockman, Jane Jackson, Sara Jane Heger, Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Shearier, Mr. and Mrs. Reinhart Vogt, Milton Grundeman, Mr. and Mrs. Earl McCourt, Henry Baldwin, Mr. and Mrs. Del Rowland, Mr. and Mrs. Hugh Damon, Miss Jacobs, Ralph Renzel, G.K. Dickerman, Stanton Mead, William Heilman, Don Abel and Troy Schultz.

As the tournament of spring 1938 approached, the Dec. 14, 1937, *Tribune* publicized a badminton demonstration to be held at Biron community hall. Men's doubles matches would include Stanton Mead and Henry Baldwin vs. E.M. McCourt and Del Rowland and Heilman and Gleue vs. Brockman and Mader. Mixed doubles and singles were also part of the program.

After an exhibition at Lincoln, a January 27, 1938, *Daily Tribune* column described the game of badminton, noting that it had become increasingly popular. "In tennis the player is run to death on the baselines, but badminton requires swift action forward and backward."

"Much credit is due the group of local badminton enthusiasts who have organized classes for the promotion of the sport." Many badminton enthusiasts were also members of the Elks Club and played on its court.

"The state badminton tournament to be held here this spring will certainly aid in increasing interest in the game, again making Wisconsin Rapids a leader in encouraging amateur athletic competition."

The contest was held at Lincoln the weekend of March 18, 1938. Entering the "tourney" Friday night were 15 "clubs."

Rowland, president of the Wisconsin Badminton Assoc. and tourney manager, said there would be 44 players in men's singles; 22 teams in men's doubles; 11 teams in women's doubles; 12 for women's singles; and 18 for mixed doubles.

The highest-ranked Rapids player was Earl M. McCourt. In women's singles, Dorothy Mead (Mrs. Stanton) and Betty Miller were expected to do well.

Mixed doubles included Heilman-Healey, Brockman-Miller, Murtfeldt-Rowland and husband-wife teams McCourt-McCourt, Mead-Mead, and Watson-Watson.

In men's singles, the following were named: Bob Mader, Fern Scott, C.K. Crouse, Henry Baldwin, George Jacobson, Bill Brockman, Jim Plzak, Del Rowland, Bill Heilman, Reinold Vogt, Stanton Mead, E.M. McCourt, Larry Murtfeldt and Don Farrish.

Messrs. Baldwin, Dickerman, Mead, McCourt, Murtfeldt, Plzak and Farrish were Consolidated execs. Consolidated leader Stanton Mead was born in 1900, making him 38 at the time of the tournament.

In the words of the *Tribune* sports columnist of 1938, "Their interest in the game offers persons here an opportunity to engage in a greater variety of sports and provides exercise well-suited to the business and professional man."

If they expected to be big winners, Rapids players and members of the other 13 victim clubs, including that from Racine, the previous year's champions, were to be disappointed. Almost all the awards presented after the matches Sunday afternoon by Del Rowland, now retiring president of the State Badminton association, went to West Allis players who had won four of five championships.

Wisconsin Rapids entries bowed out early, according to the *Tribune*. The best showing by the local host club was accomplished by the doubles team of Del Rowland and Earl McCourt.

Though I don't know of any local clubs still batting the birdie about, badminton is alive and well, at least in West Allis. The 2010 Wisconsin Open Badminton Tournament will be held April 24-25 at Nathan Hale High School in that city.

Consolidated Benefits

To outsiders, "Consolidated" isn't a friendly name. It sounds about as massive, impersonal and abstract as "Amalgamated." To be sure, there is a real company named Consolidated Amalgamated and a fake one that has been used satirically in movies.

Our own Consolidated was anything but a soulless abstraction. In 1980, when I turned my attention to such topics, it was common for me as a *Daily Tribune* rookie to stroll through the "old stone office building" with P. Dan Meyer, Consolidated's head of Public Affairs.

Although he was making 20 times my reporter's wages, Meyer took off the afternoon to show me around. At the 1911 landmark headquarters in downtown Wisconsin Rapids, we visited the entire cast of enamel-coated moguls, concluding in the office of the chairman of the board.

In those days, Consolidated Papers Inc. evidenced several attributes of the Deity. It was all powerful (omnipotent), and it was everywhere (infinite). It also seemed immortal (everlasting). But Consolidated, like Amalgamated Olympus, is over. If you're younger than 21 and your views come on screen rather than as inked Productolith, you may know nothing about it.

On May 29 [2010], at McMillan Memorial Library, long-time South Wood County Historical Corp. spokesman J. Marshall Buehler introduced a Paul Gross video about the "paper village" of Port Edwards by calling attention to the numerous contributions of the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. and its primary owners, the Alexander family. As a municipal historian of River City, I gave a nod to Consolidated and its owners, the Mead family.

We didn't have to look far for influence. The room we gathered in and the building that surrounded it were a memorial to Consolidated stockholders, the McMillan family. The screen we watched: a gift of the Mead-Witter Foundation, itself a product of Consolidated.

Across Grand Avenue, the Hotel Mead.

Across Garfield Street, the Community Foundation, funded largely by Consolidated stock.

Across Lincoln Street were (former) Lincoln High School, Lincoln field house and Witter Field, all accomplishments attributed in part to George Mead I, then-mayor and president of Consolidated.

My remarks were made because of my position as director of the South Wood County Historical Corp., itself owing its existence to George W. Mead's purchase of his uncle's house to become T. B. Scott Public Library and to his family's continuing contributions.

Employees and residents alike owe Consolidated for benefits around town but also for lakes Biron, DuBay, Petenwell and Castle Rock; for Eau Pleine flowage; and for Mead Wildlife Area.

More personally, my family had been sustained by the decent wages my father earned as a welder at "the mill." During my college years, through the $2.22 per hour I made as summer vacation relief, I could save up the $1,000 needed for another year at Point college – besides accumulating street cred for my future paper industry chronicles. In my four summers, I came to know the chain gang, lime cars, beaters, paper machines, rewinders, supers, air hammers, hot ponds, wood room, wet machines and lumber yard.

What I didn't mention at the library were the little things that came our way at home in part from a generous tool allowance: stag-handled penknives, ball bearings, welders glasses, fireproof gloves, blobs of mercury, mugs, glasses, pens, medals and plates. My welder dad was allowed to fashion on his own time but with Consolidated equipment and scrap iron, clotheslines, bike racks and a basketball backboard.

My sister's National Merit Scholarship was sponsored by Consolidated and personally delivered by the same Dan Meyer previously mentioned, who would later be to a modest degree my own patron.

And so on and so on, the listing is only begun, but I'm out of breath from gushing.

One of the best views I have had was reached by ascending the long walkway that paralleled the conveyor of wood chips being carried from the wood room to the sulfite mill, the tallest building around. At the top, if it were the 11-7 shift, I could look out from on high, over the tree tops and roof tops as the sun rose to light up the dark, rushing river and the peaceful street of downtown River City.

At that time I thought I was alone, looking ahead only to punching out and going home to breakfast. I didn't know that at my side was the ghost of myself, who takes this moment to submit this report.

May 2010

Witter 40

Vocational School was a Godsend but not to me. It stopped my career before it got started. Lincoln high school guidance counselor Frances Nairn broke the news: I had missed qualifying for a National Merit Scholarship by one point.

What follows is my rationale. Attached to the high school was the Vocational School and in the attic of the ancient edifice was "Witter 40," a "study hall" to which I was sent for the test mentioned above. As I vacillated between "none of" or "all of the above," there was a steady distraction outside bird-dew dappled windows, the "coo coo coo" of fat, filthy, stinking loudmouth life-wrecking pigeons.

I didn't know it, but, in 1962, when I took the test, the Vocational School was the product of big thinkers who would have done very well on the NMSQT, PSAT, SAT, ACT, LSAT, MCAT, or GRE. It was also the precursor of an institution whose mission has exceeded that of the founders.

And little did I know as a high school junior that half-a-century later I would still frequent the same "River City" and that I would be telling this tale.

Throughout its history, the Vocational School not only shared the high school but the Normal school (teachers' college) to the south, in which I had as a grade-schooler from the town of Grand Rapids, attended a memorable Punch and Judy puppet show and played a couple basketball games. Later, my high school locker was near the music room in the Vocational addition connected to the Witter building.

In 1980, after a decade as an English teacher at UW-Stevens Point, I reported to and for the Wisconsin Rapids *Daily Tribune* and heard about then "Mid-State Technical Institute" almost every day. My fellow reporter with that beat, Debra Brehmer, seemed to be in regular consultation with board president Dan Meyer.

Also in the 1980s, at the 32nd Street campus, I chaired a Creative Writing class that included old neighbors, colleagues, Mid-State administrators, the wife of the former director Earl Jaeger (Lorraine) and others who were friends from then on. In the 1980s and now, my office as director of the South Wood County Historical Corp. is an old bedroom in the former home of the namesake Witter family.

When I graduated from LHS in 1963, Wisconsin Rapids was something special: world headquarters for several notable corporations, including Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co., Consoweld Corp., Gross Brothers trucking, Central Wisconsin Transport and Preway Corp.

Nearby Port Edwards, often considered the state's richest village, was home to the main office of Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. and its founding family.

Consolidated and Nepco have been sold and the other named enterprises have shut down. But through the gloom, set on an unpromising sand plain, a city on a figurative hill, is the campus of Mid-State Technical College.

In its vocational school format, the Mid-State story was a tale of three schools: Lincoln High School (now East Junior High); Witter Manual Training School (aka the Vocational School); and Wood County Normal (aka Wood County Teachers College). Throughout its first classes in Lincoln, its own home in Witter and its metamorphosis to a full-fledged modern technical college in 1973, MSTC has adapted quickly and efficiently.

Programs, teachers and administrators freely mixed, especially in the early years and toward the end, accounting for the use of rooms in the Witter building by the high school in my time.

To confirm whether my earlier story about avian distraction could possibly be true, I asked former Mid-State faculty member Randall Facklam if he remembered Witter 40 and whether there might have been pigeons outside the window as I described. "If those pigeons wouldn't have been cooing so loud, I might have got a scholarship," I said.

He laughed as if he had heard it before.

"One time, somebody left the window open at the top of the fire escape and the pigeons came in and they couldn't find their way out," Facklam said. "Their droppings were all over the floor up there at that time. Yeah, I remember that."

A history of MSTC by Dave Engel and Holly Knoll was published later that year.

Josie

Joan "Josie" Haasl had a habit of telling the unvarnished truth. In her words, in an Oct. 20, 1998, SWCHC interview:

"I was born April 21, 1928, just in time for the depression. My mother said that having my brother and I was a dirty trick life played on her. They got married in 1908, and four years later, a baby died. They never expected to have any more children. They never wanted children.

"In 1925, my brother came along and my dad got sick with his nose bleeds and high blood pressure. My mother said she had to have me, but she didn't have to take care of me. They put me in the Marshfield hospital for six months. The hospital was short on patients, so you could put anybody up there.

"The nurses spoiled me rotten because there was nothing wrong with me. They just played with me.

"My mother claimed my dad said, 'I've got a nice baby girl; too bad I don't have a nice mother for her.'

"So they were already at war. My grandmother moved in, in 1918. When she died, 11 years later, everybody hated everybody.

"My dad had a heart attack hunting, right in front of me, Sept. 27, 1942. Town of Grant, right near where we own land now. We were hunting prairie chickens.

"My mother hated the Catholic church all her life. They had a priest that would go door to door and get money from the women and then go across the street and get drunk. My mother wanted these clamp-on skates from the hardware store, and they were 50 cents. Her mother said they couldn't afford them and the priest came and got the last 50 cents in the house and went across the street and my mother watched him come staggering out hours later.

"She made up her mind that she was going to get away from an awful church that took clamp-on skates away from a little girl. So I was brought up Episcopalian.

"My dad used to, on Sunday, say 'Come on, Joanie, we'll go down, and get a scoop of booze.' You know they gave real wine at the Episcopal church.

"He was dead about 25 years when little Mac McClain told me my dad donated money for the bells on the Episcopal church. I know my mother didn't know because she would have climbed up on a rope and got the bells and got the money back. My mother got mad at the Episcopalians and went over to the Congregational church and dragged me over there. I hated the Congregational church.

"So there was always a fight on Sunday, my mother saying I had to go to the Congregational church with her and my dad saying, 'You belong over at the Episcopalian church with me.'

"When she was dying at the Lutheran hospital in Milwaukee, she had orders that no Catholic priest was allowed in. Then Frank Walsh sends over a rosary that's blessed by the Pope, and I'm supposed to give it to my mother and I'm supposed to get a priest in there.

"I said 'No, she knows how she wants to die. She's gonna die the way she wants to.'

"Then the other relatives got on my back. They weren't so concerned with my mother's physical ailment right at the moment. It was the hereafter that really had them. They were all after me to get a priest in there. I had to keep saying 'No. No. No. It's not going to be a priest. She's got a Lutheran minister that comes in to (see) her, and that gives a great deal of comfort. But there's not going to be a priest over.' I had to really get a little tough with them."

Joan died June 12. I saw her at Higgins Funeral Home and got a couple surprises: the fishing cap, the camera in one hand and the carved bird in the other. A fish by her head that appeared to be a crappie. Attached to the front of the casket, words written by hand and attached to the memory of the dead lady.

"It is what it is."

Just like the prophet said. What it is, it is. What it was, it was. What it will be, it will be.

George Mead's Mother's Rockford Home

All good citizens know our founder George W. Mead. He moved here from Rockford, Ill., where he and his brother, D. Ray Mead, in the language of legend, "ran a furniture store."

In recent decades, we have spoken of Rockford with condescension and prejudice. From our point of view, it seems a city struggling to avoid becoming a ghost town, ruined by the blight of industrial collapse.

Really? In G.W.'s time, it was a metropolis of some dignity.

To experience Rockford as a tourist, take the Highway 20 exit at the Clock Tower complex and head west on State Street, old U.S. 20.

Pass godless franchises of the new-new "miracle mile"; the old-new miracle in its already-faded glory; a pleasant residential zone; and the old-old commercial strip. Stop and explore the historic downtown spanning the Rock River.

Among the remnants is the stately furniture store block at 301-305 S. Main built by D. Ray Mead a few years after his partner brother, George W., departed for his industrialist destiny here in 1902. At the Rockford Public Library, in a wood-paneled local history room, can be found city directories, making it all too easy to find out where the Meads lived.

1887—Hattie and Ruth, both teachers, with (their mother) Mrs. Abbie Mead, widow of D.R., at 601 (later renumbered 603) N. Second St. The spacious but unassuming white house can be seen at the corner of North Second and Hill, in person or on Internet earth views.

1889—D. Ray Mead at the same address, a commercial traveler (book salesman) for Chandler Bros.

1892—D. Ray Mead, "D.R.," now a "clerk." Marion, a bookkeeper for Rockford Seminary.

1896—D.R., now of Church Street, secretary and treasurer of Empire Mercantile. Brother G.W., now of the Second Street address, manager.

1899—D.R. of "Mead Bros" and George W. on North Second with their mother and with sister, Ruth, a bookkeeper for Mead Bros.

1900—G.W. and wife, Ruth, reside at 831 N. Church, a couple blocks from the present Rockford Art Museum. George's sister, also named Ruth, continues to live with their mother on North Second.

1903—G.W. and wife, Ruth, have left the directories of Rockford for those of Grand Rapids, Wis.

In the midst of the drive from Interstate 39 to State Street, the tourist notices the secluded gateway to Rockford College. Upon investigation, it's a set of brick buildings that appear to be a product of the 1960s, nearly deserted on a July afternoon.

Rockford College: founded in 1847 as Rockford Female Seminary was a sister to Beloit College, a year older, both associated with the Congregational church. The seminary's initial campus was in downtown Rockford.

According to an admiring website, Rockford College [since 2013 "University"], is a lively haunt of the dead, with no less than three buildings housing "restless spirits," disembodied voices, moving objects and phantom reflections. One of those voices could be that of George Mead's mother. According to the copy of the 1915 death certificate found in the Rockford library, Abigail Spare Mead died at 78 in her longtime home at 603 N. Second St.

Abigail's obituary was prominently displayed in the Rockford *Daily Register Gazette*, on the same page as a large ad for D.R. Mead Quality Furniture. An invalid, she had been confined to the wheelchair for the previous eight years. From "an old Galena (Ill.) family," Mrs. Mead was one of seven students in the first class graduated from Rockford College, in 1854, having "spent five years, under the care and guidance of its founder."

Abigail's interest in Rockford College continued throughout her life as "one of its most beloved alumnae." Three of her daughters were students there and son George attended the sibling Beloit College. It was in large part her interest in the college, said her obit, that had caused Abigail to come to Rockford after the 1873 death of her husband Darius R. Mead in Oak Park, Ill. Mead had been a lumber merchant out of Chicago, whom she married in Galena.

Abigail's father, James Spare, also in the lumber trades, had been among the founders of Galena. A sister was "Mrs. Murtfeldt," which helps explain the known distant relationship of former Consolidated executives Harold and Lawrence Murtfeldt to the Meads.

Abigail had been an active member of the first Congregational Church for 30 years.

At the time of her death, nine children survived Abigail, including George W. of Grand Rapids, Wis.

Gilardi

A month ago, I thought I knew it all; then came a message from Debra Brehmer, formerly of the *Daily Tribune* and now director of the Portrait Society gallery, Milwaukee. She was planning a showing of paintings found in the basement of Bernard F. Gilardi —from Rapids.

From his obituary, I learned Gilardi was Catholic, had been born into "a large family" in Solon Springs, Wis., and was raised here. He died in 2008 at age 88.

"Bernie proudly served his country during WWII in the U.S. Army Air Corps. He moved to Milwaukee where he met his wife and became a lithographer until his retirement in 1982. He will be remembered for his friendliness and amusing sharp wit that reflects in his primitive style paintings, his lifelong hobby. He was a proud member of the Italian Community Center."

More Gilardi lore, going backward in time:

When Bernard's brother, Bert, died, in 1970, at age 63, his obit said he was born in La Crosse and had worked as a carpenter at UW-Madison. Besides his immediate family, Bert was survived by his mother, Angeline Gilardi, Milwaukee, a sister, Sister Mary Rose, and six brothers: Joseph, Wisconsin Rapids; Harold, Bernard, Raymond and Carl, all of Milwaukee; and Ralph, Sacramento, Cal.

Another step back to 1963. At the Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln high school reunion for the Class of 1938, for which he served on the reunion committee, Bernard's caricatures were prominently on display.

In February 1945, Bernard's brother, Harold, on military leave, visited the Gilardi parents at 1050 Washington St. here. Harold had earlier met with Bernard, a PFC with Army transport, in North Africa. Ralph and Raymond were stationed in the Hawaiian Islands.

Dec. 11, 1943. Of the "Galardi brothers," (usually pronounced Jill-ardi) Ralph was on a small island in the South Pacific, Harold was with the air corps in North Africa and Bernard had completed a course in radio at Scott Field, Ill.

In June 1940, before the war, Bernard left his Wisconsin Rapids home to take a six weeks art course at UW-Madison.

1938: Bernard, "Bony," graduated from LHS, having illustrated three years of the yearbook, *Ahdawagam*, with clever cartoons.

1937: When group secretary Bernard was pictured with the Catholic Youth Organization, he stood with president Woodie Swancutt, the famed boxer and military flier often featured here.

1932: Bernard won third place in boys horseshoe at the second-annual Kiwanis Water Frolic on the Wisconsin River north of Rapids.

1930 census: Joseph Gilardi, 51, and wife Angeline in Wisconsin Rapids with children Carl, Harold, Ralph, Bernard, Mary Rose and Raymond.

1929: Bernard, 9, son of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Gilardi, 241 Drake St., while clinging to a rock below the Consolidated spillway, was rescued by fireman John Miller. Bernard had been walking home from SS. Peter & Paul school, when he saw the then-low stage of water and thought he might find some landlocked fish before rising water cut off his escape.

1920: Bernard was born but not soon enough to be listed on the 1920 census for his family in Koochiching County, Minn.

1905: Bernard's father, Joseph, married Angeline Penchi at Genoa in what is now Vernon County, Wis.

1878: The father, Joseph, was born in the U.S.A. Like neighbors in Genoa, Wis., named Buzzetti, Fanetti, Barilani, Zabolio, Gadola, Paggi, Francoli, Starlocki, Vener, Ghelfi, Curti, Trossoni and Guanella, Joseph's parents had originally come from the Alpine lake region of northern Italy.

Many of the Italian immigrants had come up more lately from the lead mines at Galena, Ill., some before 1860. Farming and fishing, as they had been for many of these immigrants while in Europe, were chief pursuits.

In a 1930 newspaper account, one of the oldest residents of Genoa, Wis., was a "Mrs. Gilardi," who lived in a stone house built by one of the first settlers, reminiscent, said a reporter, of old world architecture.

In the St. Charles Borromeo church at Genoa hung a valuable painting brought from Italy, a portrait of St. Charles, patron saint of Campo Dolcius, back home. Italians, it has often been proven, can be talented artists.

Several works by Bernard Gilardi were featured in Artifacts, a publication of the South Wood County Historical Corp., 540 Third Street S.

Another Day Off for Slicing the Bologna

Year after inconvenienced year, it's upon us before we have a chance to defend ourselves. No mail today.

To be sure, we love the U.S. mail and the postal people who serve us. They have provided great service for decades and have deserved the letters of commendation I sent First Class to Rudolph RFD. So why no mail?

Columbus Day.

Among excuses for goofing off, this is one of the lamest ever. What is the connection between not getting mail and "Cristoforo Colombo," as he was called in his home country, Italy? As "Cristobal Colon," for his adopted country of Spain, he "discovered" a new land in hopes of cracking open the pot of "oro" under the rainbow.

Talk about slicing bologna, salami and Slim Jims.

No mail today.

How about hiring private detectives to tail the government employees with Columbus Day "off?" If you are paid to not work today, how do you exalt your patron saint and namesake of Columbia, Gem of the Ocean? How are the Italian lessons going? (Or is it Spanish?) What about you bankers and stockbrokers? Pilgrimage to Columbus, Ohio, or Columbia, Mo? To Genoa, Wis., namesake of Crostoforo's hometown? Prayers, rosaries, Hail Marys? Bingo. Monday Night Football?

Here's some slicing of the old kielbasa from your own Uncle Dave, who found information for this non-story about a non-event by getting out the old virtual Nina, Pinta and Santa Maria and surfing the World Wide Web.

Columbus Day is observed by some countries in the Americas and in Spain to "celebrate" Colombo's arrival in the New World on Oct. 12, 1492. It has been a Colorado state holiday since 1906, after a Denver Italian-American resident succeeded in his lobbying attempts. It has been a federal holiday since 1934, after lobbying by the Knights of Columbus, a Roman Catholic fraternal organization "bound together by the ideal of Christopher Columbus, the discoverer of the Americas, the one who brought Christianity to the New World."

As the day has strayed from Oct. 12, so the theme detaches from Cristoforo.

In the United States Virgin Islands, it is "Puerto Rico-Virgin Islands Friendship Day." Hawaii observes "Discoverer's Day," for its Polynesian discoverers—on Columbus Day. The city of Berkeley, Calif., replaces Columbus with "Indigenous People's" Day. One of the few communities to stick with the theme, San Francisco has enjoyed an Italian-American parade since 1868, established by Nicola Larco, the partner of Ghirardelli, the chocolate guy.

Since it began, Columbus Day has been controversial. In the 19th Century, Protestants feared Catholics would use the holiday to advance their takeover of the free world.

Denver's Columbus Day parade is routinely protested by Native-American groups. Mostly, Cristoforo is blamed for his part in exploitation of, cruelty to and collapse of the indigenous population. Apparently, he named them "Indians" and found that they would make good servants. "With 50 men we could subjugate them all and make them do whatever we want."

The *Wall Street Journal* of Oct. 10, 2009, told us that Philadelphia's annual Columbus Day parade had been canceled. Brown University renamed the holiday "Fall Weekend" following a campaign by a Native American student group. Tennessee moved the party to the Friday after Thanksgiving. "You can celebrate the hell out of it if you get it the day after Thanksgiving-—it gives you four days off," said former Tennessee Gov. Ned McWherter.

In California, Columbus Day is one of two unpaid holidays blown away by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger as part of a 2009 budget cut. The take-away is still being appealed by so-called Italophile unions.

Most of us don't care about the real Cristoforo or the real date of his trip. In 1968, Congress passed the Monday Holiday Law, which not only made Columbus Day the second Monday of October, but also moved Memorial Day, Veterans Day and Presidents Day so they always fell on Mondays. And, said the Wall Street Journal, the golden age of three-day weekends was born.

A spokesman for the Knights of Columbus claimed, "So far as we're concerned, it's quite obviously an appropriate holiday."

Yeah, right.

What it means in three simple words:

No mail today.

Totally Bonkers

Yes, he's mad as a hatter. How else could Uncle Dave make an offer like this?

$20.

One thin strip of the old legal tender for a fantastic Dial-O-Matic, Pocket Fisherman, Showtime Standard Rotisserie, Solid Flavor Injector, Chop-o-Matic dealio: membership in the South Wood County Historical Corp.

It's a whopping bargain. $20 for an entire year's membership in SWCHC [now $25].

"The hysterical." The historical society. The Museum. The old library.

It's been at 540 Third Street S. since 1970. Even longer, for half-a-century plus, SWCHC as a civic organization has been here for you, working local history through stories like this, books, films, recordings, exhibits, archives, tours, programs, memories, photographs and more.

Can it be true?

That I can become a contributing member of this worthy cause for the price of two cheap fish fries and one Bud Light – tip not included? Or one expensive fish fry and two Bud Lights; 20% gratuity to be added.

A SWCHC membership will bring more than a few burps recollected in tranquility.

This offer is so incredible it is available today only to the readers of this column. For the same $20, you will receive, AT NO EXTRA COST, *Artifacts #27*.

Artifacts?

Nothing less than a top-notch local publication devoted completely to your history and mine as habitués of a magical place called "River City." *Artifacts* is jam packed with SWCHC news, programs and updates and, even better, historical facts, lore, legend and photographs. Here you will revisit the stories, sights and scenes of the past WITHOUT DANGEROUS CHEMICALS.

For $20, you will receive SWCHC membership and *Artifacts #27*, both delivered free of charge to your own personal mailbox by the U.S. Postal Service. There are no hidden shipping and handling fees.

But wait! There's more.

Take advantage of this offer today and get TWO FOR THE PRICE OF ONE. At no additional charge, you will receive your own personal copy of, not just #27, but *Artifacts #28*, to arrive in February, 2011, another chapter of the same high-quality cutting-edge history [inquire about updated offers].

Three products for the same low price: SWCHC membership; *Artifacts #27* and *#28*. How can it get any better? Listen up, pard.

This year and this year only, the wacky folks at SWCHC will QUADRUPLE this offer and add *Artifacts* #29 and #30 for the same amazingly low price, shipping and handling still included.

If you thought the giveaways had subsided, keep reading. OMG! Uncle Dave is NUTTY AS A FRUITCAKE.

With your order of a SWCHC membership, complete with four issues of *Artifacts*, an amazing bonus has just been added for the first time: FREE BOOK.

And not just any book. It's *River City Memoirs VI: The Home Front*, a $20 value alone.

River City Memoirs is a collection of stories that appeared here in the *Daily Tribune* since 1980 all about Wisconsin Rapids history by the City Historian whose byline heads this exact promotion. *Home Front* mostly features the World War II era here and may even mention your grandma or grandpa.

For the same low, low, price, add it up: SWCHC membership, four issues of *Artifacts*, AND *The Home Front*.

There is only one catch and it's not much of one: if you need the book mailed to you, it will cost you an extra $5 for postage, making your total $25. But if you pick up *Home Front* at the Museum, it's absolutely free.

There is NO BETTER CHRISTMAS GIFT than this bunch of stuff.

Not only can you support a worthy local cause and cover your coffee table with high-class verbiage, you can solve a personal problem. Who hasn't found the years coming around a lot faster than good gift ideas?

Here is the answer, especially for someone who thinks he or she already has at least one of everything in the known material universe. Impossible.

NO ONE ALREADY HAS *ARTIFACTS* #27, #28, #29 or #30 and they're all included in this incredible deal.

You're not going to get a lot of these offers in the future: $60 worth of products for $20. Nice young men in clean white suits are coming to take him away; Uncle Dave has a one-way ticket to the funny farm.

All I Want for Christmas Is a 2-headed Calf

Not on everybody's wish list but Santa brought it to a Junction City farmer in 1960: a two-headed calf. Born dead, it also had six legs.

In the same issue of the *Daily Tribune*, chosen because it had been delivered on Christmas Eve, fifty years ago, was found a photo even more serenely serendipitous than the bifurcated bovine, as follows:

And the $64,000 question is: what do these boys of 1960 have in common: Wayne Dempze, Gary Ashenberg, Jim Wilhorn, Mark Suckow and Dave Engel?

Answer: They were all cornet players.

"Bent on spreading Christmas cheer, the Pep Band of Lincoln High School went caroling Friday evening at the Wood County Infirmary and Riverview Hospital. Shoppers heard them as they later caroled in the downtown area." Out of the archives of River City, a copy of the same photo reappears now and then, suggestive of an evening when Scrooge was but a figment of an Englishman's imagination and the Spirit of Christmas was feeling his Old Milwaukee.

Of course, a lot of the Spirit's chorale was rattling the same old holy chains.

Of the same old Holy Land.

In 1960, it was United Arab Republic leader and Egyptian President Nasser who threatened Israel with a shooting war if the 12-year-old nation built an atomic bomb. He said a constant state of war existed between Israel and the UAR and chastised the U.S. for arming Arab enemies.

The Spirit rattled the same old money chains too.

Britain reported record poultry sales for Christmas dinner; Italy, that shopkeepers were running out of sable, mink and chinchilla; Paris, that night clubs were sold out; and Africa, that refugees were dying of starvation. Here, only an untimely blizzard chilled hopes for a new high in Christmas sales.

In the political world, as of Christmas 1960, Democrat John F. Kennedy had just won a narrow election over Republican Richard M. Nixon, due to the votes, a columnist speculated, of 100,000 "freewheeling, independent eggheads," whereas Nixon and the outgoing President Eisenhower had gained most support from the business community.

The Spirit of 1960 rattled the same old fantasy movie at Christmas. At the Rapids theater, now Rogers Cinema, was the Brobdingnagian romp, "Three Worlds of Gulliver." At the Wisconsin, Bob Hope and Lucille Ball in "The Facts of Life" – "two romantic couples are each married to different people! They really DO love each other."

At the Rialto in Nekoosa, "The Boy and the Laughing Dog."

But some of what the Spirit of Christmas 1960 presented has been warped by the half-century that unfolded. When President Eisenhower lit the D.C. tree, he said he was grateful, "for all the material comforts with which we have been blessed," while urging the nation to look seriously at its imperfections: racial prejudices and apathy toward violations of law and integrity.

Things have changed.

Self-styled pollster Eugene Gilbert, said young Americans of 1960 related a growing belief in God, caused, he suggested, by the threat of annihilation in the atomic age. Three-fourths of teens said they attended religious services regularly, compared to 59 per cent in 1955.

Things have changed.

Throughout recorded time, a *Tribune* egghead said, war has been the usual means of solving disagreements between nations. "Today, however, with the atom bomb, war is no longer a practical extension of diplomacy. Like it or not, we are now one family, and aggression against one member of that family could lead to the end of the world family as a whole. Peace, based upon brotherly love, expressed by world law and enforceable by some means, seems to be the only alternative.

"When we say 'peace on earth,' we could mean peace for all men and countries, not just those who agree with our political philosophy. When we say 'goodwill to men,' we could mean all men, not just those of our color, nationality or creed."

War, in 1960, was outmoded. Now, it is routine. But not everything has changed.

Christmas over, it was/is time to party: JOIN OUR GALA—HOTEL MEAD—Dinner and Dancing—"Out of this World" Dinner Menu—Music By THE CASTILLIANS.

Get Into Orbit—Make Reservations.

Have A Fun Packed Evening With Favors For All.

Come EAT, DRINK, DANCE and be MERRY.

Then as now [2010], what follows Christmas is New Years. Celebrate! New Year's Eve. Something for Everyone! Music By Southbound.

Hotel Mead, still advertising and still at the same number, HA 3-1500.

[And at that number in 2015!]

David and Kathryn

Clyde Avenue East? 1948

Canoe pictured at Clyde Avenue east was moved to Two Mile Avenue where it sat on the ground until it disappeared.

David, center, cousin Dennis, right, at rented house on Clyde Avenue. For a while, it did not have indoor plumbing.

Clyde Avenue West

Duane Keating, 1949, neighbor, at his house adjacent to the matching one rented by the Don Engel family on Clyde Avenue, north of Grove School, then in the heart of “Sand Hill,” town of Grand Rapids.

State Capital?

Community progress initiators got good news shortly after the night of Feb. 26, 1904, learning that a gas jet had ignited a newly-varnished ceiling in the Wisconsin state capitol building, followed by a series of fortunate events, including finding the nearby university reservoir empty. When Milwaukee firefighters arrived in the bitter cold, their equipment was frozen and temporarily unusable.

Most of the structure burned to the ground, destroying documents and most famously, the stuffed eagle, Old Abe, Civil War mascot.

To make matters worse (or better), the fire occurred just after the State Legislature voted to cancel the capitol's fire insurance policy, a decision blamed on Gov. "Fighting Bob" La Follette.

The fiasco provided our state senator, Herman C. Wipperman, a perfect moment to propose bringing home a barrel of pork we would be barbecuing still: move the state capital and capitol to Grand Rapids.

Sounded pretty good to Rapids mayor Wheelan, who immediately appointed a committee to assist. The March 2, 1904, *Grand Rapids Tribune* grabbed a figurative pitcher and poured what we now call "the Kool-Aid."

"It is hardly necessary to enumerate all of the advantages that there would be in having the capitol located in Grand Rapids, as every small boy in this locality knows them by heart."

The ten o'clock scholars could recite that Grand Rapids occupied one of the most central locations in the state; and had more railroads serving it than any other city in the state – with prospects for more, or so the vision went.

Certainly, there was lots of water, River City "being situated on one of the prettiest streams in the state, and the fluid is good to wash in and drink also."

Too much copper-colored water or opium-infused sugar water seemed to be affecting the newspaper, which further declared, "We have no brewery but no doubt with the increased demand created by the location of the capitol it would soon be established and would be one of our most paying institutions." So what if legislators here would contaminate the better class of our people, "corrupt their morals, so to speak…

"Of course we would not have to associate with the lawmakers if we did not want to, and it is possible that if we did condescend to associate with them it would raise their standard of morality very considerably.

"Of course it is barely possible that the new capitol building may not be built here, but if the powers that be are onto their job there will not be much hesitation in the matter."

The rival *Wisconsin Valley Leader* agreed that Grand Rapids, on the picturesque "Old Wisconse," with its railroad connections, would appeal to the unprejudiced voter; but there were obstacles, such as contention that unprejudiced voters were few to none and the belief that a constitutional provision required the capital and state university to be located in the same city.

Belmont, the original capital, along with Oshkosh and Milwaukee also pursued the opportunity but local pundits cautioned that, if the state seat were to be located in Milwaukee, that city would "be found to possess the longest pole and would 'rake in the persimmons,'" another wording for "pork," which are now called "earmarks."

Sen. Wipperman's bill, presented a year after the Madison fire, received the approval of several upstate newspapers, including the Marinette *Eagle*. Wipperman and his story were also featured in the Chicago *Chronicle*, a version repeated locally, again with the same talking points.

"The Wisconsin River Valley is rapidly becoming the leading manufacturing, commercial and agricultural section of the state, and when preparing to build a new capital [*sic]* it seems the most natural thing possible to locate it in the industrial as well as geographical center and have such railroad facilities as to make it easily accessible to every part of the State."

The Pittsville *Times*, from a village that had identical cartographic claims, joined "the boomers for Grand Rapids," because, "Anything that helps a city in this county helps us. Grand Rapids spelled out in big black capital letters on the future maps of Wisconsin, with a big six-pointed star indicating the location of the capital of the state would look good."

Fun while it lasted, Wipperman's capital idea was buried in the Capitol and Grounds committee, leaving good ol' River City to forge a solely industrial destiny and to face its startling decline in the New Millennium.

Desperate Housewives 1961

When this "50 years ago" timeline began in 1989, it marked the 1939 invasion of Poland and other European countries by Nazi Germany and the beginning of World War II. The timeline continued through the 1945 birth of this author and his generation until now "50 years ago" dates to his sophomore year at Lincoln high school.

Any issue of the *Daily Tribune* of 1961 will show again how some things change and some seem to stay the same. These items are from February 1.

Nationally, a "liberal" Democrat tried to cope with economic recession.

Newly-inaugurated Pres. John F. Kennedy said he would ask Congress for postal rate increases and a raise in the gas tax. The funds would help pay for "a shot in the arm for the economy" by: extending unemployment compensation payments while implementing long range programs to fund federal highway programs; providing tax credits for heavy plant equipment purchases; and expanding the home mortgage market.

Kennedy's plans required action by a Congress where Republicans, said the *Tribune*, "seem determined to slow spending programs as much as they can."

—Locally, Lincoln high school sponsored an excellent wrestling program in which coach Ken Hurlbut's team posted its ninth triumph in ten matches. Among the winners against Wittenberg were Mike Ebsen, Melvin "Doc" Weller, Lafe Enkro, Dick Droste, Dale Dix, Larry Ironside, Lynn Dix and Frank Klevene.

Weller would, in 1961, become Lincoln's second state champion with a 22-0-1 record.

—"Daly Music & Appliance Co. celebrating Diamond Jubilee."

A large portion of the Feb. 1 paper was taken up with the 75-year anniversary of one of the city's oldest businesses, founded by the late Frank P. Daly in the "small riverfront city of Centralia." In 1961, Daly Music & Appliance was located at 351 W. Grand Avenue near what is now U.S. Bank.

Frank had opened the Centralia Jewelry & Music Co. in 1886 on the site of what in 1961 was the Quick Lunch restaurant. After 14 years, it moved a block "eastward to the old Pomainville building" which stood on the site of the 1961 Heilman's store.

When Frank died in 1903, his wife (whose name was Louise but who is called "Mrs. Frank Daly" in the 1961 story), with her four children, disposed of the store's jewelry stock and moved the musical instruments to her home. With her oldest son, Francis, she traveled the countryside selling pianos and organs.

In 1917, Francis took over management of the phonograph department and opened a store in a West Grand Avenue site about where the Frank Abel Clothes shop was to be located later in the 1926 Mead-Witter block. In 1922, the West Grand store that was celebrated 50 years later was built.

Another son of Frank and Louise was Glen Daly, who, in 1920, took over management of the piano department and was associated with the company until January 1959 when Glen purchased the adjoining Wilcox building and established the Glen Daly Music Co. as a separate enterprise.

The partner of Francis Daly Sr. in 1961 was his son, Francis ("Bud") Daly Jr., who continued to sell GE appliances long enough for me to buy a television from him. Now, half a century after the Diamond Jubilee, Bud is still an active personality about town.

— The headline says, "American husbands fail to make selves attractive." These husbands were probably born around 1940 so they would have crested 70 by now [2011].

According to Dr. George W. Crane, the failure to "feed their husbands in the erotic appetites" maybe wasn't all the wives' fault. (In 1961, male sexual partners were called "husbands" and female, "wives.")

Some wives had complained that when they tried to become more aggressive, they were repelled by fumes of tobacco, liquor, onions or garlic on their husbands' breath. Some Neanderthal males couldn't tell a toothbrush from a cake of soap, having used neither.

Crane warned husbands that a wife was "always more sluggish in her erotic disposition, for her brain is woman's chief sex organ." Hence, females required "idealism" and "play acting," always difficult for men "with little use for poetry or candlelight at meal time."

According to Crane, the usual opening remark of the typical un-talkative American male was, "Smoke?" as he proffered a cigarette before taking his date to a movie where he tried to drape his arm around her. Afterwards, he might invite her to a tavern for a beer or a hot dog sandwich, finally wanting to park in some lovers' lane and "demonstrate Roman hands."

Not a pretty story but, face it kids and grand kids, that's how the worst generation conducted the social network that produced you.

What Democracy Looks Like

At Wisconsin's capitol square, the call went out, "Tell me what democracy looks like," and the response came back time and again.

"THIS is what democracy looks like."

That day, Saturday, Feb. 25, democracy looked like ordinary but noisy people: union members, teachers and college students parading in steadily-falling snow to protest their governor's plans. His "budget repair" bill would end collective bargaining for their public employee unions.

Call: "What's disgusting?"

Response: "Union busting."

In the glory years, them was fightin' words in our own "Paper City," a classic labor union town. For example, my dad, then a welder, was financial secretary of the Machinist union local at Consolidated Water Power & Paper Co.

That was half a century ago.

Half a century before that, the rising labor movement was under attack by almost every paper company. Famously, in 1919, one leader decided to accept unions and go forward: Consolidated president George W. Mead I, later Rapids mayor and U.S. senate candidate.

At Lincoln high school, my American Problems "hour talk" topic was racketeering by the International Brotherhood of Teamsters. The strong arm tactics of Dave Beck and Jimmy Hoffa seemed remote from the Papermakers local I joined in 1964 as "summer help."

Had I stayed at Consolidated, I would be much wealthier today. As it happened, college degrees lured me into the profession of "writer," one of the worst: no collective bargaining, contracts, security, benefits or sympathy.

Fortunately, I had the good sense to marry a teacher, allowing me for 30 years to share punditry like this with the readers of the *Daily Tribune*. Now mill workers and teachers have bonded against a common antagonist and have found themselves a new role, acting out crowd scenes in a Menckenesque political melodrama.

To halt the budget repair bill vote they would lose, 14 Democratic state senators absconded to Illinois. Meanwhile, the Republican-led Assembly caught other Democrats napping and passed a budget bill after midnight in view of angry protesters occupying the capitol building 24-7.

This is what democracy looked like in 2011. What did it look like in 1968 to Lyndon B. Johnson?

Four years earlier, he had been elected President over Republican Barry Goldwater with 61% of the vote, then the widest popular margin of the 20th century.

Result?

In Madison and across the land, "the people" turned against LBJ in flamboyant recrimination that induced the creator of the Great Society to announce his decision not to seek the 1968 nomination. He included these well-peopled words: "There is divisiveness among us all tonight. And holding the trust that is mine, as President of all the people, I cannot disregard the peril to the progress of the American people and the hope and the prospect of peace for all peoples."

The current Wisconsin commander-in-chief reminds me of my mother. She lamented that the people, her children, the underling progeny, were a disappointment because they didn't do what they were told to do in a brisk and cheerful manner.

What does democracy look like to "Gov. Mom?"

Clearly, he's been elected parent, having received 27 per cent, just over half the votes of the half of the people eligible to vote who actually voted. Now the people, children and underlings, should snap to attention and march with a smile.

By contrast, during that early strike at Consolidated, George Mead showed up at the picket line for a face to face with the people, his colleagues, after which he decided collective bargaining was here to stay and furthermore, that Consolidated workers would continue to work hard.

"There is every reason to believe that we can meet together on common ground," he said. "We can not do this by condemnation, retaliation and abuse."

That was 1919. What did democracy look like in 1972?

Lyndon Johnson's successor as President was reelected with a 23.2 per cent margin, almost 18 million more votes than the antiwar Democrat, George McGovern.

Result?

The people turned against Richard Nixon in a vast, disorderly enemies list and he resigned in two years, leaving behind a thought mothers and governors everywhere can embrace:

"Politics would be a helluva good business," he said, "if it weren't for the (expletive deleted) people."

Jerry Wood

Skiing at night toward the ancient fence line leading to deeper woods, I saw what I shouldn't see. At a familiar home out by the road, red lights flashed all too patiently, making it a shock but not a surprise when the phone call came: "This is Gen; Jerry died today."

The March 10, 2011, death of her husband and my good neighbor, Jerome B. Wix, 82, ended a big era in our little corner of Rudolph township. For 35 years, he was the most common visitor to my property, much like the pail-carrying French-Canadian wood chopper who bemused author and philosopher Henry David Thoreau at his Walden Pond cabin.

"I went to the woods," wrote Thoreau, "because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived."

Proud of an early interest in English and literature, Jerry may have read Thoreau's words; for sure he lived them.

Thoreau was a surveyor by trade and so were we for a day or two some 20 years ago when, to pay for a new tractor, Jerry sold me a couple acres that adjoined mine. Rather than hire a professional, we measured from the road, paced off a line and marked it with whatever metal posts were available. The trees I planted, now fat as golfers, stand in a perfectly straight line even when seen in satellite views.

As a mason, notably expert with stone work, Jerry had helped build many homes in central Wisconsin, one of which, in 1976, was [and is] mine. Under his tutelage and benefiting from his commentary on all topics, I hauled rocks, mixed mortar and cemented over wedge holes at the end of the day.

For a 1980 *Daily Tribune* "Seventies Section" interview, Jerry and Gen told me about how happy they were to live in Rudolph, which they termed a "faith community." At Jerry's funeral was displayed a fading photograph that may have come from that *Tribune* session. In it, he assumed a pose worthy of *Field & Stream*, shotgun in one hand and ever-present pipe in the other.

At the funeral lunch in St. Philip's Catholic church basement, survivors discussed the resourcefulness of our passed comrade.

How he convinced us to enable his efforts: one neighbor to cut trees and leave him the branches; a second neighbor to haul the branches down the road to Jerry's yard; a third to loan him a chain saw to cut up the branches; so he could finally sell the finished product to a fourth neighbor, me.

This "Jerry wood," composed of 16-inch-long sticks from 1-3 inches in diameter, was carefully stacked and covered with plywood scraps and countertop laminate, for me to pick up. A mix of maple, pine, oak, birch and poplar, it was good and dry, but burned up fast.

Jerry also made the rounds in search of spare parts. His latest quest had been after a window to repair a door, for which he had tried and returned several samples found in barns and storage sheds along the way.

As crops ripened, he might ask how the broccoli or sweet corn was coming. "Are you going to pick those beans?" If not, he would be there before noon.

Jerry believed the bounty of the earth should not be wasted and that it was meant to be shared.

Anyone along his circuit could expect ice cream pails filled in season with blackberries, wild and domesticated grapes and tart native plums. In plastic buckets, he brought apples, grapes, plywood kindling and bluegills floating in former river water, some still gasping.

Most striking were the occasions I opened my front door to find a headless cottontail rabbit stuffed between screen and inner door, meaning I had to drop any previous plans, sharpen up the tin snips and find a recipe for hasenpfeffer.

Thanks and more to Jerry for all these things, remembered in ways short and long: tracks from a small black pickup—will last a couple years; jars of plum jam—about the same; rabbit between doors—timeless in the tale; bundles of Jerry wood—until Memorial Day; and stones in the wall—as good as immortal.

Potluck 1961

If the cold war got hot, noted a 1961 *Daily Tribune*, Nick Engel out on Plover Road would be one of the few River City residents who were ready. Engel, with help from seven children and their spouses, was putting the finishing touches on a fallout shelter at the rear of his property.

If Russia launched the predicted nuclear attack that would bring on World War III, Engel, like thousands of other like-minded shelter-builders across the continent, could take refuge underground, protected by a 27-ton ceiling of poured concrete and furnished with hand-operated fan, oil burner, gas stove, gas lights, sink, toilet, pump and three double bunks.

So those were the happy days.

The story about Nick Engel (no relation to me) came up when the word "Engel" was typed into "Newspaper Archives" for 1961.

As financial secretary for Machinists Local 655, this columnist's father, Donald Engel, a Consolidated welder, was pictured with other officers at the Labor Temple. At least once every month of that year, he was mentioned because he was secretary of the local International Order of Odd Fellows chapter or "lodge."

The odd gals who accompanied the eccentric fellas mentioned above were called "Rebekahs." Here, my mother, Sally, despite a bashful modesty, won media mention as "chairman of entertainment."

One program at the IOOF Temple (now a private residence adjacent to the SWCHC Museum) included the skit, "Friday's Thursday Off," by Mrs. Donald Engel and Mrs. Ray Wilson and the "Rebekah Song," also with Mrs. Frank Newman and Mrs. Prosser. Donald Engel joined Ernest Krohnholm for what had to be a humorous reading of "How to Drive a Car" and Robert Cleworth, music instructor at Lincoln high school, contributed selections.

At the Rebekah Christmas party, Mrs. Don Engel presented a "Password" contest, preceded by the obligatory potluck supper. In July 1961 the monthly lodge potluck was held at the Two Mile Avenue home of Don and Sally: "bring your own tableware and a dish to pass; rolls and beverage will be furnished."

(Planned and executed by Don, the newer local Odd Fellows temple on 9th Street, is named Engel Fellowship Lodge.)

The 1961 *Tribune* said Mom, still entertaining, joined Mrs. Bertram Urban and Mrs. Harold Sultze on the Christmas program committee of the First Methodist church.

A photo of Don and a "churchman's" planning committee included Henry Baldwin, Calvin Hagen and Don Arndt. At Methodist Youth Fellowship, the officers in 1961 were Jack Ritchie, president, Tim Snyder, vice president, Kathy Engel, secretary, Karolyn Hulse and Ralph Riemer, committee members, and "Dave Engel," treasurer.

Dave's best accomplishment was a "first" at the state solo-ensemble contest at Madison for a brass choir including James Wilhorn, Gary Ashenberg, Ronald Plowman, Mark Suckow, Ronald Hamelink, Christine Marceil, Dale Fausch, Judy Gilbert, Mary Morzinski, Paul Brown, Jack Roller, Dave Parker, James Weisman, Craig Carpenter, Bob Meyer and Les Johnson.

Dave's sister, Kathy, a sophomore in December 1961, performed in "My Niece from Paris," a one-act play at Lincoln high school with her friends Sally Peterson, Elaine Rued, Barbara Reddick, Judy Jackson, Judy Wachter, Sally Plummer and Terry Thompson, all pictured in the *Daily Tribune*. Play directors were Dave's classmates, Jennifer Junkman and Jennifer Johnson.

Methodist church Christmas eve candlelight services included a liturgy by Kathy.

The youngest Engel to come to attention in 1961 was brother Gary of Grand Rapids Cub Scout Pack 178, who received a Lion badge. He also won a chess tournament at Woodside School summer playground.

The summer of 1961 Dave went to work for Sampson Canning Co., among the 100 men and boys working at pea viners in the fields. According to the *Tribune*, the company would soon begin processing beans, mostly harvested by new mechanical methods.

Although young Dave spent time with Odd Fellows and Methodist Youth Fellowship, he preferred to hang out in the vicinity of Grand Avenue on weekend nights.

Like at the Wisconsin Theatre, where, according to a *Tribune* promo, on February 14 country western singer Marty Robbins appeared "in person" to sing hits such as "White Sport Coat and a Pink Carnation" and "El Paso."

But you can't beat the Drag Strip Benefit Dance sponsored by the Creepers Rod and Custom Club at the Palace Ballroom—featuring none other than our own, The Fabulous Zakons.

Masons

At the Murfreesboro, Tenn., Civil War battlefield in the spring of 2010, the only other visitor was a bearded Caucasian youth, probably a graduate student touring the South. A mostly African-American work crew laid asphalt on the parking lot, perhaps enjoying the fruits of President Obama's stimulus plan by paving over the long-absorbed blood of Stephen J. Carpenter.

Capt. S.J. Carpenter died in what the Northern brethren called the Battle of Stones River, 149 years ago, only a few months after he volunteered at Stevens Point for Lyon's Pinery Battery, 8th Light Artillery.

A year earlier, which is to us a more memorable 150 years ago, Carpenter, a dam builder and prominent citizen, was living in Wood County. Here, among other interests, he was a founder and first Worshipful Master of the local chapter of the Free and Accepted Masons, which as a group continues to define itself as the oldest, largest and most widely known fraternal organization in the world.

Current Worshipful Master of the Wisconsin Rapids F&AM Lodge 128 Craig Carpenter is not directly related to Capt. Carpenter above; but the connection between the two is furthered in Craig's new Lodge 128 history, which updates previous versions by Martin Lipke (1958) and James Studley (1995).

Much of our early information about the group comes from the 1881 *History of Northern Wisconsin*, which recognizes that, "The common tendency of civilized people to form themselves into societies, developed itself at a very early day in Grand Rapids."

The local "F. & A.M." lodge began meetings "as early as" 1848 but, because a fire destroyed the first records in 1867, the official founding is based on a charter signed June 12, 1861, three months after the Civil War began.

Among the founders were Jesse H. Lang, A. Lamb, Henry Clinton, Robert Farrish, Thomas Barbour, S.H. Pearson, J. Stanley Rood and Abijah Pierce, whose 1890 obituary says he trod a familiar path from Massachusetts through New York and southern Wisconsin to Grand Rapids in 1858. According to his obituary, Pierce became "a consistent Mason, true and trusty. Masonry was his religion—the lodge his house of worship." In 1884, he gave the lodge a portrait of George Washington, also a Mason.

Many biographies in the 1923 *History of Wood County*, contain references to Masons and other fraternal organizations. Following is a list of Masons who also belonged to the Elks: George Hill, Franklin Wood, Mark Whitrock, Charles Normington, Ernest Anderson, Charles Kruger, Freeman Gilkey, August Gottschalk, John Farrish, Charles Briere, Thomas Mills, Oscar Mortenson, Guy Babcock, Dr. William Ruckle, Amos Hasbrouck, Dr. Hugh Waters, Fred Bossert, Frank Calkins, Earl Smart, Charles Kellogg, William T. Jones, William Huffman Jr., Edward Gleason and Joseph Cohen.

Other similar institutions that Masons listed were Rotary, Eastern Star, Methodist church, Congregational church (common), American Legion, Woodmen of the World, Tripoli Shrine, Odd Fellows, Eagles, Knights Templar, G.A.R., Bullseye Country Club, Moose, Mystic Workers, Royal Arcanum, Beavers, Equitable Fraternal Union and Republican party.

Lodge 128 inhabited numerous homes prior to its location since 1959 at 2321 2nd Avenue S.

According to Craig Carpenter's account, in 1866-67, a hall was rented from William S. Miller. In 1859, Miller owned the Grand Rapids Hotel and later a general store in the vicinity of what is now the Jackson Street bridge landing.

Perhaps due to the 1867 fire that destroyed early records, meetings were moved to a building owned by George Neeves but in 1868 they were returned to Miller's establishment through the 1870s and, at the time of the 1881 history, were held in a room over Seth Reeves' store.

In a related incident, when the flood of 1888 washed out the city's only bridge, the Congregationalists and Methodists of the West Side (Centralia) joined in the Unity Church and erected what later was the Masonic Hall and, in the 1960s, the Corpsman Hall.

A footnote to this story comes through another local landmark: Rosecrans Street, Wisconsin Rapids. When Stephen Carpenter died at Murfreesboro, he was under the command of General William S. Rosecrans, like so many soldiers of both sides, a fellow Mason.

Rapids Lodge No. 128 celebrates its 150th Anniversary on Sunday, June 12, [2011] at the Mead Hotel, 150 years to the day that the charter was granted and signed.

Last Train to Rudolph

Lately I have wondered why, if I lived outside the city limits, it was a city cop, Leon Galganski, who drove me home after curfew that night in 1962. Though I had spent my first months in a West Side apartment, my youth was misspent in the unincorporated area south of town, where my associates and I attended a "country" or state-graded school.

What I recently found is that 50 years ago I was in the process of returning to the city of my birth, or, better said, Wisconsin Rapids was returning to me.

According to the June 1, 1961, *Daily Tribune*, a referendum in the Grove-Woodside-Two Mile School District approved annexation, followed by the Wisconsin Rapids Common Council's adoption. The resulting ordinance then was being considered by circuit judge Herbert Bunde.

Before you knew it, there would be fluoride, garbage pickup and kindergarten.

The same June 1 *Tribune* contained other items of interest on the front page.

•The Witter Vocational School was in the process of metamorphosis to Mid-State Technical Institute as the Wisconsin Rapids Board of Vocational and Adult Education hired Eldon C. Everetts to succeed longtime director W.A. Sprise. Everetts, a native of Minnesota, was a graduate of Stout State College, Menomonie, Wis., and had been Director of Stoughton vocational and adult education for four years.

The Vocational School and directors Everetts and Sprise are profiled in the history book, *Building for the Future: Mid-State Technical College 1907-2010* by Dave Engel and Holly Knoll.

•Also depicted in *Building for the Future* is Wood County Teachers College, then adjacent to the Vocational School.

The 1961 *Tribune* reported that, in a joint graduation ceremony with the student teachers, receiving 8th grade diplomas from Warren J. Lensmire, president, were five graduates of the college Model school: Kathleen Ironside, Jack McGraw, Allen Macha, Betty Parsons and Lois Skerven. Included in the program was music by Mrs. Dorothea Johnson, Model School principal and the college trio of Carolyn Ralston, Judy Collins and Nancy Swope.

Of 30 Teachers College graduates, 22 had accepted positions in elementary schools, two would be "homemakers" and the others would move on to Wisconsin State Colleges at Stevens Point and River Falls.

•Assumption high school was entering its numerical prime as it graduated 121 seniors, including valedictorian Marlene Rezin and salutatorian Rosemary Lepinski.

•Badger Plastics Corp.

Hope for a brighter future was expressed by president J.J. Nimtz and officers Darwin Blanke and Jay G. Somers at the company's annual meeting. After numerous conflicts with out-of-town directors, Badger showed a loss after its first year but hoped to break even in 1961 on the way to prosperity. It planned to manufacture a variety of items at Pepper Avenue and 16th Street in the Town of Grand Rapids.

Nimtz was also vice president and director of purchases for Preway, Inc., a local manufacturer of stoves and other metal items.

•Photo on Page Two: Mrs. Lawrence Marcoux, attended by Wood County Telephone Co.'s general manager, H.B. Flower, making the area's first direct-dialed long distance call.

•Last train to Rudolph: 85 years previous the first passenger train into the Grotto village. In 1961, 200 passengers aboard Milwaukee Road No. 203 for Wausau.

The junket carried a ton of children who couldn't sit still and a hundred pounds of pretty girl with an accordionist who played "Beer Barrel Polka," "Let Me Call You Sweetheart" and "Red Raven Polka."

The passengers joined in singing and the conductor couldn't resist a few jig steps down the aisle.

At Wausau waited a television cameraman as the crowd detrained for a nearby restaurant and mass quantities of "pop," before returning en masse on to a southbound back to Rudolph for the last stop ever.

•Peacock: stolen from municipal zoo and recovered by police in a car parked on Drake street where the bird had been placed, apparently as a prank—Lincoln's head not being available.

•Lincoln's head would be an item of interest and the foreign exchange Dutch girl tainted with guilt by association in theft of same during the following school year. That was Hendrika Van der Harst, chosen in the summer of 1961 to enjoy a portion of her life adventure right here in River City.

Bookworm

Fourth-grade teacher Mrs. Schmidt was smart, pretty and pretty much in charge as principal of the four room "state graded" Two Mile School. When she retired 21 years later, Mrs. Schmidt told the *Daily Tribune* she had taught grades one through four and liked fourth grade best. "It's a good age; the kids can do a lot for themselves. They want to learn; they try so many things on their own and they still mind."

By "mind," she meant the kids did what they were told.

In my year, 1954, Mrs. Schmidt had strongly reprimanded us for not returning encyclopedia volumes to their proper place, which some of us took seriously; yet, it wasn't an hour before Larry, an archetypal underachiever, tossed a book in the general direction of the shelf and walked away.

So I said, "Larry didn't put the encyclopedias away." And Mrs. Schmidt answered, "Don't be a tattle tale."

Clearly, it was a mistake to do the right thing and that was the last time I tried. By sixth grade I was carrying a loaded squirt gun.

Maybe 30 years later, I began to recognize Mrs. Schmidt around town, though she was not nearly as tall or stern as I had remembered.

Through my mother, she relayed the scrapbook I am looking at now. Here are wallet-size faces of friends Harlan Kramer, Bruce Zanow, Clen Brundidge, Jerry Calvi, Alfred Leggitt, Boyd Sharkey and Jennifer Enkro.

As for Larry, he is listed on the roll under the first of the surnames I knew him by but his record is blank and there is no photo.

The scrapbook ends with Mrs. Schmidt's 1976 retirement, which, she said, sort of snuck up on her. "All of a sudden it's here. It went by so fast, especially the last 10 years." Perhaps the biggest reward of teaching, she said, was when children with difficulties at home or in school "made well of themselves."

In retirement, Mrs. Schmidt continued to add clippings about former students. She had kept the 1967 *Tribune* story about me going to the University of Wyoming and 1980s *Tribune* stories such as "River City Memoirs Trivia," "Heart of Rapids was Grand Avenue," and "Uninvited stranger shows up at Christmas."

She had a 1979 photo and story about how Two Mile School would close permanently June 1, recalling that the front half replaced a wooden building in 1913 and the rear half was built in the late 1930s to accommodate a rising enrollment.

In the 1950s, pupils were not privy to lives of teachers. Lately, I found that Mrs. Schmidt attended Madison East High School and Whitewater State College. In 1946, after stints at Fort Atkinson and Beaver Dam, she began teaching at Two Mile and, when it opened in 1949, Grove School, both then in the town of Grand Rapids. She later added a degree from UW-Stevens Point.

My first new friend at Grove, back in 1955, was George Zimmerman. He confirms that Larry lived with his Grandma Kitchkume on Pepper Avenue and that her clotheslines stood on the lot long after the old two-story house had been removed.

Newspapers show Larry's grandmother active in her church, the community and Native American events.

George remembers himself and Larry in a vacant lot shooting blunt-tipped arrows into the sky, one scoring a direct hit on Larry's head. In 6th grade, George said, Larry in anger cast his fountain pen at a young teacher, damaging her red dress. He quickly finding himself in Principal Budahl's office.

George couldn't verify my impression that Larry jumped off a railroad bridge into the Wisconsin river, though it is believable.

Larry Boutwell was born in Milwaukee and died at Elgin, Ill., in 1980. His son, an anti-gang activist, was shot and killed in 1996.

Loving references to "Lawrence" have been placed on Ancestry.com, including photos of him with an attractive dark-skinned mother, who, according to records, had attended Tomah Indian School.

Would Mrs. Schmidt do it over again, the *Tribune* had asked.

"For me, it was the right thing to do," she said. She had come from a long line of teachers.

For her, telling me not to tattle on Larry was the right thing to do. Whatever precious wrongs the class bookworm might feel, Larry already had enough real problems.

See additional material from Mrs. Schmidt's in Artifacts 30.

Witter Revisits Museum Home

When I asked him if he had ever been in the building before, the visitor said, "I was born here."

The distinguished River City native was Phelps Dean Witter, of San Francisco, Cal., who visited the South Wood County Historical Museum, 540 Third Street, in mid-August [2010] with his wife, Barbara.

Bearing a resemblance to Isaac Witter, the Museum's original owner, Dean, 78, operates Witter Coins in San Francisco and composes classical music of some distinction. He and Barbara had returned to Rapids to bury Dean's sister, Priscilla Witter, the other person known to be born in the Museum building.

The father of Dean and Priscilla and their older brother, Jere III, was Jere Witter II (1902-77), the "playboy" reputed to have flown his airplane under the Grand Avenue Bridge, who was born before the house was built.

Jere II, here often called "Young Jere," to distinguish him from his eminent namesake and grandfather, J.D. Witter, was the only child of Charlotte and Isaac Witter, whose home became the T.B. Scott Public Library in 1948 and the Historical Museum in 1970.

Also an only child of sorts was Dean's mother, Suzanne Gobel, of Evanston, Ill., daughter of Charles and Julia Gobel.

Prior to her marriage to Gobel, a contractor/architect, Suzanne's mother Julia had been married to a dentist, and Julia's son, Kenneth Keats, sometimes lived with the Gobels. "My grandfather Gobel wanted mother to be a musician," Dean said, whereby Suzanne and Julia traveled to Europe to further Suzanne's piano playing—as Dean himself was to do later.

But Gobel couldn't support the lifestyle indefinitely.

Dean: "Mother was poor, father rich. Mother went to work at Marshall Fields, modeling furs. She was gorgeous. Jere spotted her, took her out on a date.

"The Witters were thrilled with her. Grandmother [Charlotte] was an organist and they got along. Mother made friends in Rapids. She would mention the Brazeaus, Nashes, Kelloggs.

"Mother and Father had Jere III right away, then Priscilla [1930-2010] and me [1932], both born in a bedroom here. By then, the marriage was finished.

"Grandma and grandpa always exited in winter. In the 1930s, they discovered California."

When Suzanne and the children left Jere II to join Charlotte and Isaac in La La Land (travel courtesy of driver Hod Bell, future husband of Emily Mead Bell), their house was a gift from Grandpa.

A 1936 Beverly Hills city directory lists Isaac and Charlotte Witter and Jere III at one address and Mrs. Suzanne Gobel at another.

When Charlotte died in 1955, a California obituary honored her as a prominent citizen and church leader of Beverly Hills. At the time, Priscilla and Dean were living in France, where Dean and Barbara Newman had been wed and where Dean was studying musical composition.

In 1942, the year of Isaac's death, Priscilla spent the winter at the Third Street house here. Dean followed, after a stop with Uncle George Gibson at his Drake Hotel, Chicago, residence, visits to "the theater" and a Cubs game.

Dean said that, while at the Witter home here, he had a crush on June Jackan, a young family maid and saw a lot of Otto and Mabel Krumrei, family employees favored by Isaac but not Charlotte. He stayed in Rapids for about a month.

"Father and Vi drove out from California in a new Cadillac," he said. Violet, Jere's second wife, born in England, died in Los Angeles in 1968.

Jere and Vi didn't stay long here, said Dean. "Father hated Wisconsin Rapids and I think Wisconsin Rapids hated him," said Dean.

Jere's third marriage took place in 1972, to "Annie," the fortune telling caregiver he met at a rehab facility. He died at Big Bear Lake, California, in 1977.

"Mother was puritanical and dominating," Dean said. "We'd go to father's and he would spoil us. He would take us shopping, which I adored.

"When our son needed braces, I asked father if he would give me the money. He said, 'No, I'm not going to give you money for teeth; I'll buy you a Porsche instead.'"

Civil War Sesquicentennial Rages On

Early in 1861, as southern states threatened to leave the union, "Old Bob Wakely" of Point Basse figured they could "secede and be damned."

"Secession troubles" had "dampened enterprise" here in the "pinery," where business men hoped for prompt action by President Lincoln.

On April 12, the attack on Fort Sumter began what LHS history teacher William Miller famously called the "bloody, bloody battles" of the Civil War or War of Rebellion as it was more commonly known then.

Our *Wood County Reporter* heaped scorn on the remote enemy. "We would suggest to Jeff Davis that the new Confederacy change, *just a little*, the name given the eight renegade States — calling them the *Can't-feed-her-eight* States."

When "Disunionists," "Tories" or jokesters here hoisted an early Confederate flag, Union loyalists riddled "the vile rag" with bullets, hauled it down and burned it. At a meeting to defend the federal government, "every available standing place in the capacious hall was occupied, and enthusiasm ran high throughout the vast assemblage." Stirring speeches were made, resolutions passed, and steps taken to form a military company.

A "Union Meeting" was led by W.W. Botkin, L.M. Hawley, "Messrs. Reeves and Lavigne" and W.B. Naylor. Resolutions called for defense of the U.S. government and retaking of national forts. "The time for party agitation has passed, and that it is our duty to unity in sustaining that flag which is the symbol of a nation never yet conquered." Speeches were delivered by "Messrs." Webb, McGrath and Compton; the "Star Spangled Banner" was sung by Philleo, Bradley and Wilcox; and remarks were heard from "Bacon and Salmon."

A paper to form a company to learn military drill was "extensively signed." Compton, Voyer, and T.B. Scott were designated to obtain subscriptions to defray expenses of those who might enlist and the meeting adjourned with three cheers for the Union.

In May, the *Reporter* said, "Democrats of this town have got up a new company, composed of men of their political faith exclusively, 'for their own amusement, and to be in readiness *when needed*.' It is styled the 'Grand Rapids Union Guards.'

"Grand Rapids is one of the live towns of this State. Full of energy and vigor, matters are done there with a 'rush' to be found only when the citizens are liberal and on the alert. Long may it wave, and be prosperous.

"By the way we hear that the patriotic citizens of our sister "burgh" [Centralia?] are sending a company of "African Zouaves," [wearing tribal costumes] for the war. Later we hear the African element is purged out of the Company, which is now of the real Pinery nerve, grit and patriotism."

Meeting at Plover, May 4t, 1861, the "Wisconsin Pinery Rifles" were organized, and on May 11, in Grand Rapids, they elected H.B. Philleo chairman and L.J.E. Voyer secretary.

First Lieutenant W.W. Botkin having resigned, on motion of Sergeant John H. Compton, Charles M. Webb was elected.

In May, "the Union Home Guards (Democratic) made a grand parade on Sunday last on the Brewery green, Grand Rapids. We learn they charged on Apfel's beer, and completely demolished the enemy. Apfel asked for *quarter*. We are informed the '*Home Guards*' propose to leave town only in '*case of invasion*.'"

In the same spirit, "Friend Arpine has opened in his superb block a saloon under the appropriate title of Union. The external appearance of the institution is neat and tidy. The American eagle with wings spread, hovers in the window, a terror to traitors. The word 'Union' is conspicuously displayed at the door lights. The 'Union' is the place to imbibe, boys, for verily '*United we stand*.'"

Farm Journal

When I knew Grandpa, he was an old coot my age now and still working an 80-acre dairy farm. Owning no tractor, he used horses and the same Hudson car he drove to the EUB church every Sunday.

I didn't know as a boy that a few years earlier, he had lost the family homestead to creditors and that my memories were of a poor substitute.

Nor did I know that Grandpa was young once and had traveled to Central Holiness University in Oskaloosa, Iowa, with hopes of becoming a minister, but returned to Cicero township, Outagamie county, Wis., at age 26 to put his shoulder to the plow. That's when he started keeping a financial journal for "Silvaspring Farm, S.W. Sylvester Prop."

The accounting begins Dec. 14, 1910, three years before Sanford W.'s marriage to Velma Thiel from church. The purchases are much the same as they would have been in Vesper, Rudolph or Kellner and show a frugality foreign to us now; there were zero shopping days before Christmas.

As itemized here, almost everything was needed and useful. For the year 1911, the total spent for groceries was $140, including:

Store-bought cereals such as corn flakes and Cream of Wheat.

Ingredients including sugar, butter, lard and flour.

Molasses, Karo syrup, vinegar, honey.

Nuts, cocoa, coconut, tapioca, vanilla, nutmeg, cinnamon, cloves, mustard, salt, pepper.

Baked goods such as ginger snaps; fruit like cranberries and peaches.

To supplement home-butchered meat, sausage, sardines and salmon.

Cheese, pork-and-beans, pickles, peanuts, candy on special occasions.

But why dog biscuits? Maybe Rex earned treats by fetching the cows for milking.

For the house, a laundry list of the quotidian:

Matches, thread, wax, writing supplies, toothpicks, needles, safety pins, clothes pins, alarm clock, watch.

Bluing, starch, Dutch Cleanser, washing powder, dust pan.

Stove polish, oilcloth.

Window shades, muslin, flannel, tacks, dippers, mailbox, lamp wick, lamp chimney, tea kettles.

Add telephone service and a subscription to the Milwaukee *Sentinel* ($1.50).

Clothing for the year cost $108 and included one $14.95 overcoat, one union suit, rubbers, cuff buttons and "one pair arctics" for $1.19. I think he was still wearing the one-piece long johns in 1955.

Some of the items came in bottles that ended up in the dump by the barn, ready for BB gun "got'm" plinking: coal oil, kerosene, lead arsenate, peroxide, ammonia, wood alcohol, carbolic acid.

Farm stuff included fly paper, staples, poultry netting, tank heater, sprayer, manure fork, whitewash brush, incubator and brooder, husking pegs, Sterilac Sanitary Pails, cream separator ($46.50), ax, plow point and a male hog ($12) to drive off salesmen.

Exotic-sounding are the poke root, Belladona leaves, hellebore and Formalin, meant as medicine for man and beast.

Knowing that a lot of S.W.'s later problems came from debts to relatives, the payment of $200 to "Pa," raises a red flag. Another ominous figure is that the total spent for the year was $1,008 but income was only $634. Of that, Sanford was paid: $117 as a farmhand in faraway Columbia county; $3 for working on local town roads; $155 for sale of milk; $5 monthly from "Miss Martin," the schoolmarm boarder.

Also sold for income: cream, chickens, roosters, eggs, oats, pigs, barley, timothy seed, cabbage, an occasional cow or bull.

Indulgences?

Shaves at 15 cents and haircuts at 25 cents. Hair oil.

One dinner and two lunches in a year. One fair ticket.

So why did he blow $2 on carfare to Appleton and back? And $15, more than the price of a hog, for a book?

Because Ryan's new 1911 *History of Outagamie County* included the story of Charles Sylvester, son of a German schoolteacher and farmer, who had transformed 80 acres of wild Wisconsin land into a modern farm that was being run by his son, Sanford.

"In addition to raising large crops of a general nature, the Sylvesters breed high-grade cattle, and both father and son are ranked among the good practical agriculturists of their locality."

S.W. Sylvester, prop. of Silvaspring Farm, knew history is a good value any time.

Twinkling City Greeted Returning Heroes 1961

In December 1961, the U.S. was preoccupied with the Cold War and threats from Communist regimes that had helped defeat the Japanese and Germans in World War II. Looking to an Asia increasingly dominated by Red China, Pres. John F. Kennedy ordered greater assistance for South Viet Nam's "desperate efforts to repel Communist aggression from the North," promising again not to send American combat troops.

In Berlin, then isolated within East Germany, tension over a wall built by the Soviet Union to divide the city caused the October 15 mobilization of the 32nd Division of the United States Army National Guard.

Wisconsin troops of what was also known as the Red Arrow Division were "called up" and sent to Ft. Lewis, Wash., to be trained for possible deployment. Among Army Reservists also included in the National Guard unit were Green Bay Packer linebacker Ray Nitschke and wide receiver Boyd Dowler.

32nd Division Brig. Gen. Francis F. Schweinler later was quoted about his first encounter with PFC Nitschke: "I was making a check down on the quartermaster area and here was this great big, husky guy picking up 100-pound sacks of potatoes and tossing them up on a two and one-half ton truck with one hand."

Not long after Nitschke and Dowler were "drafted," Schweinler received a call from Packer coach Vince Lombardi, who was in his third season.

Schweinler told Lombardi that Nitschke and Dowler could fly home on Friday evenings but would need to return to base before reveille on Monday. He asked that they bring back films of the game, which they did.

Most of the 32nd division, many of whom were family men (at a time when most soldiers were male) returned home from Ft. Lewis for Christmas. About 160 planned to marry during the holidays and bring wives back to Washington.

Back in River City, boys and girls were just having fun as usual. Seemingly wholesome outdoor ice skating was popular at five city rinks, those at Witter and Mead fields being the largest. Tobogganing and skiing could be enjoyed at Arneson Hill.

If you thought the worst generation wanted to be good, promos for movies showed how much we wanted to be titillated. At the Wisconsin on West Grand: Kirk Douglas in TOWN WITHOUT PITY, a "shocker," the story of what four men did to a girl and what the town did to them, double-featured with "X-15," "Actually Filmed in Space."

At the Rapids on East Grand: It's the Livin' End of Thriller! SPEED CRAZY plus the Blood-And-Guts guys of the 7th Army in "Armored Command."

The next day, it was the shock-scorched diary of Lieut. Blackburn, who led the U.S.A.'s secret Army of Headhunters in a movie named, "Surrender – Hell!" Also playing was "Battle Flame," an attempt to rescue the Female Captives of the Chinese Reds.

At Nekoosa's Rialto, a "super shocker," brought us Stewart Granger in "Secret Partner" plus the usual cartoon fun.

On deck for Christmas was something decent for a change: Frank Capra's "Pocketful of Miracles."

My favorite activity as a 16-year-old was visiting rock and roll "dances." I might have been at the Palace on December 17; hope so. That Sunday afternoon, our premier local rock band, the Zakons, were hosting special guest Ral Donner, performing "Please Don't Go." During his fleeting fame, Donner also recorded a cover of Elvis Presley's "The Girl of My Best Friend." Donner's biggest hit, and one embedded in my memory, was "You Don't Know What You've Got Until You Lose it."

The price of admission that day was a steep $1.85 in advance. If the Palace employed its usual stamp, which I had personally duplicated in a block of wood, I may have got in free.

A locally-spawned entertainment celebrity was Donald "Red" Blanchard, native of Pittsville and former WFHR staff member, who received an award as best comedian of the year in Chicago radio. Blanchard appeared Saturday nights on WGN's Barn Dance and had been a regular on WLS prior to moving to Mason City, Iowa, where he was also co-owner of radio station ESMN.

When they finished the regular season at 11-3, and returned to Green Bay, former Packer linebacker Ted Fritsche orchestrated a demonstration by radio from Austin Straubel airport.

As the Packer plane circled, residents turned porch lights on and off, followed by fireworks that lit the sky in an excellent Titletown Christmas homecoming for their noble Green and Gold surrogates.

Kathryn, David, November 1950

With Gary, 1951

Two Mile Avenue

Kathryn, Donald, Gary, David, 1951

Front: Diane Keating, Kathryn Engel, Scott Keating, David Engel, Gary Engel. Back: Sherry Keating, David Keating, 1952

David, cousin Dennis, brother Gary

Helpers at Two Mile project include Uncle Roy Engel, David's cousin, Dennis Engel, Uncle Wilmer Engel, Uncle Wallace Engel, Aunt Eleanor Engel, May 30, 1950

Two Mile Avenue: 1949 Pontiac at left

Kathryn, Gary, David and Pal 1952

David and Kathryn with grandpas Philip Engel, left, and Sanford Sylvester, right - picnic

Home Front 1861

January 1861, the Wisconsin river had "overflown" the ice at the foot of the Rapids, coating a large portion of "the eddy" with glassy ice. "Skating is excellent. Wouldn't some of our South Carolina seceders like to participate in a curling match with the pinery boys, eh?"

Christmas was a brownout but January snow came in the night and "Mother earth rejoiced in her angelic garb"—good news for sleigh riders and lumbermen who could move their product better on a frozen, lubricated surface. Snow also pleased street urchins who jumped passing lumber sleighs for a free ride, a practice that could lead to a broken head, said the *Wood County Reporter*, but "none of our funeral."

January 1862 also began with the "unpleasant conviction" that there would be no snow that winter. When snow came, the fabled "lumbermen" employed as many as thirty teams hauling logs to mills. By February 15, the lumber was being compiled first into "cribs," then into rafts of cribs and fleets of rafts to be sent downstream.

Although the Civil War in 1861 had disrupted the money market and lumber production decreased, major local industries seemed to be busy enough.

Pierce's shingle mill was running night and day "turning out piles of Wood County Currency. Glad to see such enterprise these hard times," said the *Reporter.*

A new grist mill (grinding grain into flour and feed) in Centralia on the river operated "under the supervision of Messrs. Ten Eyke and Ostrander."

Also in Centralia, the "mammoth saw mill of Garrison, Jackson and Benchley" hummed day and night and the *Reporter* editor counted over a thousand saws. As the river rose in spring and fall, the firm sent to market their "No. 1" lumber.

In April 1861, the ice went out in Stevens Point, came down the river and dislodged the boom of Francis Biron at what we call Biron. Now considered in "good running stage," the spring flood brought River City to life.

In high water, the newspaper said wryly, pilots would run crib after crib aground until the rocks were completely covered, the channel was discernible and the eddy on the east side filled with lumber from the upper country.

A Meehan Brothers raft crested the rapids here bearing aloft the American flag in honor of the war effort. "When opposite the Wisconsin Hotel it was greeted with deafening cheers from the crowd," said the *Reporter.*

Raftsmen met with numerous mishaps and often drowned. Their bodies were recovered downstream but nobody bothered to get the names.

In September, the town was deserted. "Everybody has gone to the marshes, gathering cranberries. The crop will be a great pecuniary help to our citizens" and "a God send these war times," said the *Reporter*, estimating 10,000 pickers flooding the bogs.

To enforce a recent law against stealing cranberries, Sheriff Eusebe Lavigne sent deputies to patrol the mostly-wild swamps and arrests were made for theft or possession.

The wilds also teemed with "burdens of black and red raspberries, blackberries and whortleberries" and more pickers headed out.

Meanwhile in Wausau the *Central* newspaper waxed poetic about our town.

"Grand Rapids is a beautiful place now, since the buildings on Main street have been moved, and the poet even will find plenty of food to digest there. The prospect of the surrounding country, the beautiful residences of its citizens, the picturesque views formed by rocks, and the rapids in the Wisconsin River, the serpentine winding of the River itself, the pleasant green of the Islands establish Grand Rapids one of the pleasantest towns in the State; while the enterprise of its people must become proverbial in a country where energy is the first law of existence."

In late 1861 as the election year approached that would result in Abraham Lincoln's surprising ascension to the Presidency, the *Wood County Reporter* employed the political rhetoric emblematic of his era.

The President before Lincoln was James Buchanan, a moderate Northern Democrat who tried to maintain peace between the North and the South and seems to have alienated both.

That made him, according to the abolitionist editor of our local newspaper, an "old devil," "Harriet Lane's imbecile uncle" and a "hoary-headed old traitor."

Uncle Dave's Waldens

Blessed were the papermakers.

In their 100-year reign, they watched over the land like lords of the manor.

They loved acreage for a reason: paper was made out of trees. To their benefit and ours, great expanses of forest property were kept intact and uninhabited.

Blessed were the papermakers for also giving us green river banks, city and county parks, state and national forests, wildlife refuges and Trees for Tomorrow.

Blessed was Nekoosa Papers, Inc., for making possible Historic Point Basse and Nepco Lake County Park.

Uncle Dave's Walden #2: Swamp Valley

Besides benefiting from my father's paper worker wages, I needed only to cross Two Mile Avenue to enjoy a privilege that seemed everlasting: a communal forest preserve.

Here, within broad boundaries, One Mile Creek meandered to its junction with the Two Mile at the fabled Swamp Valley—from which they flowed together into deeper, darker wilds.

At the preserve's boundary along Sampson Street and Griffith Avenue, signs were tacked to trees announcing "use of firearms prohibited," but leaving open the employment of cork guns, pellet guns, slingshots, bows and arrows, blow guns, Bowie knives, bayonets, BB guns, crossbows and spears.

The postings bore the eponymous imprimatur of Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co., corporate land barons headquartered at the cheerfully sulfurous smokestack on the horizon.

NEPCO operated out of Port Edwards, said to be the richest little village this side of Neenah.

Walden #3: The Lake

Blessed were the papermakers who created a paradise and let me use it as if it were my own.

The not-much-traveled Griffith Avenue, coming down from the state nursery of that name, bridged the entrance of the One Mile/Two Mile where it formed a bay that opened into Nepco Lake.

North of Griffith, in a fishing hole of uncommon charm, dark-backed bass cruised just below the surface, waiting to sniff and snub my Hula Popper.

To the south of Griffith at left was an old house and later, ruins of same.

On the southwest was a spot to keep and put in boats.

To my surprise, I had one. My dad had brought home an old wooden rowboat, instructing me to caulk the seams well with tar, a futile gesture.

As far as I know, hitching the old boat to a tree at the landing required no permission, not for ours nor the lineup of similar vessels at water's edge.

Never mind the difficult ride out on my bicycle, carrying oars, tackle box and fishing outfit and how much the boat always leaked, the experience was idyllic beyond words and for this we say, blessed were the papermakers.

Walden #1: The Pond

Even earlier, I had enjoyed a similar privilege: full range of our neighbor's 20-acre estate and the "pond" created by damming the One Mile. Not just me: in winter, kids from miles around skated under the electric lights.

In summer, the friendly creek was mine for fishing and swimming; but too soon floated down an evil genus of jellyfish that could not be ignored any longer: blobs of raw sewage. The One Mile had become a cesspool for 8th Street.

In a few years, the entire pond area was subdivided and sold for upscale housing.

Brute Neighbors

Blessed were the papermakers.

Unfortunately, their enterprises lasted only a century before the fateful sales to outsiders. To them, River City is a second-rate mill town in a third-world country.

Within a few years, numerous paper mills and world headquarters, including those at Port Edwards, were shut down, bringing vast holdings of relatively pristine real estate to the market. In diminishing chunks, the little Waldens were bought, broken up and sold to developers. No longer property of the blessed papermakers, the forests around it, having been inspiration for many, are becoming habitat for a few.

My boat? Left at the lake where its molecules would be sold to the highest bidder and its soul could return to arboreal ancestors.

Sarah Case's Civil War

Her husband of five months had joined the Union army and Sarah Roseltha Burget Case couldn't stop complaining.

"Just four weeks ago today since I saw you," she said in a letter dated April 27, 1862, "and Dearest Fred I have passed a great, great many sorrowful moments, hours and days."

Now at the South Wood County Historical Museum, the letter was written just after the April 6-7, 1862, battle of Pittsburg Landing, Tenn., known as "Shiloh."

Besides heartache, Sarah described debilitating pains in her legs, neuralgia in her head and a reliance on pharmaceutical soporifics. Her hair was falling out so fast she ordered Fred's brother, Dan, to cut off the rest of it.

The same Dan Case, she said, while running rafts on the river, had saved one near-victim named Pierce from drowning but was unable to save "Burns," "Joe Cotey's wife's brother," who was smashed between logs.

Joseph Cotey, a French-Canadian, had fought alongside Case at Shiloh, where Cotey was wounded. A lumberman, he had lost a fortune when his St. Louis partners sided with the South.

Sarah, 20, born in Ohio, had graduated from Jefferson, Wis., high school and was teaching school at Armenia, Wis., when she met Frederick Baldwin Case of Grand Rapids.

Her father, as justice of the peace, conducted the marriage ceremony on Dec. 28, 1861, five months before the letter profiled here. Fred had come from New York State to Wisconsin in 1855 at age 22 and worked as a river pilot, taking rafts of lumber to Memphis and St. Louis.

The Alban Pinery Rangers of 90 "stalwart men," elected Case as 1st Lieutenant and John H. Compton, Captain, of what would become Co. G of the 18th Wisconsin volunteer infantry.

At Shiloh, April 6, Compton was killed almost immediately. Wrote Sarah, "Mrs. Compton is nearly crazy I hear. Poor woman, I feel sorry for her. She was so opposed to his going too. It must seem awful.

"There was a while I did not know but I was left alone too. It is now three weeks since the battle and I have just received my first letter from you."

"It is the general belief here that McRaith shot Compton. Write all about it please, as soon as received, love."

Matthew J. McRaith, a tailor by trade, was under Compton's command. McRaith died at a Milwaukee's veterans' hospital in 1916.

Another early victim at Shiloh was the leader of the Alban Pinery Rangers, Col. James Alban of Portage County, Wis. A lawyer and newspaperman in civilian life, Alban was shot as he sat astride his horse.

A couple days before the Colonel was buried in the Plover cemetery, Sarah wrote that two four-horse "hacks" had "gone from this place to see Col. Alban's remains interred" and that she would liked to have joined them.

Though relieved that Fred had survived, Sarah did not refer to his condition.

A May 24, 1862, newspaper reported Fred had returned home on furlough, looking thin and feeble. "He participated in the fight at Pittsburg Landing and his record shows that he is every inch a soldier.

"He returns in a few days," said the account, but Fred was unable to resume his post and was discharged in July. He became sheriff of Wood County until the same physical problems forced him to retire.

According to the 1890 census of Portage county soldiers and sailors, Fred, who had been in service eight months and eight days, suffered from spinal injuries to the back of head and neck. The census was signed by himself.

When Fred died in 1901, 39 years later, his obituary said he had succumbed to his war injury.

In 1873, the Cases had settled in Junction City, a brand new village on a brand new railroad.

For the 1880 federal census, Case, then 47, and Roseltha, 38, were listed at "Knowlton." He was a laborer and she a housekeeper.

After Fred's 1901 death, Sarah continued to live in Junction City, enjoying, according to a 1928 *Daily Tribune,* a privilege few had: good health.

Before her death in 1935 at 93, Sarah Case, once a near-invalid newlywed, was the oldest living Junction City resident.

Wild Bunch

More picturesque than closing time in the Bermuda Triangle. At large on the mud streets and wooden sidewalks of "Roaring Nineties" River City could be viewed a combination of the following, as stated in a hard-copy promotion, allowing for poetic license and multiple roles played by the same personnel:

"50 American cowboys; 30 Mexican vaqueros; 30 South American gauchos; 50 Western frontiersmen;

"25 Bedouin Arabs; 20 Russian Cossacks; a detachment of U.S. Cavalry; Royal Irish-English Lancers; French "chaussers" (soldiers); and German "cuirassiers" (cavalry)."

The motley crew assembled for a mid-September dream was for the most part fake, made up of entertainers under the command of Col. William F. Cody, known far and wide as Buffalo Bill.

A Sept. 4, 1896, Stevens Point newspaper ad boasted that "Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Congress of Rough Riders of the World" brought to its 20,000-seat (?!) grandstand more men and horses than any other two exhibitions put together. The Buffalo Bill bunch boasted that they traveled by way of special railroad trains that equaled those moving a fully-equipped army in time of war.

Shows were preceded by a free "street cavalcade" involving three bands. For afternoon and evening shows, general admission was 50 cents for adults and 25 for children.

There was no appearance scheduled here. Performances were advertised for Stevens Point, followed by Wausau.

The Point expo took place "in all its splendor" as planned. After midnight, having packed up its big top and massive entourage as it did hundreds of times every year, the Wild West left Point by the Green Bay railroad, stopping in Centralia on our West Side, where cars were switched to the St. Paul "road" for night travel to Wausau through Junction City.

At what was called by different accounts the Rudolph hill or the Worden hill, which was near Doudville, the first section stalled and that train was divided in half. A portion of the cars were run to a point beyond the hill when along came a second section of train, pulled by a second locomotive, whose engineer saw the leftover cars of the first section on the track and decided to push it along.

The first engine by now was hurrying back for its remaining part of train and collided with the second section coming toward it, shortly after 2 a.m. Five cars were thrown from the track and wrecked although there were no injuries to humans or stock.

Unfortunately for the 5,000 enthusiasts waiting in Wausau the following morning, the show had to be canceled as announced by an 11 a.m. telegram. The Wild West show would move on to La Crosse.

The *Centralia Enterprise and Tribune* of Sept. 5, 1896, describes the scene emanating from the depot. "Our city presents a cosmopolitan appearance to-day, such as was not anticipated until early hours this morning. We have among us the wiry cowboy, the Mexican greaser, Sioux, Commanches and Pottowattomies, Russian cavalry, the unspeakable Turk and a host of discomfited passengers."

According to the *Enterprise*, the rear portion of the train had returned to Centralia where the horses were watered and fed and the men "ditto." A "wrecking train" had come through from Babcock at 6 a.m. to clear the tracks but northbound passengers from Rapids were delayed considerably, providing a "dreary time" to the passengers.

For Buffalo Bill's Wild West, which played more than 130 towns in both 1895 and 1896, wrecks were a way of life, as the huge entourage collided in the dark of night with itself and with other trains. The mishaps played a role in the demise of the show as the Wild West Rough Riders experienced three big wrecks in 1901 and 1902.

Most renowned was an event in North Carolina, in which over 100 horses were killed or injured, the latter "put down" by the "cowboys and Indians" who had been riding them. Included were Buffalo Bill Cody's own favorite and beloved mounts. Sharpshooter and headliner Annie Oakley was also injured in the wreck and left the show.

After an interval, Cody and the Wild West began touring again but apparently never regained the prestige enjoyed before the North Carolina disaster. The big bison wrangler turned the company over to creditors in 1913 and died in 1917.

50 Years: Looking Back at Looking Back

Numbers are getting pretty high.

It's been 23 years since these River City Memoirs, then a mere 9-year-old, began a "50-years-ago" theme.

That was 1989, half a century after World War II began in Europe.

Today's story happened to be started May 3 so the 50-years-ago timeline falls upon the *Daily Tribune* of May 2 and 3, 1962, at the end of the author's junior year of high school.

By then, the World Wars had been replaced by a "Cold War" that involved a military "arms race." In the Pacific, near Christmas Island, a series of American nuclear weapon tests dwarfed the A-bombs dropped on Japan in 1945.

Similarly to 2012, Congressional Republicans were hesitant to support President Kennedy's "Medicare" while Republican candidate for Wisconsin governor, Lt. Gov. Warren Knowles, complained the state payroll had increased alarmingly under Dem. Gov. Gaylord Nelson.

Locally, new drive-in windows were connected to First National Bank by a tunnel that could also serve as a fallout shelter.

Plans were drawn by local architect James LaPorte for Donald H. Gutzmann Associates, Milwaukee, to build a block-long apartment building replacing the former D.D. Conway residence on Witter Street between 2nd and 3rd Streets. LaPorte also designed an addition to Sampson Canning Co., 80 Oliver St., that would boost production by 20 per cent, said Ray Sampson, general manager.

The Wisconsin Rapids city council voted to annex an adjacent portion of the town of Grand Rapids (including my boyhood home), bounded on the west by 1st Street, on the south by Two Mile Avenue and on the east by 8th Street. The move was challenged by the town board in a continuing dispute.

Meanwhile, Grand Rapids leaders joined the Wood County board in pledging financial support to locate University of Wisconsin extension centers in South and North Wood County.

According to Supt. R.E. Clausen, 45 teachers at Lincoln High School and 60 at elementary schools signed contracts for 1962-63. A few weren't returning, including two of my teachers, Bernard Knauer (gym) and Barbara Santapaolo (speech).

Howard Junkman, my freshman math teacher, would return from active duty with the 32nd Division.

Subject to debate were the new Univac "teaching machines" intended to instruct the "vast middle majority" in a time of teacher shortages.

A ban on prayers in public schools would lead to wholesale establishment of parochial schools by major Protestant denominations, a Florida clergyman predicted—at the same time the Rialto in Nekoosa was showing, "The Jet-Hot Age! Speed Crazy" and "All about the Beatniks: The Rebel Set." At the Wisconsin, "Here comes trouble: Jessica, That Scooter Riding Sweater Gal."

An icon of the greatest generation, retired general and ex-President Dwight D. Eisenhower, at his new Abilene, Kan., library, contrasted scientific and material gains with "the vulgarity, the sensuality, indeed the downright filth" of the 1960s. "Ike" said of the new dance craze, the twist, that he did not personally dislike it but that it represented a change in standards.

What were they thinking, these twisters? wondered Eugene Gilbert of Gilbert Youth Research Co.

Teen-agers of 1962, he said, mainly because of preventive and curative drugs, had prospects of living longer than people ever had in history so he tried to make them think about retirement, though two of three couldn't care less.

Gilbert asked what age level they saw as the best in life.

Happy years for a man, said 67 per cent of the teenagers, were 21-30; ideal retirement age was 61-65.

For women, the best age was before 25, according to 73 per cent and ideal retirement was 46-50.

Many of the worst generation were already on their way to debauched indolence; but some seemed ambitious, such as Badger Boys Staters Ronald Brazener, William Metcalf, Wayne Miller and Eldon Bliek from LHS; Patrick Hartman and Nicholas Couse from Assumption.

No cell phones in 1962; but other reasons for inattentive driving, like that by Mrs. Arthur Knoll, Port Edwards, whose dog jumped into the front seat. As she reached over to return Fido to the back, her car went out of control, crossed a lawn and hit a tree.

Homage to Clio

In my early years with the *Daily Tribune*, anonymous messages ominously and repeatedly stated: "You must and will serve Clio."

Clio (rhymes with Ohio) is the muse of history.

For no good reason, things are named Clio: software, cities, restaurants, dogs and offspring of academics. Annual awards honoring creative advertising are called Clio. A computer Clio "pop-up" offers commercial products. A servant of the muse named his or her book about the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, "Clio's Servant."

Though I didn't want to, I found myself serving the C-nag as ordered. It's been fun enough but not lucrative, even in the affluent eighties, when Wisconsin Rapids could subsidize history as much as it wanted to.

It didn't want to do much. The fictive "Occupy Main Street" symposium asserts that the top one per cent gets 99 per cent of the history (and about the same per cent get the jokes).

My own math confirms that one per cent of Rapids-area residents support the local historical society. Experience shows that the market for history books here has withered from next to decent to next to nil.

To its discredit, Wisconsin Rapids has sponsored no historic district and counts only one building named to the National Register of Historic Places. The city razed 40 buildings in favor of the same number of storefronts in Rapids Mall. In the 20th Century, the historic courthouse, jail, city halls, schools, depots, dwellings and downtown buildings were speedily demolished.

The typical excuse, in good times and bad, is that the victim is beyond repair, a state sometimes called neglect. Recently, when a Civil War era house was flattened, the only conspicuous tear was shed by an English immigrant.

A share of the blame goes to me, the writer who didn't and doesn't want to be consumed by causes. The exception was helping found non-profit Wakely Inn Preservation, now Historic Point Basse, which has flourished by the efforts of others.

Fortunately for posterity, writing about old things has proven more durable than the old things themselves.

My local history enterprise began with a modest NEA grant to research my property, the "old Monson place," followed by 32 years writing for the *Daily Tribune.* Consolidated Foundation supported the first *River City Memoirs* book in 1983 and several ensuing volumes; the Community Foundation funded *River City Memoirs VI.*

Also in 1983, Rapids mayor James Kubisiak named me the first, and so far, only City Historian, complementing my position as first Director of the South Wood County Historical Corp., a role I left and then resumed six years ago.

Among those who furthered the SWCHC cause in my time:

Ellen Sabetta, first curator of SWCHC, whose love for Wisconsin Rapids is faithful and true; "Doc Lee" Pomainville, robust male muse who was, like me, known to tell the same story twice.

Pamela Walker, director between my terms, accomplished and meticulous; Paul Gross, videographer and historian, still productive.

Phil Brown, current president, community antiquarian and raconteur; Lori Brost, administrator, managing her bailiwick with vigor and aplomb.

For special mention today, my invaluable assistant, Holly Knoll, who responded with "big ideas and busy hands," as stated in the working title for our 2010 book about Mid-State Technical College.

UWSP grad Holly began as a volunteer at the Museum and worked with me on several personal projects prior to filling a newly-created staff position. Her column was a feature in the SWCHC publication *Artifacts* and she was my best hope in organizing the "third floor" archives.

For the 2012 season, Holly assembled an ambitious and significant Civil War exhibit.

Her position didn't survive the current bad economy and Holly has already moved on to another job—and life—as she and longtime fiancé Tyler Arndt will be married this weekend (June 9).

In a related matter, May 31 was my last day as SWCHC Director. I will continue as publisher of *Artifacts*, historian of River City and all-purpose lackey of you know whom.

June 2012

Rablin

Featured in the June 24 *Daily Tribune* was the arts and crafts community at Mineral Point, Wis. As the name suggests, the painter-friendly 19th century pile of bricks surrounding the Shake Rag Alley state historical site is what's left of a mining boom.

Oddly enough for an official paper city historian, I have authored several accounts of Midwestern mining towns—Hibbing, Minn., iron ore capital and boyhood home of Bob Dylan; Calumet, Mich., copper country metropolis; and Galena, Ill., lead mining landscape from which came the first industrialists of our sawdust beginnings.

During the 1820s, lead ore (galena) was uncovered in northwestern Illinois and mining soon moved up to Mineral Point in then Michigan Territory. By the mid-1830s, about the time government land sales began here, "hard rock" miners were immigrating from Cornwall, England, to Grant, Iowa and Lafayette counties in Wisconsin.

Last year, at the Galena courthouse, researching George W. Mead of our Consolidated paper company, a packet labeled "Howe & Rablin" came to light. They were familiar names here.

John Rablin mined copper in Cornwall and, after 1838, lead near Galena, where his wife and sister ran a hotel. In 1851, he joined the California "'49ers" for a year before returning to Galena.

In 1854, Rablin's six-month entourage back to the California gold mines included 150 head of cattle, nine horses and ten men. A later account spoke of him crossing the great desert, braving Indian massacres, witnessing wastes of caravans and bleached bones of beasts and passing by "little mounds of earth which told a story without words."

In 1856, after a short stay in Elk Grove, Wis., Rablin came here to take over the lumber mill of his recently-deceased brother, Henry. John also purchased Henry Clinton's share in the mill and Clinton moved downstream to Frenchtown, later named Port Edwards.

Though he couldn't read or write, Rablin successfully operated sawmills, foundries, machine shops and a hotel.

A 1920 *Daily Tribune* featured John's son, Henry Rablin, in "Who's Who in Wisconsin Rapids."Henry was born in 1848, at Elk Grove, Wis., now a rural location with little evidence of a settlement. Henry recalled the trip up from Elk Grove by team, staying at taverns (inns), located every ten or twelve miles.

He was educated in our city's first school, on 8th Street between Wylie and Baker. The one-room structure served as election place, auditorium and meeting hall.

Henry was sent to a Fulton, Ill., military academy and Point Bluff Academy near Wisconsin Dells. In his early teens, he worked for his father in the "old Rablin saw mill" at the location of the East Side swimming pool, since become lawn. He also worked in the lumber yard of Howe & Rablin at East St. Louis, Ill., followed by six years at Hannibal, Mo., where he wedded his wife, Mary.

Henry operated a ferry across the Wisconsin where the current Jackson Street bridge is now. It ran night and day, he said, and once transported 400 Indians and ponies being sent to a Kansas reservation.

When he heard that no one could ride a particularly unruly mount in a race on Quality Row (Third Street South), Henry, well known as a horseman, tied up his ferry and headed for the action. He climbed aboard a felicitous nag and rode to victory, also winning a famous race against the stagecoach returning from Plover.

Henry helped obtain rock at Rudolph's Lessig quarry for the first Howe school, named after his father's old partner.

Henry also worked for John Farrish, a lumberman like John Rablin.

During the Civil War, Henry served as undersheriff for Sheriff M.J. McRaith at a time when the jail was a small second-floor room in McRaith's house. He said he was present at three o'clock in the morning when authorities brought in the "riverman" who killed mill owner Henry Clinton.

Henry Rablin's daughter, Clara Rablin Nelson, continued to live in the house at 1311 First St. N. that she said was built by John Rablin in 1856, pictured 100 years later in the *Daily Tribune Centennial Edition*.

As she evidenced to the community, Clara was proud of her heritage as the granddaughter of an illiterate Cornish miner who, through ambition and an adventurous spirit, made good in the pine lands of central Wisconsin.

Barns

Gotta love a barn—if you have an ounce of agrarian soul in the hay bale you call a heart. Poets limn the classic lines, historians lament their loss and former farm kids relive precious moments in, on and behind the barn.

In the May 2012 issue of *Artifacts*, a series of paintings by Mrs. Fletcher's grandson, Andrew, deftly capture the charm and character of farm buildings he found in our vicinity.

The barns are mostly empty, following the decline of what we used to call "farming," which has been going on since before the original Dust Bowl. In mid-20th Century, many owners of barns tried but couldn't make a go of it or, decideding they didn't enjoy being at the beck and call of rough-tongued bovines, joined the golfers of Rome, leaving hard labor behind.

Many of the original barns were built for bragging and designed to last the farmer's lifetime and that of his descendents. Pride was displayed from the rock-solid foundation to post-and-beam timbers much like those of a German-Lutheran cathedral.

Even better, the design was practical. A gambrel "barn roof" accommodated available lengths of oak or pine in its trusses. The shape enabled maximum storage of hay or straw, smartly placed above the feeding room.

Artifacts artist Andy Fletcher has a cousin who happens to be Wisconsin's premiere commentator on rural themes: Justin Isherwood of Plover. Several former dairy barns on the current Isherwood family potato plantation are used for storage or decoration. With Scooch Romundson and others, Isherwood has photographed every known barn of Portage county and may turn his attention to Wood.

In official jargon, the number of milk cow operations continues to decline in the United States while milk production and milk cow numbers rise, in part due to Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations (CAFOs). Recent local controversy surrounds a 3,500-cow, 6,000-acre dairy planned for the town of Saratoga.

Don't look for nouveau pastoral charm. Even before the surrender of the family farm to agribusiness, the barn was being replaced by a homely box we called a "pole shed."

The barn I refer to most was my maternal grandfather's. He had bought the farm I knew and loved to replace a better one he had loved and lost in the Depression. His bouts with Mother Nature had left him with a bent back and enlarged, gnarled knuckles.

But to city boys like me and my cousin, the barn was a playground: giant piles of hay and straw to jump in; fragrant silo to climb; granary to hunt for vermin; eaves busy with sparrows; milking parlor washed with hard water and DDT.

Perhaps to employ its capacity as a government bathroom, I happened to stop at the Dairy Queen in Grandpa's town, Seymour, Wis., a few years ago. It was about a mile as the meadowlark flies from the old farm.

As excavation began for an expansion of the fast food franchise, thick, sticky clay was turned to the sun and I couldn't help thinking about how this was the stuff Grandpa and all the farmers had worshiped and wrestled with. And I also couldn't help but notice that across the highway, a crop of pernicious weeds had sprouted—a subdivision for commuters to Green Bay.

That was a few years ago but now I can view a satellite photo of the same area and see that Grandpa's side of the road is not so much changed: old cheese factory, limestone quarry and his still-modest former residence with a recognizable circular driveway to the machine shed.

But across the road, a bombed-out zone, pock-marked by craters. Not really; those are ponds for the luxury houses on the arcs and squiggles of a subdivision.

Isherwood and his crew have posted the requiem, "Barns are the hallmarks of the landscape, the Raphaels and Rembrandts of our countryside—art done in timber frame and field stone. Every barn was someone's dream come true and some community's pride. Every barn has a story and the time is running out to make it heard."

Local Guy, Big Time Dolls

Looking back fifty years turns up some surprising stories.

Like Neal Smith's.

In 1962, Neal was 33 and living the high life in La La Land; but he had been born right here in River City, son of Lloyd and Selma Smith, 410 12th St. S. Neighbors remember the father, Lloyd, sounding a car siren as he cruised by. Lloyd was some kind of assistant cop, besides working in the mill.

Lloyd wasn't so nice but the mother, the former Selma Erickson, was quietly protective of her Neal, who played dolls with neighbor girls, excelled at roller skating, wore red shoes and kept his clothing so immaculate the girls told him to get a pair of overalls; but then he wouldn't get them dirty either.

Maybe young Neal didn't make a big impact at Immanuel Lutheran elementary but he was mentioned several times in the *Daily Tribune*, including, in 1941, references to a vocal performance and a prize for a fish story. In 1944, Neal was in charge of entertainment (Swing Shifters) for the sophomore dance at Lincoln High School. As a senior, his regular "Lincoln Hi-Lights" columns in the *Tribune* included a mug shot.

The 1947 Lincoln yearbook credits Neal with Ahdawagam Staff, Choir, Debate, Delta Theta Sigma (geography), Lincoln Lights (newspaper), Radio Workshop and Tam and Smock (art). He was on the advertising committee for the all school play, "Brother Goose."

In September 1947, following graduation, Neal returned from St. Paul, Minn., to visit his parents here. He said he was a student at Lee College, possibly a school of barbering.

Neighbors remember that Neal often announced his impending appearances by telegram. On one occasion he visited a local beauty parlor and boasted of a 22-inch waist.

Ten years later, Neal had much more to brag about.

"Local boy finds Hollywood an exciting place to work," said the June 4, 1957, *Tribune* about "The word from Neal Smith, a young man from Wisconsin Rapids who ought to know. For he mingles daily with fandom's top stars, digging up information which their following of fans wants to know."

According to the *Tribune*, Neal was a publicist with 20th Century Fox. "Even though it's work, it's fun," he said.

Neal and other staffers visited actors and actresses on sets of their pictures, "ferreting out tidbits of news for movie magazines writers and columnists." He had worked with Robert Wagner, Jean Peters and Lana Turner and was pictured with Jayne Mansfield, "a wonderfully sweet girl."

Neal recalled the recent funeral for actor Humphrey Bogart. "I happened to be walking behind Lex Barker and Lana Turner. Fans crowding around trying to see all the stars there mobbed them so badly that I, walking behind them, nearly had my clothes torn off."

Getting a job with a major studio was no easy task, Neal admitted. "It's largely a matter of who you know, not what you know."

Who Neal knew was someone from the University of Minnesota, where he had been enrolled briefly. The friend had moved to Beverly Hills, Cal., next door to actress Arlene Dahl, who had also attended the University of Minnesota.

While visiting, Neal met "Miss Dahl" who found him a job in the music department of 20th Century Fox. After a year of scoring music, he moved to public relations. Neal's ambition was to become a top flight agent—in what he said was a crowded field.

He was happy to be living in Hollywood because of the climate and way of life. But mostly, "I just love being associated with motion picture people."

On Sunday Aug. 5, 1962, Neal called Chuck Kleiforth at WFHR radio, Wisconsin Rapids, with some breaking news. Neal's friend, the actress Marilyn Monroe, 36, had been found dead earlier that morning, telephone in hand, pill box nearby.

Saturday night, she had called her psychiatrist in distress and also spoke with Kennedy in-law and actor, Peter Lawford.

One night earlier, Friday, it had been our homeboy, Neal Smith, who heard for the last time the voice of the world's most desired female and reported, "She seemed to be in good spirits and wished me well on my vacation trip to Mexico."

Vaya con dios Neal.

Born here July 3, 1929, our friend of the famous, died obscurely July 1, 1989, the same year these fifty-years-ago stories began. His last address was in Beverly Hills, Cal. Best information is that Neal's ashes were scattered over the Pacific, making these last reminiscences the most of him that ever came home again.

Civil War: Edwards Surrogate Slain

In the Civil War, it was official; rich guys could legally buy their way out.

When the Enrollment Act subjected males 20-45 to the draft, Northerners could pay $300 for someone less fortunate to take their place in the Union army. In the South, substitutes could also be procured for a "bounty" though owners of 20 or more slaves were already exempt.

Numerous national figures chose not to personally join the ranks of combat. Closer to home was John Edwards Jr., who was supervising his father's sawmill operation in Frenchtown, to be renamed Port Edwards.

The 1860 federal census for the Town of Centralia, listed John Edwards Jr., 29, a lumberman, living with the wealthy Irishman, Henry Clinton, also a lumberman. In Clinton's household was Fanny (Frances) Morrell, a teacher from Pennsylvania (as was Clinton's wife) who would marry Edwards Jr.

As illustrated in "Feeling the Draft," a chapter from *River City Memoirs V*, Edwards wrestled with his wartime prospects.

By November 1863, the Union had taken 46 men from Wood County and one from Frenchtown, wrote Edwards Jr. to his father, who lived in Hazel Green, Wis. Of the lone Frenchtown draftee, Andrew View, Edwards Jr. said: "He will make a good soldier, providing he is not too lazy. He is very anxious to have Clinton come back to see if he won't buy him off."

At the end of 1864, a "great excitement" arose about the draft. "Everybody is leaving for Canada, Nevada and California. Not only the French and Irish, but every one in general. There will not be men to drive logs or run the lumber unless the raise [in water level] comes in a week or more.

"They are chasing me around every one and wanting their pay, but I am putting them off as long as I can by telling them that I am willing to pay but the Administration forbid me doing so.

"It's a pretty good excuse, but I cannot make it work much longer. [Brother] Billy [23] and me, one or other, are sure to be drafted but, just before it comes off, I think I will send him home and, if he is drafted there, he can do as you all think best about reporting himself.

"As for me I will do the best I can. And if it was not for business, I would go."

Edwards was drafted and reported at La Crosse, Wis., Nov. 29, 1864. He told his father the results. "Jim and Mike Brennen and Leandro Riply got exempted. Wm. Farrish and myself put in a substitute. He got a fellow from Misketo Creek.

"And I put in old Frank Caterea's boy, Frank. You may think he was small, but I made him pass. And I don't think there is another in Wood County that could put him in. They treated me like a gentleman and done all they could for me."

Fulfilling the bargain, Edwards Jr.'s youthful townsman, Cattra, joined Company H of the 6th Wisconsin Regiment and was sent to the Washington D.C. area.

Copies of the papers Edwards Jr. and Cattra filed were forwarded to me by SWCHC volunteer Karen Schill.

At La Crosse, Frank Cattra Jr. asserted he was an 18-year-old laborer and that he had agreed with John Edwards Jr. of Centralia to enlist in the Army of the United States of America for one year. He would accept whatever bounty, pay, rations and clothing were established for soldiers.

The document notes that the 5-feet-four Cattra had blue eyes, black hair and a dark complexion. Like many who could not read or write, Cattra signed with an X.

A Wisconsin genealogy website relates that Cattra was wounded April 2, 1865, at the battle of Five Forks and died in September 1865 at Harewood Hospital, Washington, D.C. He is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

According to the account, Cattra was born in 1849 to Frank Cattra and a Native American woman named Mary. At the time of his death he was 15, not 18 as claimed at the time of his enlistment.

In 1891, Frank Cattra, 71, a farmer from Canada living in Port Edwards, filed for a survivor's pension on behalf of Frank Jr.

Money got his only son killed; maybe there was a little left to make life easier for the aging father left behind.

Nite Owl

Not only does he sport a big Dutch moniker, Frederick C. Peerenboom is one of the few natives of River City to attain pop culture celebrity.

Widely known in media circles radiating from Columbus, Ohio, Peerenboom is "Fritz the Nite Owl," characterized by a sonorous radio voice and awe-inspiring spectacles. "Nite Owl Theatre," presenting movies with commentary, was produced at Channel 10, Columbus, seven nights a week from 1974-1991, during which time Fritz earned five regional Emmy awards. He also held nite court at numerous radio stations and wrote a jazz music column.

Dubbed "Fritz" as long as he can remember, the future Nite Owl was born at Riverview hospital in 1934 to Rosalie and Nekoosa mill chemist Maurice "Perry" Peerenboom. He spent his tender years at 121 W. 5th Ave., Nekoosa (which he pronounces "Nee-koo-sah).

One of many cherished memories is of skiing down a hill near his house onto the frozen Wisconsin river. Later, with pals such as Nancy Hostetter, Jack Frisch and Carl Arendt, skating all the way across.

"Thrill of thrills" was to hear a familiar yellow Piper Cub airplane coming in and rushing down to see it land on the river ice, soon to fly off toward some unknown next stop.

To the west of the house on Fifth were the immense paper mill log piles that seemed to stretch from Nekoosa to Port Edwards and beyond. "We used to play in, on and between them, and borrow logs to build tree houses," he said. "The kids in Nekoosa had the best log rafts in the world."

A favorite hangout was the Rexall drug store, where owner Sid Denis allowed young customers to enjoy a syrupy hand-blended Coke in a booth while perusing, at no charge, comic books from the best-ever magazine rack. All Denis asked was that the comics be put back neatly.

Also at the drug store, Fritz and his older brother picked up *Daily Tribunes* to deliver. In those days, you collected payment in person and met all the people on your route.

Next to the drug store was the post office, where Fritz and his family visited every day, hoping for a V-Mail from "Pops." "Your dad would write a letter in the Pacific and somehow they would photograph it and reduce it to a smaller size."

As a member of the Captain Marvel Club, Fritz received letters telling him what a wonderful guy he was and that he should buy war bonds.

Also in downtown Nekoosa were the Herrick hotel and two grocery stores: Krenke's, where Mother called in the order and Krenke bagged it up; and Korbel's, more of a combination supermarket.

Resplendent in Nekoosa purple and white uniforms with gold buttons, Fritz played sax in the Nekoosa city band for Sunday concerts in the bandshell and parades down Market Street.

While attending Sacred Heart Catholic school, Fritz assisted as an altar boy for Father Daul in Sacred Heart church.

The Nite Owl's facility for broadcast began when his voice changed in sixth grade and he began to mimic narrators on popular radio programs: Sam Spade, Buck Rogers, Terry and the Pirates and Captain Marvel.

About that time, Fritz's father got a job in Maryland and the family moved there—and on to Columbus, Ohio, where Fritz graduated from Ohio State University.

Fritz said he couldn't have asked for a nicer childhood. The only bad memory was that World War II was going on. "The last thing you wanted to get was a telegram or a long distance phone call because that meant your father was dead, your brother was dead, your husband or boyfriend was dead."

He hopes to go back one more time: just to hang out, go down by the river, go by the church.

"On winter days I'd be serving at the early mass. On an early morning, there's no cars on the road, the sun ain't up, the moon is out and the trees are encased in ice, like crystal.

"I cut through Nancy Hostetter's yard, tromp through an alley, through Milkey's and across to the church and school, crunching through six or seven inches of snow—fantastic."

To find "Fritz the Nite Owl" on the Internet, start with www.fritzlives.com.

Krohn

Sorting old files at the *Daily Tribune*, I said the wrong thing to general manager and editor Allen Hicks—that, if fellow contributor Don Krohn were to die, I would be the most ancient *Tribune* contributor.

Our common employment and interests had made Don and me fraternal. My *Tribune* tenure was more continuous than his, 1980-present, but his began in 1948, when I was three years old.

On November 12 of this year [2012], a week or so after my unfortunate commentary, came the news of Krohn's death, not long after his latest tree farm column in the *Tribune*. He had also published a story in the August 2012 South Wood County Historical Corp.'s *Artifacts*, relaying an account of Jere Witter flying under the Grand Avenue Bridge.

In a 2001 interview, later printed in the May 2008 *Artifacts*, Krohn said he had begun his journalism career during senior year at Lincoln high school by working in the *Daily Tribune* mail room.

Krohn soon learned to develop film and print photos in the old *Tribune* darkroom, followed by on-the-job training as a part-time weekend photographer. Soon, he was asked by publisher and owner William F. Huffman Sr. to come in full-time for $25 a week.

Krohn was the photographer for the 1951 LHS basketball championship in Madison and for events surrounding the visions of "Our Lady of Necedah," besides chronicling the round of activities taking place at mid century here.

In 1953, Krohn was named assistant editor and photographer of the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. magazine *Nepco News*. That year, he married Inez Ruesch and moved to Port Edwards, a village he was to be closely associated with.

Krohn became public relations manager in 1971 and worked for NEPCO and its successors for 37 years.

Representing one such entity, Great Northern Nekoosa Corp., in the early 1980s, Krohn was supportive of the efforts of Wakely Inn Preservation, Inc. to preserve the landmark and its grounds, then owned by the paper company. He famously loaned me the house key for a night of ghost busting and maneuvered a gift of Nekoosa paper for *River City Memoirs II*.

Krohn, who retired in 1990, became a frequent visitor to the SWCHC Museum and a supporter of its efforts.

Another friend of history, Gerald E. "Gene" Johnson, whose memoirs provided invaluable vignettes of our town in its prime, died November 24, in California. Like Krohn, Johnson was a modest gentleman, an exemplary citizen, a long time paper company employee and a practicing historian.

Johnson graduated from Lincoln high school in 1946, Krohn in 1947. Both were 84 at the time of their deaths.

Johnson married Irene Bautz July 28, 1951, in Wisconsin Rapids and worked 43 years at the Biron Division of the Consolidated paper company. Same as Krohn, he retired in 1990.

Johnson too had become a familiar face at the Museum and a regular contributor to *Artifacts*. Earlier this year, he asked me to come by his house and look over items he wanted to donate because his health problem meant his time was about up.

A founding member of the Numismatists (currency collectors) of Wisconsin, Johnson also edited their quarterly news magazine. In 1967, he published, "Trade Tokens of Wisconsin," which provided the background for some of his *Artifacts* work.

Johnson served on the Wisconsin Rapids District School Board 1967-71, during the planning and building of West Junior High School and on the board of directors of Camp Five Museum, Laona, Wis., 1977-88.

Not forgotten.

Not Don Krohn, who had the foresight to save his *Tribune* photos and years later to donate them to the SWCHC-Museum. As "Krohnographs," they are on display in exhibits, on the SWCHC website and frequently in "Artifacts."

Not Gene Johnson, whose books, collections and memoirs will continue to illuminate our shared past for many years to come.

1952

David, Gary, Donald, Kathryn

Kathryn and David

David and Gary

Roberson Players

Answering some requests can take a while.

Thirty years ago, then South Wood County Historical Museum curator Ellen Sabetta urged me to look into a cherished topic: the Roberson Players tent show of her childhood.

Now, it is possible to fulfill that request through La-Z-Boy research obtained exclusively from Internet sources.

The eponymous George C. Roberson, an Evansville, Ind., native, went "on the road" early in the 20th Century, playing the juvenile lead in "Shepherd of the Hills." After appearing in New York productions, he toured in "The Trail of the Lonesome Pine."

George soon became known as owner and producer of the Roberson Gifford players with a crew as large as 35 touring the Midwest in summer and moving southwest in fall. According to the July 20, 1923, *Daily Tribune*, "This company of clever artists have appeared for many years before the public in our neighboring cities, but on account of conflicting dates were unable to play Wisconsin Rapids before. You will surely enjoy the play, the vaudeville between the acts and above all, the snappy Jazz Novelty orchestra."

A 1925 ad touted 25 "people" and five vaudeville acts appearing in a tent on the West Side market square and in Nekoosa. The show cost 40 cents for adults and a dime for "kids." Ladies were free with a paid ticket, an ongoing policy.

In 1929, at the West Side market square, plays presented were "Ella Cinders," "The Unkissed Bridge," "The Unwanted Child," "The Gorilla," "Peg O'My Heart," and "Which One Shall I Marry?"

Said the *Tribune*, "The Roberson Players have an entire new outfit and is one of the niftiest and classiest tented theatres entour on the road this season. Besides the usual high class vaudeville specialties offered with this company, between acts, Kaaihue's Hawaiian Orchestra as an added attraction will entertain you. They are singers and players of a thousand songs. You are assured a good, clean, wholesome amusement, well worth your time every night during the week, with a change of program nightly."

The 1931 location for the "big dramatic, musical and vaudeville show" was one block north of the Dixon Hotel on Fourth Avenue.

In 1933, the Players entertained the Kiwanis club in the Rose room of the Hotel Witter. In 1937, they were at the winter rink grounds on Third Avenue North.

Richard S. Davis provided a generous description for the July 24, 1938, *Milwaukee Journal*. "It was up there in the lively paper mill town, Wisconsin Rapids, the city that straddles the foaming river…one of the most delightful experiences ever found in the unpredictable institution known as the drama."

As customers arrived, Roberson greeted many by name, "children mostly with a good sparkling of swains and maidens from the country and farmers and their wives."

The play that night was "The Lonesome Pine."

It paused now and then, said Davis, "for some entirely extraneous comedy, but that was quite all right. There was a deal of hocus pocus and that was all right, too. The honest citizens of Wisconsin Rapids and the vicinity sat forward on their chairs and with shining eyes stared at the stage. Babies got hungry and were nursed in the semidarkness by mothers who were not ashamed. Lovers held hands and, in the more romantic situations, sat with heads very close. Weather beaten older folk, of town and country, drank in every last word."

After the show, Davis found the cramped trailer Roberson shared with his wife and co-player, Phoebe Fulton.

The impresario smoked "one cigaret after another" as he related how he loved touring the "sticks" where "the folks who flock to his tent were sincere and dependable…

"It's great to come back to the same friends year after year, to watch the kids grow up and take the reserved seats, and finally to send their kids along with sticky dimes. It's grand to stand outside and say, 'Hello.'"

In the late 1940s, the show location moved from the winter skating rink grounds on Third Avenue North to "Bender Field," apparently the current Mead Field.

In winter, Roberson and Phoebe ran a motor court in St. Petersburg, Fla. and took a portable roller rink on the road in summer.

Roberson was helping arrange stage settings for a charity show in 1954 when he suffered a stroke and died, at age 64. His widow, Phoebe, may have lived almost half a century more.

Tales of Brave Hiram

He was born under the name Hiram and you could call him that though he wouldn't like it.

As a young adult, Hiram likewise hated the family business in Ohio so his father sent him to West Point for a military career. Graduating without distinction, brave Hiram performed acceptably in the Mexican War of 1846-48 and served until his resignation in 1854 under allegations of binge drinking.

Hiram failed at serial ventures in the St. Louis area, finally resorting to selling firewood on the street. In 1860, his father brought him, then 38 and married with four children, back to the family tannery, by then in Galena, Ill., where Hiram was supervised by his two younger brothers as he waited on customers and filled orders. Muscular and sturdy, he had "throwers' forearms" and was the only brother who could heft frozen 250-pound hides. After weighing and tossing a couple monster steer skins, Hiram would wash his hands and resume his favored position of reclining in a chair, feet on the counter.

Hiram also had duties as a teamster, at which he was expert and apparently found himself transporting goods by means of the Fever River that had made Galena an important commercial center.

That's how he met a guy from here.

The July 21, 1900, Grand Rapids *Tribune* related the adventure of Dan Rezin, then a 70-year-old farmer in the town of Rudolph. The story had taken place 40 years earlier, when Rezin had been one of that romantic species called "river pilot."

His task was to guide immense rafts of lumber from sawmills near Rudolph down the Wisconsin and Mississippi rivers to Galena, Ill., Dubuque, Iowa, and St. Louis, a "rough and precarious existence engaged in only by men of unusual courage and hardihood." For several hundred miles, Rezin couldn't leave his lumber raft as he endeavored to evade rocks, whirlpools and dangerous rapids. When a stretch of calm water came, he could nap for a couple hours, sometimes only to wake and find the expanse of pine beached on an island or sandbar.

In the summer of 1860, Rezin was guiding his lumber into the mouth of the Fever as it entered the Mississippi from Galena, when he encountered Hiram coming his way in a flatboat.

According to Rezin, the same Hiram had the reputation of being the roughest and toughest brawler up and down the Mississippi. His meetings with lumber drivers were frequent and brave Hiram always emerged victorious in hand-to-hand combat.

Where Rezin and Hiram met, the channel was narrow and a dispute arose over right of way. "After exchanging all the epithets for which river men are famous, it was decided to have it out on the bank," said the 1900 account, "whither they repaired, several men who chanced to be in the neighborhood accompanying them to see the sport and make certain of fair play."

Selecting a level green spot, Rezin and Hiram's encounter soon became a battle royal.

Rezin, 30, was taller, younger and weighed less than his stocky antagonist with those big forearms. Though our boy was a hardy Irishman, clever with the boxing gloves or in a "catch-as-catch-can" wrestling match, at first, it seemed Rezin would be pounded into insensibility; but then he recharged and give as good as he got. For an hour the contest waged fast and furious, until both men were forced to relinquish from sheer exhaustion. They shook hands, Rezin said, and were good friends from that time forward.

Much later, at the time he told the story, Rezin was "three score and ten years of age, possessed of all his faculties and going about his work with the suppleness of a man half his years," and, according to the 1900 *Tribune*, fond of story telling, "and of his long list there is none he likes better to repeat than his fight with the great American general—Ulysses S. Grant."

Yes, brave Hiram Ulysses Grant had changed his name to Ulysses Simpson Grant.

Hiram's temporary home, Galena, the town that traded supplies for our lumber, remains one of the best-preserved historic downtowns in the Midwest. The most lauded landmark in Galena is the home Hiram was given in 1865 for leading the Union armies to glory and where he lived until he was elected President in 1868.

Frugal Days Ledger

As she marked daily expenditures in a Herald Square cash ledger, my mother, Arline "Sally" Engel, then 26, resided with her husband, Donald, and first-born me in a 551 ½ 11th Ave. second-floor apartment so small she had to crawl across the bed to tuck in the sheets.

Nobody was complaining then, in 1946; but the youth of the New Millennium will be perplexed by the thriftiness of post-World War II years, working with Don's salary of $40 per week from the Frank Garber Co., for delivering welding supplies and clerking in the stock room.

For 20-somethings like my parents, whose psyches were etched on Outagamie county farms during the Great Depression, necessities came first and were paid for in cash.

Rent at $30 per month seems low and many current outlays do not appear at all, such as cable television, Internet subscriptions and mobile technology—or are minimized, like eating in restaurants.

Utilities include $4 monthly for lights, $2.50 for water, $1.50 for phone, 36 cents for coal and 32 cents to supply the "ice box" that would be used until a GE refrigerator could be afforded, one that would occupy Sally's kitchen for half-a-century.

Blue Cross health insurance, $19, and car insurance, $11, covered an amount of time not stated. A $1,000 life insurance policy for little David reached maturity six decades later and was cashed in.

State income tax was recorded at $8 with no record of federal income tax paid other than "V-tax" for "victory in WWII." War bonds were taken out and cashed periodically.

While at the 11th Avenue apartment, Don and Sally bought groceries for an average $4 at the nearby Mumford grocery, 411 10th Ave. N. The same Mumfords once owned my town of Rudolph acreage as a weekend retreat.

Shopping at Johnson Hill department store provided many items, especially clothing such as stockings, gloves, shirt and overalls. Pants were cleaned somewhere for 75 cents and shoes repaired for $1.75.

Besides common household supplies, the baby required cod liver oil, Q-tips, rubber pants, rompers, diaper liners, blanket fasteners, nipples, crib pad, bottle warmer, shoes, salve and medicine.

"Eats" in restaurants were infrequent and cost 50 cents to $2. A 40-cent (for two) movie was accompanied by ice cream, candy or a milk shake, supplemented by bowling, a dance and a basketball game.

A shoe shine was 15 cents and a haircut 60 cents. Don needed "hair oil," and for Sally, end curl, hair pins, hat pins, hair brush and a finger wave hairdo at $1.25.

Among non-essentials were pictures, cards, "gift for Daddy," and a gift cap for my cousin. A once-that-year ride in a cab was a buck. Train ticket, $2, two-night vacation to Winona, Minn., $14. "Music," probably sheet music for Mom's piano, was 60 cents.

Don joined a rifle club and spent 40 cents on ammunition, more than paid for by a $7.50 check from the Wisconsin State Guard.

Small donations went out to "Guild," "church" (Methodist), March of Dimes and Red Cross. Surprising to me, Sally hired a "chore girl" named Orla Mae at 15 to 75 cents per visit.

In early 1946, Don bought tools: ax, hammer, chisel, jackknife, level, wrench, shovel, flashlight and a 25-foot rule, all for the same purpose, explained inside the cover: "Bought land April 19. Laid foundation May 15. Moved in July 28."

The concrete-block structure at 520 Clyde Ave., pictured in the February *Artifacts [2013]*, was meant to become a garage when an adjacent house was built, though that never happened.

Building expenses started with a dollar for a building permit; $15 for lawyer Crowns and $21 for lawyer Billmeyer; concrete blocks from "Haessly," $124; concrete, $57.

Tork Lumber supplied windows, $16; doors, $28; roofing, $46; brick, $27; wall board, $46; two-by-fours, $22; lumber; linseed oil; shellac and waterproof paper. Light fixtures and switches from Staub's Electric totaled $25.

By August, groceries came no longer from Mumford's but from Oestreich Grocery on 8th Street, evidence that the move from West Side to Sand Hill had been made.

In October, Sally bought "announcements," to be sent after the Nov. 9, 1946, birth of my sister, Kathryn, the second of what would be four children of Don and Sally, their contribution to the mid-century phenomenon later called the baby boom.

March 1863, the Cruelest Month

For most of us, this year's prolonged winter was a minor inconvenience but a sesquicentennial ago, the vicissitudes of March had more consequence.

As an 1863 *Wood County Reporter* lamented whimsically, warm weather had "used up" almost all the sleighing. Unless that thaw took "a severe cold," sleigh-rides and logging would end for the year. The *Reporter* hoped for cold weather that would remain another three weeks. Frozen turf and snow for easier sliding in the woods meant good harvests. Logs were hauled to riverbank mills, sawn into boards and stored on the ice when possible.

With winter about played out, said the *Reporter*, "warm, genial days, with cold nights, denote the approaching [maple] sugar season. After the windy days in March, we may expect spring in reality, with her wild flowers and red-breasts." The passage closed with an observation and the well-seasoned style of puns frequently employed here. "We don't like to note passing time, but we shall rejoice over the demise of chilly March. He has no soul, but goes March-ing on. Let him 'forward March.'"

As April emerged, the river ice had become unsafe. Teams of horses were breaking through regularly, "yet people will cross. A bridge at this point would be a useless (!) expenditure of money," snorted the *Reporter*.

Ice had already gone out above and below the undammed Grand Rapids, where in another week, the lumber, "all cocked and primed for a start, is patiently awaiting its exit."

Indeed, by April 9, the ice had left the area and the waterway had erupted into a lively spectacle. Scores of pinery boys were busy assembling rafts of lumber and running them downstream. "The clashing and crashing of boards, together with the hoarse voices of raftsmen, present a busy aspect to the uninitiated in lumbering life," observed the *Reporter*.

At the same time we were having so much fun here, the bloodiest battles of the War of Rebellion were being fought on southern soil. Yet, just as many men probably died here.

Many perished going over Henry Clinton's dam between Rapids and Port Edwards, such as, in 1863, a French-Canadian called "Chavalier" and a Norwegian "whose name we cannot recall." In the same incident, the grandfather of Betty Boop animator Grim Natwick, "Mr. Ole Natwig," incurred a broken arm.

Among the war casualties of the season were two New York state natives, "A. Pierce," slightly wounded at Fredericksburg, Va., and Capt. S.J. Carpenter of the 8th Wisconsin Battery, killed at Murfreesboro, Tenn.

Carpenter had recently located at Point Basse, where he was building a dam and lumber mill for "the Nekoosa Co." The *Reporter* gave him a mixed review: "He possessed a good mind, but was an unpopular man in military as well as social life."

Talk of resistance to the draft brought attention to the Copperheads, a vocal group of Democrats in the northern United States who opposed the Civil War. The *Reporter* carried a picturesque denunciation by our Andrew Turnbull of the 5th Regiment. "To be a traitor to one's country, is hellish; to be a menial of treason—a lick-spittle pimp—a crawling, sneaking, blear-eyed scab for the monster whose foot is upon your neck and whose dagger is at your heart—there exists no epithet in the vocabulary of hell to do ye justice."

New Port Book

The sawmills at Nekoosa and Port Edwards that brought the river to life in the 1800s would become the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co., a major employer for generations.

Now comes an unusual reading and book signing.

At 6:30 p.m., April 18, at the Dorothy Alexander Auditorium, village 4th graders present their new book, "Port Edwards Voices - The Rise & Fall of the Port Edwards Mill."

The project, which includes interviews with nine former mill employees, was created by teacher Ann Pickett and supported by grants from the Port Edwards Progress Fund and Port Edwards Education Foundation.

Assistance was provided by numerous area writing professionals and artist-in-residence Mary "Casey" Martin, a Wisconsin Rapids publisher and publicist.

The book concludes with a River City Memoirs story about interviewee Don Krohn, a former *Daily Tribune* photographer and paper company head of public relations.

Betty Boop's Popeye the Sailor Man Blues

Bright and shining, like the stars—this Connstellation.

Not a misspelled star grouping but historic musical instrument, the cornet, displayed behind glass, was a product of the Conn company, Elkhart, Ind. Brass in color, it had routinely burst forth with golden refrains.

"I have one like that," I told Selena, the museum curator with the brunette skin and southern inflections, "in the attic."

"Are you a musician?"

"Not really. I played in the high school band."

My Connstellation is silver in color and, unlike the one on display, remains forever muted.

Back at Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln high school, we cornetists of the early Sixties still yearned to swing with the Dukes of Dixieland but, sadly, were falling for the Duke of Earl. Band director Roger Hornig deplored our upturned collars and "greaseball" haircuts.

The other, better-used, Connstellation had belonged to the "Father of the Blues," William Christopher Handy. In March of this year, at the W.C. Handy Home, Museum and Library in Florence, Ala., this correspondent found Handy's cornet and piano, miscellaneous memorabilia, personal papers, research materials, musical instruments and sheet music.

In his autobiography, Handy, son of slaves, wrote that he began "exercising" his vocal organs in 1873, "eight years after surrender [of the Confederacy]." As a boy, he lived in the log cabin attached to the museum. Handy's home town, Florence, is located on the Tennessee River, upstream from Pittsburg Landing, Tenn., and "Shiloh," site of the Civil War battle that so stunned our pinery boys.

Handy and I used the Conn brand of instrument but, as I told the curator, Selena, at the Florence museum, our *Memoirs* and hers have another chapter in common. Beside the Connstellation in the display was sheet music for Handy's classic song, "Saint Louis Blues."

"See that," I said in micro-macro mode, "Natwick." Before us, in a glass case in a remote pocket of the old South, was the creation of our singular Yankee artist, Myron "Grim" Natwick, "creator" of Betty Boop. Sometimes referred to as Handy's "favorite" sheet music illustrator, Natwick had drawn one of his lesser covers for "St. Louis Blues."

Years before that jazz anthem, Handy had defied his preacher father by joining a touring minstrel band. At the time of his death in 1958, he was a world-famous song writer and musician.

Competing with Handy in his early years were white minstrels, such as the Ethiopian Serenaders, United Mastodon Minstrels and the old Christy Minstrels. These singers, dancers and comedians blacked their faces and imitated "Negroes," through "humorous" characters like "Jim Crow" and "Zip Coon."

At the end of the "roaring" Twenties, came another form of similar caricatures— by white cartoonists in the "golden age of animation" when cartoons were shown before movies well into our Elvis years, including at the Palace, Rapids and Wisconsin theaters. One of the offenders was Grim Natwick, whose "Making Stars" cartoon included a talent show hosted by Betty Boop, in which a trio of classic pickaninnies can be pacified only by slices of watermelon. Likewise, in Natwick's sheet music covers, black subjects are portrayed minstrel-style, as in "Livery Stable Blues," on exhibit at the South Wood County Historical Museum, Wisconsin Rapids.

Returning north from Florence on the historical junket mentioned, the *Memoirs* omnibus passed through larger riparian municipalities, including Memphis, where a statue of Handy stands on Beale Street, and the namesake of Handy's Blues, St. Louis.

Not far from the Gateway Arch is Chester, Ill., on a bluff overlooking the Mississippi. At a strategic entry point to the city, stands its symbol: an unexpected and definitely not animated statue of Popeye, the cartoon character.

Popeye's creator, Elzie Segar, was born in Chester in 1894. Grim Natwick was born in Rapids in 1890 and began his career in Chicago as did Segar, whose own cartoon character was "Barry the Boob."

Popeye first appeared in Segar's New York cartoon strip in 1929; Betty Boop debuted in an animated short movie in 1930.

In 1933, Popeye made his first appearance on screen—in a Betty Boop cartoon called "Popeye the Sailor." For this short flick, our make-believe nymphet performs a hula designed to pop the eyes of any celluloid mariner and, like Lady Godiva, does it topless.

Black Sock

Legendary White Sox baseball player Oscar "Happy" Felsch came here as an up-and-coming hero and returned as an over-the-hill has-been.

It's easy to imagine the jocular infielder grinning broadly July 24, 1912, after hitting a 3-run homer in his first at-bat for Grand Rapids. In his second game, Felsch's center field home run blast was considered the longest ever at what presumably is now Witter Field.

In an online biography of Felsch, Milwaukee sports historian Jim Nitz says Grand Rapids and arch-rival Stevens Point played against semi-pro teams from Tomahawk, Green Bay, Waupaca, Wausau, Fond du Lac and Portage—and against barnstorming Negro teams.

In late August, said Nitz, Grand Rapids disbanded and Felsch signed with Stevens Point and continued to compete for the "semiprofessional championship of the state." In 1913, Felsch, one of 12 children of German immigrants, joined his home-town Milwaukee Mollys of the Class C Wisconsin-Illinois League, a farm team of the Brewers, then at the top level of the minors, who soon called him up as an outfielder.

Felsch signed for the 1915 season with the White Sox, owned by Charles Comiskey, a tightwad villain in the making, for whom Felsch quickly established himself as one of the best players in the American League. The happiest year might have been 1917, Felsch's fifth season, in which the Sox won the World Series and Felsch's $3,600 check almost doubled his salary.

The Grand Rapids *Tribune* of July 5, 1917, reported that local fan J.R. Ragan returned from an undertaker's convention to say he had seen the White Sox and Felsch, "who played ball in this city some years ago, but who has since risen to considerable prominence as one of the big men in the league." A great outfielder with a strong throwing arm and a pleasing disposition, Felsch was expected to wrest the batting crown from Ty Cobb and Tris Speaker.

The Sox had become regular pennant winners even as clubhouse dysfunction set in, blamed on World War I during which racetracks closed and betters turned their attention to baseball where vulnerable players had to decide whether to submit to the military draft or find a way out of it.

In 1918, Felsch resigned from the Sox and took a wartime job at Milwaukee Gas Co., while playing for the Kosciuskos of the Lake Shore League. He returned to Chicago in 1919 and led the American League in fielding and batted well during the season but performed poorly in a nine-game World Series against the Cincinnati Reds. Rumors of a fix were buoyed by Felsch's purchase of a new $1,800 Hupmobile.

Grand jury investigations alleged Felsch was one of eight ball players who participated in the scandal that turned the White Sox black. Although the players were acquitted in court, they were banned from organized baseball by the first baseball commissioner, federal judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis.

Among the soon-to-be storybook reprobates were left fielder "Shoeless Joe" Jackson and third baseman George "Buck" Weaver, featured in the movie, "Eight Men Out" in which Felsch is played by actor Charlie Sheen.

Felsch's last year in the majors was 1920. He and the other suspended Sox continued to play exhibition games around the upper Midwest in towns such as Marion and Merrill. Felsch also operated a grocery store and tavern while he continued to play with the Twin City Red Sox of Sauk City and Prairie du Sac and later for teams in the northwestern U.S. and Canada.

Maybe not as jovial as he had been two decades previous, in August 1932, Felsch returned to Lincoln athletic field in our fair city where his Milwaukee Triangle Billiards team defeated a Rapids club. Local pitcher Earl Eastling "dished out nine hits" and may have won but for a "comedy of errors" from a lineup composed of Bromley, Sandrin, McClain, Swenson, Hribernik, Finup, Kosak and Biot.

For Triangle Billiards, Felsch had one hit and scored a run. In 1974, the happy hitter died in Milwaukee at age 72 of a liver ailment.

Scarborough's Abundant Miscellany

Already seemed like a legacy.

Found in November 2012 on a back shelf of the former *Daily Tribune* building: one outsized, dilapidated, cardboard box, scrawled with a familiar overflowing script, "Mark Scarborough." Here were gathered the last scraps of an abundant miscellany that represented the former *Tribune* reporter and columnist.

Six months later, on June 11, I had finally packed up two of his awards (unimpressive second and third places) also found at the *Tribune*, to send to Mark. But destiny would have it that, on the very same day, mutual friend Michael Hittner of Historic Point Basse called to tell me it was too late.

Mark, by then an all-purpose journalist at the Edgerton *Reporter*, had joined another employee outside on a park bench where Mark suffered a "seizure" from which he could not be revived. "I thought he was going to write *my* obituary," I told Mike, of the younger historian who had seemed on course to assume my role.

When he came to the *Tribune* in 1985, Mark was a wide-awake 26-year-old, fresh from Edgerton, Wis., the "tobacco city" he had covered for the Janesville *Gazette* beginning in 1979. The same *Gazette* ran a retrospective June 12 of this year that portrayed Mark's desk at Edgerton where the then 53-year-old was inundated by material objects: books on vampires, Babe Ruth, Jack Dempsey (and Sterling North); John Wilkes Booth bobble-head doll; faded portrait of Mother; children's books from the Edgerton Book Festival Mark organized; photos for his book on Edgerton; and journalism awards (seven firsts). For the pile on his *Tribune* desk in the 1980s, add his "Our Town" and "Over the Rapids" columns; scribblings for Riverwood Roundtable and Mid-State Poetry Towers; books like his "Blackberries Grown Wild" and "River City Memoirs"; files on Edith Nash, Frances Hamerstrom, Point Basse and Ed Gein; and scripts for Wisconsin Rapids Community Theatre.

Greg Peck, a former *Tribune* editor now at Janesville, described "such a mess that our cops and courts reporter got yellow police tape, and wrapped his desk in it."

Besides his work space, much about Mark was abundant. His funeral at the Congregational United Church of Christ across from the *Reporter* in downtown Edgerton was overflowing with amused affection from a variety of those who had been touched. The preacher said Mark, a member of the choir, brightened her mornings by telling jokes over the phone. (On May 26, he left on her Facebook page: "Much affection and love to you and yours from *moi*."

According to Mark's second-grade teacher, when Mark should have been studying, he was drawing pictures. His cousin spoke of Mark's distress with boyish roughhousing; a friend told a story about Mark falling out of a boat. *Reporter* editor Diane Everson said Mark skipped school in junior high to see 1972 Presidential candidate George McGovern. A young barista was thankful Mark encouraged her writing; a gay male praised a sensitive story Mark had written about him. A former city leader said Mark brought to meetings a fierce defense of good and proper government. He left everything until the last minute, said Mike Hittner, but came through in the end; Mike's wife, Barb, said Mark treated their children with disarming respect.

Mark's father, Everett, told me that as a young boy, Mark insisted they visit every possible Civil War site. He said some of the vehicles overflowing their driveway stored Mark's historical collections. Photographer Donna Browne said Mark continued to exhibit the same giant and genial persona she had known on stage at UW-Whitewater.

Here, Mark's saunter belied his increasing girth as he roamed greater River City with a camera around his neck and notebook in hand—or adorned in black frock and top hat of a 19th Century snake oil salesman, exhorting the gullible at Point Basse.

He liked to make an impression. Then *Tribune* reporter Lisa Zwickey warned Mark to stop addressing Wisconsin Supreme Court justice Shirley Abrahamson as "Darlin.'" His verbosity frustrated decades of editors, including Everson of the *Reporter*, who said that Mark stood behind her as she edited and defended every word. Former *Tribune* city editor Robyn Austin said Mark loved words so much he used as many as he could, yet made a story about a school board meeting read like poetic prose.

Mark didn't let me forget I had criticized his poem about an owl, eagle and loon for displaying, "too many birds." He might appreciate that, in his honor, I have burst the aviary and fluttered beyond my usual 700-bird limit.

Mark deserves a rambling epitaph that will confound *Tribune* editors and readers, like this tale of too many desks, too many pages, too many words and too many feathered bipeds, all too precious to cut.

June 2013

Billy

At the 50-year class reunion in September, many members of the Class of ’63 will gather at the Mead hotel and Bulls Eye country club to express befuddlement at how they got so old.

They are the fortunate ones. Billy never made it to his senior year.

Back in the happy days of high school, when he and Al Norman shared a six pack of beer in the front seat of a car in the garage of a house somewhere off Third Street, I said I didn’t drink, so it must have been my sophomore year, 1960-61. Billy, though a classmate, was at least a year older and Al was a junior.

Later that night, Billy heated up some frozen French fries and I told him what a paradise he inhabited, a rich kid with the entire house to himself and fast food in the fridge. Although they allowed overnights “in town,” my parents set curfews and often attempted to amend my behavior.

But Billy didn’t seem to feel as good as he should. Maybe something to do with the fact that his grandfather, William F. Thiele, an accomplished patriarch and industrial leader, had died Aug. 4, 1960.

If G.W. Mead dreamed up the harnessing of the Wisconsin, Chief Engineer Thiele carried the dreams to reality. He was credited with increasing the “working head of water” at Wisconsin Rapids, Biron and Stevens Point and building the Big Eau Pleine, DuBay, Petenwell and Castle Rock dams and reservoirs. At the time of his death, he headed the Wisconsin River Power Co. and owned a cranberry marsh northeast of Rapids.

Pretty hard to live up to for his surviving sons, Robert W. and Paul F., then of Georgia and daughter Margaret in Florida.

In 1946, William F. and second son Paul founded Thiele Kaolin of Sandersonville, Ga., which provided “clay” for Consolidated’s coated paper. But Billy’s father was not the dad’s partner, his uncle Paul, but Paul’s year-older brother, Robert W. Thiele, the less fortunate son. In 1940, Robert, 26, after three years of college, was living at the Thiele family home and managing the family cranberry marsh.

Billy’s other grandfather was Harold Boyd, a salesman at Heilman’s clothing store here. In 1930, Harold, his wife Cynthia, and daughters Lorna and Jeanne Ann had arrived from Ottumwa, Iowa.

Billy’s mother, Lorna Boyd, was a 1939 graduate of Lincoln high school, where she was active in music and stage and a regular with the Congregational youth choir—along with Robert Thiele’s sister, Margaret. In 1939, Lorna played Zingara the Gypsy maid in the comic opera, “The Marriage of Nanette.”

Robert Thiele and Lorna Boyd married at Dubuque, Iowa, in 1940, and lived in Wisconsin Rapids. A November 1948 *Tribune* noted that Lorna and children Susan and Billy were visiting her parents, who had moved to Carlsbad, N.M., in 1943, the year Billy was born.

In September 1954, Billy’s parents divorced in Rockford, Ill. Custody of the two children went to the father, though Billy was closest to grandmother Thiele at 950 1st Ave. S.

In 1956, Lorna, then of Stevens Point, married Flavel Beadle of 810 Elm St. here. He died in 1959, leaving his widow and his stepdaughter Susan. Beadle had not adopted Billy, ostensibly because Billy’s father, Robert, “wanted him to carry on the family name.”

As an older student, Billy was able to drive a car and as a rich kid, was provided with one. An 18-year-old junior, he was also old enough to drink in a beer bar.

Friday night, Nov. 25, 1961, William Boyd Thiele pulled his 1956 Chrysler from Highway U onto Highway 54 and collided with a convertible driven by a mill worker heading home to Portage county. Both cars were demolished, both drivers killed.

Classmates Nick Brazeau and Butch La Chapelle were together for breakfast on Saturday when they learned they would be pall bearers at the Congregational church.

The obituary said Billy was a member of the art club and that his father lived in Georgia. At the Congregational church where his grandfather’s funeral had been held so recently, I saw his inconsolable mother, dressed in black, as she was helped down the aisle.

On the night in 1960 that I was lamenting about maternal oversight, Billy said something that put the situation into another perspective, words I obviously haven’t forgot. “You’re lucky,” he said, “At least your parents care about you.”

August 2013

Keeping Up with Myron

Well before Betty Boop was conceived in 1930, Rapids native Myron Henry "Grim" Natwick (1890-1990) was regularly mentioned in the *Daily Tribune*.

A 1910 Lincoln high school grad, Myron had, in June 1909, become the only state champion on record from "Grand Rapids," winning the 120-yard hurdles and placing high in the 220-yard hurdles and discus throw. He had also performed in the class play, "Higbee of Harvard" and in community theater's "Grand Old Flag."

After graduation, Myron left for Chicago and, in 1913, for Baltimore, home of his uncle, Joseph Natwick, to "again take up" the study of art. Joseph's daughter, Mildred, then 8, would become a well-known actress.

During Christmas season 1914, Myron gave "a very interesting illustrated lecture" to the Mozart club here. In 1915, still considered "of this city," he won first prize of $5 in the Chicago *Record Herald* spring poem contest and enjoyed a two-week float on the Chippewa river in Sawyer county with brother Frank.

On April 2, Myron and M.H. Jackson were scheduled to host at the Congregational church but didn't seem to be making any preparations. Members present began to think it an April Fool joke and were about to leave when it was announced that the committee had arranged to entertain at the Hotel Witter and the hungry multitude rejoiced.

July 21, 1917, Myron was married in Chicago to Ida Lucille Wittenberg of Rapids. The couple visited Rapids before returning to Chicago for "a short time" prior to a planned move to "their future home" in New York City.

In July 1918, Myron left for military service at Camp Grant, Rockford, Ill., only to be discharged in October as the war wound down.

In March 1923, the Ideal theater (now Rogers Cinema) advertised that the movie, "Strongheart the Wonder Dog," was accompanied by a surprise. "For months we have been trying to locate some of the cartoon work of Myron 'Grim' Natwick and all unexpectedly as the last half of a Goldwyn Graphic we have one. Better come and see what a local boy does for the screen."

Throughout 1925, ads in the *Daily Tribune* appeared for Normington's laundry, drawn by Natwick.

Though his permanent address remained Rapids, Myron and Ida resided in New York City for the first part of their marriage and the later two-and-a-half years in Europe, where he studied art, mostly in Vienna.

When Ida fell victim to a serious illness in 1925, she and Myron returned to New York, hoping for a cure. She died March 18 at her sister's residence in Marietta, Ohio. Funeral services were held at the home of her parents, Charles and Augusta Wittenberg, who had moved to Janesville, Wis. After his wife's death, Myron spent ten days with them.

Having "attained success as an artist and cartoonist since leaving Wisconsin Rapids six years ago," Myron continued to be mentioned throughout 1925: in April, for entertaining the Elks Lunch club with chalk drawings; and in June, "you will all want to see the home boy who went out into the world and made so fine a name for himself by his drawings."

At the Ideal theatre, between showings of movies, he conducted his "famous CHALK TALKS including…some caricatured reminiscences of the old home town…particularly interesting to those who knew Grim as a boy."

In 1926, the cover designs of the artist by then best known as "Grim" began to grace *Consolidated News*, a "community" monthly for Rapids-area residents and company employees. The illustrations are part of the permanent Natwick exhibit at the SWCHC Museum, 540 Third St. S., Wisconsin Rapids.

In March 1927, for the Entre Nous club, Myron's mother exhibited paintings made by Grim at Vienna. One of those works was donated this year to the Museum by Myron's cousin and 1960s LHS pole vault ace James Natwick.

In 1928, Myron reportedly began a collaboration not generally known by current animation devotees when, according to the Rapids *Tribune*, he entered the newspaper paper comic field with a feature entitled "Kids" in the Chicago *Tribune*.

"Kids" would carry the by-line of Bert Green, "well known humorist, who writes the conversation of the cartoon characters. The drawings, however, are by Mr. Natwick, who has an agreement with Mr. Green for the syndication of the feature."

As the artist approached 40 years old, he still had not given a thought to the animated little flapper we would swoon over so many years later.

Johanna's Sore Spots

Society lady called the piles of junk "sore spots."

She was Johanna Lyons Kellogg, president at the time of her death in 1944 of the Kellogg Bros. Lumber Co. and the city park and pool commission. She was also a board member of Forest Hill cemetery association and a member of Travel Class, Tuesday Club and other high-toned groups.

In a 1918 paper to the local Women's Federation, "Mrs. Will Kellogg" called out restaurant, hotel and garage owners, market and newspaper owners, merchants, lumber dealers, saloon keepers, shop keepers and other business men. "They will paint the front of their business place, put up awnings perhaps, put in fine window displays and do everything to attract attention to their front windows and doors, yet seem perfectly content to live with an abomination of debris at their back doors," even though "all sides of their property are plainly in view."

Kellogg described downtown buildings pock-marked with half-obliterated and useless signs, "racked and bursting boxes and cases reeling drunkenly around their grounds," huge piles of winter ashes, cans and broken machinery, old sheds and out buildings.

The "plague spots in this fair city that stand up and shout and hoot at the passer-by" had included her family's Kellogg Bros. East Side lumber yard. Fortunately, old sheds packed with old sleighs, wagons, boards, scaffolding and debris were being torn down and a garden or two already peeped out of the litter, she said. But behind Lambert Printing and Baker Undertaking on Second Street, "we are almost overcome at the sight" of an alley exhibiting a "wonderful and fearful collection of all kinds of old trucks."

"Look into the area behind the express office, saloon and market – cans, boxes refuse, cases, old sheds staggering with hanging doors and old wagons and trucks, a sight to distress the eyes of gods." At the river end of Oak Street, adjacent to the Daly Drug Store, "If [the owner] had set out to make the worst looking hole he possibly could he would only need to pattern it by this place."

At the east entry to what is now Riverview Expressway bridge, then the Chicago and Northwestern railroad bridge, was a bona fide waste disposal site. "It is a loathsome place, one where hoboes and dogs drag forth unseemly things into the light of day."

Kellogg liked the old cemetery "near the F.J. Wood home" on Washington Street. "Nature has kindly covered many wounds here, but a little pruning and a little filling would make this spot most attractive. It is a quiet lovely place, a paradise for birds, and an ideal spot in which to be alone with your thoughts, while all that is fair in nature helps us to beautify this quaint beloved acre."

On the West Side, Kellogg found a mess behind the relatively-new Johnson & Hill store but good work at the Chicago and Northwestern depot where whitened stones and native shrubs blocked view of a decrepit wall, barn and out-buildings belonging to residents.

Sore spots festered all over town but the one behind the previous Johnson & Hill store on West Grand Avenue was the worst, infected by years of neglect and the "fearful results of the burned building lying just as it fell."

Kellogg's expose was part of a national movement to mitigate the collateral damage of the industrial revolution. Here, Kellogg hoped to restore what she envisioned as a pleasant green valley along the blue waters of the pristine Wisconsin. To a remarkable extent, she and her cohorts were successful.

Once strewn with sawdust and slabs, the river bank below the Elks building was already in the process of "healing." At the river next to the Witter Hotel near the present Jackson Street bridge, Kellogg recommended that boulders be deposited "where high water creeps in," followed by her favored nostrums of dirt, grass, and shrubs. Seats could be added for pedestrians, she said, and with that, concluded a veritable prophecy.

In the New Millennium, lush park land extends with one interruption [that includes the old Elks club] from Belle Isle to the New Page dam for which much credit goes to the spirited matron as responsible as anyone for converting "sore spots" to the beauty spots enjoyed by current residents.

1963

Friday afternoon Nov. 22, 1963, I waited in Sims Hall for fellow LHS grad Kurt Halverson because my roommate was going to chauffeur us home from Stevens Point, where we were freshmen at then-named Wisconsin State College. Theoretically, we had leaped the ontological chasm, never to look back, but, like so many homeboys, I hadn't really left River City behind.

On Friday afternoon, Nov. 22, 1963, I looked forward to a Mom-cooked meal, then to join Kurt and the gang for boys-only at Buzz's Bar on West Grand across from City Hall, and later, to Riverside dance hall, half way back to Point, where the girls were likely to be dancing—with each other.

But it was still Friday afternoon, Nov. 22, 1963, when Kurt appeared at our door. His message was urgent, delivered in much the same way by newscasters to millions of stunned antediluvians who perversely and proudly recollect the moment 50 years later: "The President has been shot."

That Friday morning there is little chance I shivered the long, cold, trek to breakfast at the Union—only slightly more likely that I sweated through 7:45 a.m. gym class with the eponymous Hale Quandt—or showed up at 8:45 a.m. English 101, far away in the basement of Old Main. Had I been there, the chances of the uneasy instructor I recall as "Mr. Wacker" appearing on the same morning (to ritually butt out his cigarette and relight it after class) weren't so good.

Of course, Friday morning followed Thursday night. Because so many yokels fled for the weekend, Thursday was Joe College's night to hang out at Fill's bar. Bingeing was time-honored at the campus that hosted the Siasefi drinking club.

We didn't know it but our life at Point was more reminiscent of 1948 than it would be similar to 1968. The fees had an antique quality. Tuition was just over $200 for the year; room and board about $800—a year.

"Coeds" had 10:30 p.m. curfew on week nights. Expulsion was the penalty for "shacking up" or drinking in your dorm room, a cement wall cubicle without television, refrigerator, cooking appliance or customized sleeping quarters. [Drug use was yet to come.]

The only "fast food" was 15-cent hamburgers at "Robby's" on Division Street. Edibles on campus were provided only at the student union by Ace Foods, my employer-to-be.

Popcorn-making and smoking of tobacco were allowed in the dorm. The pipe was a fashionable accessory for white-socked, sweater-clad, crew-cut college men and clouds of Cherry Blend filtered under doors that vibrated, after November 22 with the strains of "I Wanna Hold Your Hand."

On the day Kennedy was shot, the lads from Liverpool released the album that in the U.S. was named, "Meet the Beatles," a somewhat subtle signal of the paradigm shift taking place.

By the time I graduated in 1967, the school, with close to 6,000 students, had changed its name again, to Wisconsin State University.

Thanks largely to the deceased Kennedy's overtures, "Viet Nam," the defining circumstance of our generation, was far enough into collegiate consciousness that I made it a speech topic my sophomore year, parroting a cautionary tale found in *Readers Digest*.

More succinctly and in the same 1963 season Kennedy was shot, folk soothsayer Bob Dylan penned "Blowin' in the Wind," "Masters of War" and "A Hard Rain's a-Gonna Fall." His next album: "The Times They Are a-Changin'."

In March 1967, even as the war-induced draft darkened the new frontier for graduates, WSU president James Albertson, on an educational mission, died in a plane crash in Viet Nam.

In May 1967, my undergraduate years concluded with an event that linked the old school and the new one to come. When Wis. Gov. Warren Knowles came to town a riot broke out that extended from campus to the Whiting Hotel.

Knowles wanted to raise the drinking age from 18 to 21. Students were fighting for their right to party.

In 1970, I returned as an English instructor to find almost 10,000 Pointers, wearing Oshkosh B'Gosh overalls, protesting war and other abominations and smoking pot. Curfew was a distant rumor; boys and girls, both adorned in long locks, were sleeping together in an expression of freedom unimagined on the Friday in 1963 that Kennedy was shot.

Ellen

For a quarter of a century, the Christmas Eve return home to Rudolph included a detour. Every year since the mid-80s, we drove up First Street North through the ancient part of old Grand Rapids—past the paper mill dam, the first Catholic church, the colossal panorama of the Kraft mill, the former brewery and the cluster of saloons at the tracks. Every year, we viewed the Lamplight Inn, an old hotel with rooms above for railroad men and, on the ground floor, the small bar tended in the 1980s by the portly and anachronistic Eddie Skoog.

My wife, Kathy, and I first entered the Lamplight in the entourage of Ellen Sabetta, a notable resident of that mostly blue collar neighborhood. With her imposing stature and dynamic, "How's by you?" Ellen was at the height of her tenure as a Rapids VIP.

Ellen had returned here from California in 1972, after a divorce, and immediately engaged in activities with the South Wood County Historical Corp. When I met her in 1980, Ellen, at 55, clerked at Newton's women's clothing store in the Mead-Witter Block and presided over the SWCHC Museum as "curator." She mailed me a $1 membership to the historical society and continued to remind me through anonymous notes what I owed to Clio, the muse of history.

Unfortunately, Clio was to blame for a lot of trouble and in recent years, Ellen and I didn't see as much of each other. Nevertheless, every year came the Christmas Eve swing by First Street North. After owner Skoog's 1986 death, the old hotel bar was dark and anonymous and the "Lamplight Inn" sign bequeathed to me.

North of the tracks was a second inn, Piper's, where, to owner Rachael Piper, an interloper like me was always a stranger unless he was with Ellen. Rachael's place was, even more than the Lamplight, second home for Ellen's select crowd, some of whom she adored and some she despised, especially the ex-cop who took a devilish delight in needling her.

At the time we knew her best, Ellen was head of the McMillan Library board that hired Bill Wilson as director. "We done good," she repeatedly assured us, after the hyper-extended deliberations.

On our best night at Rachael's, Wilson joined Ellen; her then-BFF Pat Orcutt, also a member of the library board; my wife, who worked at McMillan; and myself, newly-minted city historian; along with a few regulars. After one-too-many rounds of Goodhue's Finest, our small band of communitarian parrotheads loudly sang along with the juke box's "Margaritaville," as we looked for that lost shaker of salt.

At Rachael's, Ellen had the inspiration that her ex-husband, Mike Sabetta, might be deceased and she could possibly garner some much needed survivor's benefits. A socially-incorrect phone call proved he was alive and Ellen's money problems would continue.

When Rachael died in 1988, her smoky Margaritaville wasted away.

But the Christmas detour continued, every year ending at a homely little house on Cherry Street, hardly changed from the mid-20th Century when it was assembled of Consoweld laminate. If Ellen or anyone were ever awake inside on those nights, that person waited in the dark, [reputedly in the company of empty beer cans].

Every year, late on the Eve, I left the idling car and family to hurry up the narrow walk—feeling guilty as old Nick, stuffing contraband into a red mailbox at the side of the door, in later years vulnerable to busybodies with cell phones itching to call 911.

The ritual was a personal nod, related to the local history that had bound our lives, such as a then-new *River City Memoirs* book, someone else's similar book or a Paul Gross DVD. In return and after all, didn't she often say, "If you're good, you will have my collection when I'm gone"?

Last year's lagniappe was my favorite.

Many times over the decades, Ellen had urged me to write up the story of the Roberson Players, a tent show fondly remembered from her West Side childhood. Sources were too hard to find then and I demurred. But, thanks to the "Internet," mainly the websites of Ancestry.com and Newspaper Archives, I had finally been able to document her memories in a fat package I left at her door and in a story published here.

Of course, you know why I'm telling you this now.

On Oct. 23, 2013, Ellen Sabetta, 88, was found dead by a caregiver in that same unlit little house that we had stopped by for such a short time in so many snowy seasons.


439
April, 1955

[redacted]

David, second from right, Clen Brundidge, right
Boy Scouts, Troop 78

[redacted]

Broadcaster

If you're Terry Stake's age, the voice of River City in your youth was Arnie Strope. If you're younger, the voice of River City in your youth was Terry Stake.

The generation-older Strope, a former farm kid from west of town, retired in 1987 and died in 2009 at age 87. Best known for the morning call-in program, "Kaffee Klatsch," he began in 1941 and spent his entire career at WFHR. An interview with Strope took place in 2007 and appeared in *Artifacts*, the publication of the South Wood County Historical Corp.

Stake (LHS 1965), a former farm kid from west of town, retired in 2009, the year Strope died. Incidentally a WFHR on-air personality and advertising exec, Stake is best known for broadcasting Lincoln, Assumption, Nekoosa, and Port Edwards sports: football, basketball, wrestling, softball and volleyball. He has also rubbed elbows with Wisconsin's professional athletes, including numerous Green Bay Packers.

I first met Stake in 1980 by the 10-cent Mountain Dew machine in the lunch room of the Tribune-WFHR building. He was already a media veteran, having wielded the mic since 1968. "Arnie Strope gave me my first radio job," Stake related recently, although the then-young wannabe had botched his audition tape on an old reel-to-reel recorder.

That story is part of Stake's new book, *Looking at the Beams: My Life in Broadcasting*, titled after the signature phrase he used on air when a local wrestler was about to pin his opponent.

As a part-time WFHR employee, Stake was assigned "just about every task that radio had" but aspired to become a sportscaster. General manager Jack Gennaro was reluctant to risk a live audition of the neophyte. It took Bill Nobles, lawyer by day and play-by-play announcer by night, to offer a Port Edwards game that happened to fall during Stake's honeymoon with wife Terrie—demanding one of the near-heroic commitments of the profession.

"Being a broadcaster is being an entertainer, too," Stake wrote in *Looking at the Beams*. "You must create a picture and also try to make your listener smile or at least brighten up their day. There were many times that I broadcast a sporting event with a heavy heart or illness, but tried to never let the listener know."

The most difficult situation came after his two premature daughters were born. Stake was about to go on the air when the phone rang. It was the hospital telling him a daughter had passed away. "Somehow by the grace of God I managed to deliver the sports news before heading to be with my wife and plan a funeral." The second daughter would die a few days later.

The lesser but still daunting challenge of *Beams* occupied Stake for several years and speaks for a legion of self-publishers. "I just took my biggest risk ever in writing and publishing my book," he has said. "The time consumed and the money spent have given me many sleepless nights. I had a dream that I only sold two of the 5,000 books I had printed, and I was standing on a street corner with a sign stating, 'Will work for food.'"

That dream shouldn't come true.

Stake's memoirs are true to his distinctive voice and a natural for several categories of readers: history buffs who lived through the golden age of 20th Century River City; fans who celebrated four decades of sports excitement; and listeners who tuned in to the best moments of radio, an increasingly automated medium.

Stake notes that three former WFHR dignitaries have been named to the Wisconsin Broadcasters Hall of Fame:

•George Frechette, general manager of WFHR-AM, Wisconsin Rapids, 1940-63, co-founder and later manager of the Wisconsin Network, a sports, news and information service for an original nine radio stations. Frechette helped bring WSAU-TV, Wausau, to the air in 1954, as its general manager.

•Jack Gennaro, Frechette's successor, general manager at WFHR/WWRW 1964-89, during which time he also served as manager of the Wisconsin Network.

•Arnie Strope, voice of WFHR and engineer for Wisconsin Network.

Says Stake, "My prayer is that some day I will be the fourth."

Moptops 1964

The President had been assassinated and 1964 began under a dark cloud. Most oppressive was the threat of nuclear war, aggravated by events such as the mid-winter downing by the Russians of an American military plane over East Germany. In February, Russian ally Cuba cut off water to the American naval base at Guantanamo Bay in reprisal for the U.S. seizure of Cuban fishing boats.

In Viet Nam, U.S. military involvement escalated while terrorist bombings targeted Americans in what Secretary of State Dean Rusk called a "dirty, untidy, disagreeable war."

U.S. Representative (and future Secretary of Defense charged to end the same conflict) Melvin R. Laird Jr., of Marshfield, called for a "grim decision" either to abandon the effort or carry the war to Communist North Vietnam.

Influenced perhaps by the depressed national mood, a lot of us college frosh were wrapped up in our own crepuscular angst, having left home to live in a "dorm" populated by barbarians and having been informed by philosophers that God was dead. Then, from an ancient and foreign realm, a brightness burst into our dark world and yea yea yea verily, washed over us with a joyful noise:

The Beatles.

By February 1, the English pop quartet ascended to the top of the U.S. musical charts with, "I Wanna Hold Your Hand," a whimsical put-on of no consequence imbued with charisma, wit and levity.

The first time I heard a Beatles recording being played was in the back seat of an automobile in transit between beer bars in Appleton, Wis., when I opined that they, "sound like the Everly brothers but not as good." My first sight of the lads, or more exactly, their images, came Sunday evening, February 9, on the Ed Sullivan television show, viewed in the boys-only dorm basement.

At 18, I considered myself over the hill and, like my elders, abhorred the orgasmic hysteria of young females over persons other than myself; yet, I soon purchased the album, *Meet the Beatles* and played it every day.

Meanwhile, the Marlboro-addled columnists of the Greatest Generation mustered their sarcasm in a vain attempt to protect civilization as they knew it. On the one hand, so they pronounced, as I had, that this was nothing new, Elvis all over again, who himself was Sinatra all over again, who must have been Caruso all over again. On the other hand, it was some freaky, disturbing stuff, as the pundits fixated on their fear of unorthodox coiffures.

Daily Tribune: "Many parents of teen-age girls are mystified as to why their daughters have gone ga-ga over 'The Beatles,' four boys with wayout haircuts and an even farther-out way of making music." From New York: "Britain's rock 'n' rollers with the haystack hairdos, blew up a teen-age storm [of "mostly girls"] by arriving here."

Similarly, with sarcasm:

"The younger generation is flipping over the Beatles because the singing group is different and because the youngsters feel their parents are disturbed by this teen idolizing. Merely convince your children you think the Beatles are the greatest. Once you accomplish this, your youngsters probably will think the Beatles are square."

The day the Beatles "invaded" Carnegie Hall, a compliant dunderhead wrote that they looked like an amusing parody of the worst elements of American rock 'n' roll music. "The word 'looked' is used advisedly, for no one, especially the screaming little girls, actually heard the Beatles."

River City's own columnist, Ollie Williams, demonstrated his cluelessness. "The tragedy today is that we've proven ourselves such a sucker for tuneless trash that the rest of the world is only too happy to capitalize on it. But youth is fickle. We can rest assured that the Beatles won't be with us long. Even Elvis Presley, who started much of the current nonsense, has found that when a man's beard gets thicker than the hair on his head, fame fades."

That first Beatles tour ended in Miami Beach, Fla., where Cassius Clay (later Muhammad Ali), was training to take the heavyweight boxing crown from Sonny Liston.

When John, Paul, George and Ringo visited Clay in his gym, a typical commentary said the fame-chasing Fab Four were unhappy because, "No teen-agers were present. There was no outburst of enthusiasm. The fight mob took little notice of the shaggy-haired visitors except one who remarked, 'Who's dem characters?'"

Dorothy

She did what you should be doing. In 2007, half-a-dozen years before her death January 19 [2014] at age 100, Dorothy Karberg, with the help of retired English teacher Joan Wiese Johannes, published a 40-page booklet of memoirs.

Dorothy was born Sept. 22, 1913, in Port Edwards, Wis., to Helen and Andrew Pluke, a former paper mill worker interviewed 30 years ago for this column. Elements of Dorothy's story are familiar to elders throughout the region.

Have you heard of food kept in a basement "root cellar?" Later, in an icebox?

Meat in a 5-gallon crock; home-made root beer; canned tomatoes, beets and pickles; sauerkraut. Wild blueberries, strawberries, dewberries. Buying a crate of peaches once a year. Baking pies.

Milk delivered in glass bottles—by horse and wagon in summer and sleigh in winter. An "outhouse" for a toilet, baths in a washtub filled with water heated by the wood-burning kitchen stove.

Pre-vacuum cleaner spring cleaning: mattresses out to air, carpets hung on clotheslines and pounded; walls, woodwork, floors scrubbed; curtains washed and wrapped on stretchers.

Sheets hung on outside lines and underwear inside. Clothes sewn by her mother or, later, Dorothy herself.

Toys? One doll, one teddy bear, paper dolls. Games: dominoes, checkers, rummy.

In winter, horses pulled wooden plows to clear sidewalks but left the roads covered with snow for sleighs. Youngsters sledded on the unplowed streets, skated on the mill pond and walked to school in long underwear and buckle overshoes.

The Plukes bought their first car when Dorothy was seven, a Studebaker touring car with clip-on windows. In winter, the radiator was drained and the Studebaker put up on blocks.

The first radio came in the mid-twenties, in combination with a wind-up phonograph. A favorite program was WLS Barn Dance on Saturday nights.

Some of Dorothy's memories are particular to the village of Port Edwards, such as Ole Boger's ice cream parlor; the pool hall girls were not allow to enter; Friday night silent movies in the school gymnasium with Cleve Akey on piano; and a WWII victory garden along Third Street and Ver Bunker Avenue.

With no high school in Port, Dorothy chose Alexander high in Nekoosa, for which her father had to pay tuition.

On the streetcar Dorothy took to Nekoosa, there was "lots of courting," she said. Some rascally boys caught a ride on the "cowcatcher."

There were two groceries in the village, the White City Store owned by Frank McGargle and later August Buehler—and "the old store."

Highway 13 ran from Nekoosa to Port Edwards along the river by the paper mill. It frequently flooded and drivers had to take an alternate route.

During World War I, Dorothy's father worked 12-hour shifts at the local NEPCO paper mill. During the 1919 strike, he went to Janesville for temporary employment.

Dorothy played piano with various student groups at school events. When the string quintet broadcast over WLBL radio from Stevens Point, she was announced as, "Miss Plunke at the piano."

At 15, Dorothy's appendix ruptured and she spent six weeks in Riverview hospital. Later, in bed at home, she was serenaded by her brothers and Gordon Hinkley who later achieved prominence as an announcer on WTMJ Milwaukee.

In 1931, while still in high school, Dorothy started working for Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. in the shipping room office and soon became secretary for company president L.M. Alexander. "He didn't come in often; he was elderly, and I went to his house. It was very beautiful and had a marble fireplace."

Dorothy met future husband Russell while working in the mill shipping room. In 1934, the Nekoosa priest refused to marry the couple because Russ was not Catholic but Father Reding of Wisconsin Rapids agreed to the union. Later, the Karbergs moved to a succession of Russ-built homes in Port.

In 1960, they bought the Switch tavern north of town, where Russ tended bar while continuing shift work at NEPCO and farming on the side until he had a heart attack and the couple sold the tavern and moved back home.

Russ died in 1970; Dorothy lived on 43 more years. The latter portions of her reminiscences detail her numerous travel adventures.

Dorothy is survived by her son William Karberg, Port Edwards, and daughter Mary Ann Michau, Wisconsin Rapids, prime beneficiaries of her life and life story.

Callie

Callie Nason cut an impressive figure in Grand Rapids, Wis.

Business success had given the manager of the south side "Centralia" paper mill a "happy, self-confident spirit that rests one in her presence," wrote Rosa M. Perdue in the May 1912 Milwaukee *Journal*.

Nason, as general manager, directed the buying and letting of contracts and the work of 75 men and four "girls."

At Grand Rapids (now Wisconsin Rapids), Nason told Perdue she employed mostly men because newsprint for shipment on "endless rolls" was too heavy for "girls" of which there were four, employed in the department that "made sheet paper."

"I am writing this to show one of the new fields in which woman is demonstrating her efficiency," said Perdue. "While business success is hers, she does not lose one bit of her feminine charm."

The enterprise had been such a success under Nason's management that she was in the process of building a new plant, said Perdue.

Like the *Journal* story of the same year, the June 15, 1912, Manitoba *Free Press* called Nason "the only woman manager" in the U.S. paper industry and summarized the history of the mill site.

The property was originally home to a saw mill built by Lyon and Sampson in 1840, subsequently owned by Hurley and Burns, later by John Rablin.

After Rablin's pail factory failed in 1874, the property came into the possession of incipient paper magnates George Whiting of Neenah and G.F. Steele, who became the first manager.

In May 1932, the year of Nason's death, Rapids historian Tom Taylor wrote in "Paper Industry" that Nason had served for 19 years at Centralia Pulp & Water Power Co., mostly as the first and only woman manager of a pulp and paper mill in Wisconsin and maybe the world.

Taylor said Nason's family had migrated from Maine to "Nasonville," a rural area southwest of Marshfield, Wis., where Callie's father and uncle engaged in logging and commerce.

After her 1884 graduation from Marshfield high school, Nason taught school until 1888, when a friend induced her to apply to G.F. Steele, manager of the Centralia company, for the position of bookkeeper at a new pulp mill, which was followed by, in 1890-91, the first paper mill on the Wisconsin river.

Steele left in 1890 and Frank Garrison became Centralia manager, though Nason found herself operating the office and, increasingly, much of the mill, while her boss was out making sales. Upon Garrison's death in 1905, she was placed in complete charge.

In 1910, then 43, Nason resided with Celia Garrison, widow of her former boss, Frank Garrison, in Grand Rapids. The mill was located about two miles down river and Nason became a familiar figure, walking back up to her home at the end of the work day.

In May 1912, the same year the two stories above featured Nason's auspicious career, the two-machine Centralia paper mill burned to the ground, presumably the result of electric wires left coiled in the machine room. The pulp mill continued to operate under her management, sending its product to the Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. mill, Port Edwards.

In 1917, then 50, Nason "submitted to an operation" at St. Mary's hospital in Wausau, and, in 1920, suffered a breakdown that she recovered from in part due to the ministrations of her "devoted companion," Miss Pauline Brahmstead.

In 1923, the Centralia pulp mill was razed (under the supervision of Hugh Boles, who had helped build it in 1887) to be replaced by a hydroelectric plant.

Nason retired to a large house she owned in Lyon Park on First Avenue South in Wisconsin Rapids where she and Brahmstead "enjoyed many pleasant days."

Throughout her adult life, Nason traveled extensively, sometimes with the Wood and Garrison families, to destinations such as Minnesota, New Orleans, Vancouver, French Lick, Ind., Seattle, Portland, Florida and Biloxi, Miss. She and Brahmstead spent many winters in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and other hospitable climes.

In August 1932, Nason fell and broke her hip. Taken to Marshfield hospital by Dr. F.X. Pomainville and Brahmstead, she died that month.

The Callie Nason story was retold in 1969 by J. Marshall Buehler of the South Wood County Historical society, addressed to the Business & Professional Women's Club here: apt homage to the professional business woman who set such an early and excellent example.

Last Uncle

Dying of the Engels:

Earl, 1921; Roy, 1990; Donald, 1991; Ralph, 1995; Wallace, 2002; Fred, 2005; Grace, 2005.

And now, Wilmer, 98, March 14, 2014, at Mercedes, Texas.

My last uncle.

To his nephews, the slim, solitary, humble, gentle, handsome Wilmer had been a figure of romance. His limp encouraged me to believe that Uncle Wil, wounded in "the war," had a wooden leg. Yet, he was also, like my boyhood hero, Roy Rogers, whom he resembled, understood to be a cowboy, evidenced on rare visits by a rope produced and twirled in ever wider loops. He had also been photographed astride a horse.

Born in 1915, Wil, the quietest of seven brothers and a sister, grew up on a dairy farm north of Seymour, Wis. Like his family, he loved Jesus and didn't smoke, drink, gamble, curse or philander. But Wil was a loner who quit high school after a week and never went back.

When he said he was leaving for Texas, nobody at home paid attention. One dark night, after waiting in the barn for his brothers to return from town, he followed the country road to the railroad tracks and started walking west. When he found a train, Wil crawled into a boxcar and rode until it was dropped off, right here in River City.

"I had hoped I would find work in the West," he said. "But that's where I started, south of Wisconsin Rapids."

Subsequently, Wil thumbed it much farther, stopping for a while at Kenedy, Texas, where rooming house owner "Grandma Smith," ordered the young hobo to write a letter to his mother; but he failed to include the address and Grandma finished it for him. "Mr. Smith had lost his farm so he was renting his mother's," Wil said. "I helped cultivate the cotton."

Next, Wil tumbled with the tumbleweeds to California, already clogged with Depression-era dust bowl refugees. He couldn't find work and hopped a train back to Wisconsin.

At Cheyenne, Wyo., the rail yard bulls forced him to buy a ticket to Minneapolis, where he got off and started hitchhiking.

On the road about a year, Wil confessed that he was, "trying to get away from myself; but everywhere I went, I was."

After Pearl Harbor, he accompanied my father-to-be, Donald, to enlist in the Army air force but Don flunked his physical so both of them went home. Later, listed as an unmarried farm hand, Wil was drafted into "special services" through Fort Sheridan, Ill. In 1944, then a sergeant, as Wil was walking along a country road in southern France, his leg was shattered by shrapnel and he was discharged.

Still drifting, Wil visited youngest brother Ralph, who was ministering to Spanish speakers along the Rio Grande in Texas. Inspired, Wil matriculated at Toccoa Falls Bible College, Georgia, and returned to Texas with intentions of becoming a missionary like Ralph. His best shot at spreading the Word was as a lay preacher at McAllen and Brownsville. In 1953, he met "a beautiful little girl" of like faith: my Aunt Gerry.

Wil said he never cared for money "or anything or anybody but myself until I got married." The birth of Lois and John occasioned a conventional job with the federal housing authority, "in maintenance."

Did he have a wooden leg? No.

Was he ever a cowboy?

"I guess I always wanted to be."

Through a brother's Boy Scout book, Wil ordered instruction books and ropes to practice with. He owned a revolver but his only cowboy boots were given to him much later by my father.

In the late 1940s, Wil worked for his farmer brother Fred. When Fred's wife died, Wil stayed on to help take care of the three kids, Edward, Mary and Daniel.

A 2003 video I made of Uncle Wil shows him at age 87, twirling a rope in one scene and, at the end, singing a familiar lullaby in his Texas drawl to 57-year-old Dan, as he had when his motherless nephew was a toddler.

He sang it just like Roy Rogers, King of the Cowboys, did:

"Close your sleepy eyes, my little Buckaroo.

"While the light of the western skies is shinin' down on you. Don't you know it's time for bed, another day is through.

"Go to sleep, My little Buckaroo."

Warriers

They risked their lives fighting for a country that hadn't yet granted them citizenship. Shortly after the U.S. declared war on Germany in April 1917, Wisconsin Winnebagos (Ho Chunk) joined the 32nd "Red Arrow" Infantry Division at Camp Douglas, Wis. although they were exempt from selective service.

In July 1917, the Rapids Ah-dah-wa-gam chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution sent each of 23 new soldiers from the Grand Rapids Indian Agency district khaki "comfort bags" containing useful personal items.

"All of us Indians were in thanks to get the good things you have sent," wrote recruit James Brown. "We drill at 7:30 in the morning to 10:30 and in the afternoon we only drill one hour and if we have any ball games we don't drill in the afternoon. We are having all kinds of fun. There are about 154 boys in our Co. There are about 15 Indian boys and the rest are white. We got a Y.M.C.A. here and also a show tent where we see a show every night. We all can drill just as good as any body in the company now."

As the troops embarked for France, a story published in 1975 relates, a government official stood at the foot of the gangplank to inform American Indians they did not have to serve or go overseas. The Winnebago leader turned and said, in his language, "Does any one of you wear a skirt? If so, go home."

The Ah-da-wa-gam chapter provided a Service Flag to the Indian Agency here in December 1918, honoring three of the same Winnebagos who had received comfort bags and who had died or been killed. On June 12, 1919, two more gold stars signified two more deaths. Patriotism and good soldiering, said the accompanying statement, "place them in the front ranks of the American Expeditionary forces."

Of the 23 at Camp Douglas these five had died:

•Mike Standing Water, 19, the first Wisconsin Indian to die in the war, of pneumonia March 11, 1918, on the transport Leviathan on route to France, brought back at the request of his father, a chief, and buried with drumming, chants and military honors in Pine Grove "Indian cemetery" at Mather, Wis.

•Dewey Mike, 19, from wounds at Marne, France, August 30, 1918, buried at Oise-Aisne American Cemetery, Picardie, France, in a grave visited by his octogenarian mother in 1933.

•Jesse Thompson, killed in action Oct. 10, 1918, a month before the Armistice, buried at Meuse-Argonne American Cemetery, Romagne, France.

•Robert "Bob" Decorah, also "DeCorah," 24, killed in action Aug. 2, 1918.

•Corp. Foster Decorah, 40-plus, killed in action the same day.

Foster Decorah was a character of note. A minor fur trader and "sharpshooter of renown," in 1907, he had killed ten wolves and collected $100 in bounties.

At a "condition of Indian affairs hearings" in 1911, Foster told Wisconsin Senator and later presidential candidate Robert M. La Follette he once had worked in a flour mill for $1 a day but soon quit.

Then of Reedsburg, Decorah, father of two boys and a girl, said he ran an Indian camp, shooting gallery and sold beads as concessions in Illinois "picnic parks."

Liquor trouble brought Decorah into contact with federal judge Kenesaw Mountain Landis, later to become the first U.S. commissioner of baseball.

In one of their several meetings, Landis suggested, "Let's you and I go on the water wagon for the rest of this term of court."

Decorah also appeared in the Landis court in 1914 when a bar owner in La Crosse sold him beer after he claimed to be Mexican; he had been acting as a government decoy.

A descendent of the "illustrious Chief Decorah," he presented a commanding figure when he appeared as a witness in another case, "wearing the khaki of a soldier with broad shoulders and graceful carriage."

A fellow member of the 32nd Division said that Decorah and his nephew Robert Decorah had fallen on the same field and that Decorah's son was also a member of the company. "I had often watched the older go through bayonet practice. We taught our men to assume a ferocious expression in bayonet conflict and Foster Decorah's face was worth study at such times."

Foster Decorah is buried at Oise-Aisne American Cemetery, Picardie, France.

His son, Henry, died in 1993, at age 94, and is buried at Ft. Snelling National Cemetery, Minneapolis, Minn.

Indian Agent

Then located on the west river bank of Wisconsin Rapids, the boulder was engraved with the names of seven soldiers who gave their lives in the Great War. Dated 1919, it was dedicated July 4, 1923, by the Ah-dah-wa-gam chapter of the D.A.R., purposely in sight of the Indian Agency office in the MacKinnon block, to mark, "for generations to come, the Esteem and Friendship in which the Winnebagoes are held by the people of Wisconsin Rapids."

Of those named, Corp. Foster Decorah, Robert Decorah, Mike Standingwater, Jesse Thompson and Dewey Mike have been profiled here. Added were James Greengrass, gassed in Europe but expiring at home, and Nelson de la Ronde, missing in action.

When President Coolidge sent a certificate in 1925 honoring 23 Winnebago war veterans, Agent Willis E. Dunn proudly hung a copy on the wall of the Indian Agency, just across West Grand Avenue from the memorial boulder. Same with a service flag exhibited at the state fair in Milwaukee, presented by the Ah-dah-wa-gam chapter.

The local office dated from 1916, when the Department of Interior separated the Grand Rapids Wisconsin Winnebago agency from the Tomah Indian school, and named Samuel J. Stienstra, superintendent.

Stienstra's charge was to supervise expenditure of trust funds to 1,272 Winnebagos scattered over 15 counties in west central Wisconsin, northeastern Iowa and southeastern Minnesota and of 100 Kansas Potawatomi in Wood county near Arpin, presumably at Powers Bluff. Employed here besides the superintendent were chief clerk H.D. Key, and assistant clerk Agnes B. McElligott.

Two men headquartered at Mauston and Black River Falls taught farming and submitted requests to buy land, buildings, horses and farm equipment.

"While Indians frequently visit the local office to secure funds and ask advice," said Stienstra, "the bulk of the work is cared for through correspondence. Upwards of ten thousand letters are received and answered through the local office annually, and funds are disbursed principally by mail." A 1916 Janesville *Gazette* reported more than $60,000 paid out by Grand Rapids in three months to about 1,500 persons.

In 1917, after one year, the Rapids agency was removed to Laona to the protests of locals here who protested that three times as many of those served lived in this vicinity—at Arpin, Tomah, Black River Falls, Neillsville, Wittenberg and Wausau.

After local merchant L.M. Nash and banker F. J. Wood traveled to Washington, D.C., to twist the arm of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, the Rapids agency was reopened with Willis E. Dunn in charge. Dunn was an active agent who in 1919 appeared before the Monroe county board at Tomah asking that Indian lands be exempt from taxation; in 1920, assembled an exhibit of Native bead work, basketwork and produce to be exhibited at the state fair; and provided the explosive, TNT, left over from WWI, for the purpose of clearing land.

When Abner Nash, 89, who had settled in Monroe county just after the Civil War lay dying in 1920 on the White farm west of Rapids, Dunn drove out to help.

Also in 1920, Dunn reported that 89 Indians had died in the world-wide influenza epidemic but, he said, the old belief that the Indians were going to be crowded into little settlements and pass out of existence as a race was not happening—although many picturesque customs were passing out of existence. Dunn also saw no intermarriage here between Winnebagos and whites and noted that the "white plague" of tuberculosis was on the decrease.

In 1921, Dunn, most lately then of Sisseton, S.D., was the subject of a "Who's Who in Wisconsin Rapids" series in which he reported that the Rapids agency issued about 2,500 checks annually. He said he was assisted by deputy H.D. Key and secretary Isabel Schlig.

The agency, then in the Wood Block on the East Side, was discontinued in 1927 and its duties transferred to Tomah. The agent who had replaced Dunn ten months earlier, moved to Idaho.

When a new Rapids post office was planned in 1931, an unsuccessful effort was made to secure in the building a federal court room and the Indian agency.

From 1961–1966, local anthropologist, cranberry grower and politician Philleo Nash was appointed Commissioner of the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs during the Kennedy and Johnson administrations, in a time when American Indians were increasingly active in demanding recognition of sovereignty and civil rights.

Mescalito's Revenge

Apprenticed to a Mexican-Indian sorcerer, young Carlos Castaneda, writing in the 1960s, consumes peyote, believing the plant contains "Mescalito," a being who could reveal the insights a man of knowledge must acquire.

After swallowing the cactus buttons and being wracked by gut-wrenching spasms, Castaneda meets Mescalito, variously a column of singing light, a black dog, and a green warty-headed critter.

Closer to home by land but farther back in time, Mescalito, in the form of a two-faced holy ghost, arrived here over 100 years ago.

Since 1908, many Winnebago (Ho Chunk) supervised by the Grand Rapids agency had been ingesting "buttons" mailed from Oklahoma, Texas and Mexico, joining what media described as a "peyote craze."

In a 1920 report of the Board of Indian Commissioners, practitioners insisted the peyote cactus, also known as mescal, was used only in connection with religious meetings. The report denied any bad effects, moral or physical. However, Rapids agency superintendent Willis E. Dunn opposed the vision-infused "church" meetings held in members' homes that "doped" the participants and prevented them from working for several days. Dunn joined a continuing debate over whether the stuff was dangerous and whether Congress or other agencies had the right to regulate it when used for religious observances.

In 1931, Frances Densmore, legendary ethnologist, collected songs from the then-dubbed "peyote cult." She said the rites combined Christian symbolism with remnants of aboriginal ceremonials and that the adherents she knew were of splendid character.

A 1934 report from Oklahoma in the *Daily Tribune* said that Indians wove a "weird religion around cactus eaters' visions" and that a (still active in 2014) "Native American Church" had been chartered by the state of Oklahoma in 1918.

In 1940, the *Capital Times*, Madison, Wis., described a "peyote church drug cult" in which a cactus preparation "stupefied" followers wanting to perceive the "world incarnation of the body of God – what communion is to Christians."

A 1944 *Tribune* announced that "a score of families in Wood county are expected to attend a big Winnebago ceremonial at Lake Delton, on the Sauk-Columbia county line, Saturday afternoon and evening… an Indian religious event, with a huge ceremonial tepee in which sessions of prayer will be held. There will be no festivity, no dancing." Winnebagos from throughout the state were expected to attend the ceremonies, "when prayers, councils and partaking of the sacred peyote will take place."

Despite apparent social acceptance, reactions to peyote could be toxic.

In 1936, Russell Monegar, descendant of a prominent and respected Winnebago family and brother of a talented artist, competed as a lightweight boxer for the City Point Civilian Conservation Corps camp, in a Golden Gloves match at the Wisconsin Rapids field house.

In 1940, then 22, living near Wausau, Russell was jailed for speeding and disorderly conduct. He quickly joined the Army, became a paratrooper, and was released in May 1944, just after WWII's "Victory in Europe."

In June 1956, Russell, then 38, suffering from a cold and a headache, consumed a brew prepared by his wife and mother-in-law from as many as 95 peyote buttons.

At his shack five miles south of Wausau, Russell's Mescalito materialized in the form of monsters and colored flashes of light. When his eyesight blurred and he heard voices, Russell told his wife to call the cops and have him confined in an asylum. She said there wasn't anything anyone could do and told him to lie down. From time to time, his wife gave him more peyote.

Russell told authorities that a force took hold of him and he went to a cupboard and got a hunting knife with which he stabbed his wife then went next door to his mother-in-law's, and, seeing them only as blurred figures, stabbed her and his niece and nephew, who were being taken care of while their mother was shopping in Wisconsin Rapids.

Not yet lucid, he went to a tavern, where he stabbed the proprietor's wife and a customer before escaping in a stolen truck.

Russell's defense was that, under the influence of peyote, he had heard the voices of his ancestors telling him to kill.

He was sentenced to life in prison and incarcerated at Waupun. He died in 2009 at Wausau.

Born Here

By July 1945, World War II was almost over.

Meanwhile, another countdown was reaching its conclusion as my mother was enjoying the last month of carrying her first-born-to-be. For local credibility, no hi-toned credentials can replace the words, "I was born here." Only by the skin of their teeth did my parents make it happen.

Some of the details came to light in August of this year, when I came upon an old record book of my mother's.

Arline (known here as Sally) and Donald Engel had married in 1942. Before children, they lived at 1122 S. 17th St., Manitowoc, Wis., an address found on a wartime document filed with the Office of Price Administration. "Registration of Rental Dwellings" shows my parents in an "upper flat" owned by Mrs. Frank Richter. Among the conveniences was indoor plumbing, an improvement over the typical outhouses on the Seymour, Wis., farms the two had grown up on.

My dad, after at least two unsuccessful attempts to enlist in the regular military, joined the State Guard while working as a welder of submarines at Manitowoc Shipyards, an occupation that likely caused the lung cancer that killed him 45 years later. Dad's last payroll stub from the shipyard was dated July 7, 1945. He made $1.20 per hour for a 48 hour week, minus $8.24 for tax—a weekly take-home pay of almost $50.

As the war approached an end, shipyard work lessened, so the 26-year-old found a job with the Frank Garber industrial supply company in a paper mill town along a dark river in the forested hinterland 100 miles to the west. It seemed like Siberia to my mother.

A July 14 receipt from the Jos. F. Huettl Transfer Line of Seymour listed "1 LOT HOUSEHOLD GOODS," delivered for $51.32 to 551 11th St. [actually Avenue] N., Wisconsin Rapids, an even smaller apartment than they were accustomed to. With that move, I was able to be "born here" at Riverview Hospital, Aug. 12, 1945.

My birth records were not in that packet but I found those of my sister, Kathryn, born here Nov. 9, 1946. Mother and daughter stayed in Riverview hospital for seven nights at $4.50 each; plus $1 a night for the nursery; and $10 total for the operating room: amounting to about $54 for the birth of the future LHS class of '64 valedictorian. Maternity benefits from "Blue Cross Plan" of Associated Hospital Service., Inc. were $2.50 per day.

In February 1947, Donald paid $51 to Dr. Wallace L. Nelson at the baby doctor's office in the Wisconsin Theatre Building on West Grand Avenue. The receipt was signed by Nathalie Lester. I knew her later as Nathalie Smart.

In July 1947, my infant self had a hernia repaired and spent four nights at Riverview. The charge was $4.25 per day plus $10 for the operating room and $10 for anesthetic. The total bill was $40 for "Mas. Davey Engel" of which my dad paid $24 and Blue Cross kicked in $16.

The same month, Donald paid $10 to Dr. O.W. Koonz, dentist, the receipt signed "BD" by Koonz' office girl, Dorothy Gringle. Dorothy, who died this year, had told her son, my classmate, Rob Gringle, that she had considered my father a very handsome man, especially his eyes.

Just last month, August 2014, with my wife, Kathy, and my brother Gary, also "born here," I revisited the scenes of my conception.

At the Manitowoc Public Library, an address was found for Don and "Erline" that proved to be that of a house Mom had shown me a couple decades ago. Subdivided into apartments, the plain two-story dwelling fell under the shadow of the immense Mirro aluminum cookware plant, busy in World War II and functioning until 2003, now being dismantled.

This year's pilgrimage traveled a little farther from Mirro, to a quieter street and the smaller house on 17th that Don, Sally, and their incipient son left 69 years ago to stake their future in River City.

Coincidentally on my birth date of Aug. 12, 2014, I visited what long time residents still consider the "new" Riverview hospital here, for an exam with my primary care physician, Dr. Thomas E. Ferk, also a native son. "Old Riverview," the venerable structure that brought my sister, two brothers and me into the world at such reasonable rates, had been demolished in favor of plans that didn't materialize, resulting in considerable open space.

That my exact birth site has melded into the historical nothingness locals seem to prefer is just the latest of uncivil phrases so often found in these *Memoirs*, a usage reserved for those who were, by choice, chance or happenstance, "born here."

September 2014

Gulf of Tonkin 1964

50 years ago, it was "Love Me Do" on WSPT when the wheel fell off. Let's call the driver Joe College and realize he was commuting to his sophomore year at Wisconsin State University, Stevens Point.

The loose wheel jammed under the fender of the '57 Ford "Batmobile" (bat wings pasted on the sides) and stripped the studs so Joe figured the vehicle would last only as long as the tire now locked in place.

By the time he junked the 'mobile, both bat doors had been damaged and would not stay closed. The solution was to tie them together with a rope passing across the front seat. To keep the engine running at a stop sign, the gas and brake pedals had to be depressed at the same time. Two of the leaking carburetor's four barrels had been disabled by sticking a pencil in the fuel line.

That he thought his personal demolition derby comical made it pretty obvious that Joe was a card carrying member—of the worst generation.

The card he carried was a "beer card," issued when he "turned" 18. The laminated photo I.D. proved him old enough to drink in designated beer bars. But not old enough to vote. Nevertheless, suffused with incipient academic hubris, Joe was permitted to unleash a callow plethora of polysyllabic verbiage.

In the 1964 presidential election, conservative Arizona Republican Barry Goldwater challenged liberal incumbent President Lyndon B. Johnson, who had taken office when Kennedy was assassinated.

Perhaps because Johnson was the overwhelming favorite, Joe College cultivated a preference for Goldwater. At the kitchen table, he belabored his noncommittal mother with the sins of the larger-than-life Texan.

Besides covering the campaign, the Aug. 3, 1964, *Daily Tribune* broke a story that wouldn't end in November. "LBJ Orders Naval Forces To Destroy Any Attacker."

The previous day, three North Vietnamese torpedo boats had fired on the U.S. destroyer Maddox, causing Congress to pass the August 7 "Gulf of Tonkin Resolution," granting the President authority to conduct military operations in Southeast Asia without a declaration of war. The first air attacks were directed at torpedo boats and bases in North Viet Nam, accompanied by a buildup of military forces that included young draftees resembling Joe College.

But not everyone had forgotten the unsatisfactory result of the recent Korean "police action" in the same general direction.

It was time Americans were given facts about Viet Nam, said a prophetic "think piece" leaked from the CIA and quoted in the *Daily Tribune*. "After the expenditure of untold millions of dollars and hundreds of American lives—not to mention thousands of Vietnamese lives, both civilian and military—the most the Unites States can hope for is a military stalemate."

To his Speech class in the basement of WSU's Old Main, Joe recycled a *Reader's Digest* piece symbolizing the perils of messing around in Southeast Asia with the "fable" slightly modified here.

It seems Scorpion wanted to cross the Gulf of Tonkin and asked Frog for a ride.

"How do I know you won't sting me?" asked Frog.

"Because if I do I will die too," said Scorpion.

Okay, but halfway across the Gulf, Scorpion stung Frog anyway.

Dying, Frog queried, "Why did you do it?"

Said Scorpion. "It's my nature."

It was Joe's nature to choose the Pour Inn beer bar in downtown River City in which to watch the election returns. Almost before it began, Walter Cronkite declared it over, with Johnson winner by a landslide. The vote count for the "Tri-Cities" of Nekoosa, Port Edwards and Wisconsin Rapids was 9,264 for Johnson/Humphrey and 5,048 for Goldwater/Miller.

Around the corner on Grand Avenue, the Wisconsin Theatre showed the Beatles in their first feature-length motion picture, a happy days romp named, "A Hard Day's Night."

At the same time, the *Tribune* reported that the Beatles were no longer "top mops with the British public" because the Rolling Stones, "five young men who also sport long, unruly hair, replaced the Beatles at the top of the 1964 poll held by Melody Maker, a weekly for the addicts of pop music."

His world had taken a turn toward war and now wickedness. For Joe College, it was time to get some hair over his ears and start working up to that 19th nervous breakdown.

November Man

Fun to connect them, the rich and famous, with us, inconspicuous residents of Gopher Prairie, Podunk Rapids and River City.

Happily titled for today's purpose, *The November Man* happens to be a new movie starring a former James Bond, Pierce Brosnan, as CIA agent Peter Devereaux. It is based on the novel, "There Are No Spies," by Bill Granger.

Granger, aka "Joe Gash" and "Bill Griffith," is known mainly for writing political thrillers; some of his fiction depicts the mean streets of his home town, Chicago. Also regionally respected as a writer for the Chicago *Tribune* and the Chicago *Herald*, Granger was interviewed in 2003 by the *Herald's* Burt Constable, who said that, after a series of strokes, Granger's mind "wandered aimlessly around in the past."

Most likely that cognitive perambulation led him down the garden path to Wisconsin Rapids, where he, "November Man" author William Francis Granger, was born, June 1, 1941, to William C. Granger and Ruth Griffith Granger, former locals who had moved to Chicago.

Bill's father, William, had been born here to Rosetta Rickhoff Mann and Melvin G. Mann. Mann died in 1930 and Rosetta married William J. Granger.

Bill's mother, Ruth, was the daughter of Valeria Gasch Griffith and Perry Griffith, a finishing room foreman for the Consolidated Water Power and Paper Co., Wisconsin Rapids.

On Nov. 28, 1942, the *Daily Tribune's* Port Edwards society column noted that "Mrs. William Granger and son, Billy, of Chicago, are spending several days at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Perry Griffith here and with Mrs. Rosetta Mann at Wisconsin Rapids."

An undated story written much later by the same Billy Granger in the Chicago *Herald* describes a family reunion held in what he remembered as the Port Edwards public park "by the river." Granger recalled copies being presented of a nearly century-old photograph of Grandpa Griffith as a youth working at the Consolidated paper mill, Wisconsin Rapids, "in his bare feet grinning with the casual assurance of his superiority that he carried to every aspect of his life."

"On Saturdays, he would buy a case of beer and a bottle of whisky and dragoon his sons-in-law and sons into a bull session that included much swearing, many opinions, and, if there were small children watching the proceedings, even a song. My grandfather, like all Welsh, knew he could sing better than anyone else."

According to Granger, Grandpa Griffith criticized Chicago, as "a vile, evil, low-life, disgusting city," which prompted Bill's father, Griffith's son-in-law, to stop visiting the family here. So each summer, Bill and his mother would return "home" without him.

Young Bill liked to accompany Grandpa to the grocery store in Nekoosa and the Switch tavern in Port Edwards, where Griffith had his first glass of beer of the day. The admiring grandson said Perry Griffith was a big man with powerful hands and arms and huge, mocking, eyes. He wore a perpetual half-smile that was ready for a laugh or a sneer.

Like many workers and farmers, Grandpa ate a big meal at noon called "dinner" and another gigantic meal at night called "supper." He plowed his 20 acres in off-hours and kept chickens that he killed "with delight" on Saturdays in preparation for the Sunday meal.

Then, as Granger wrote in the Chicago *Tribune*, there were the reunions at the Griffith farm that took place on a Sunday afternoon around a barrel of beer with plenty of pop and food available.

Family members, said Granger, spilled into every room of the old farmhouse and onto the front lawn and side lawn and the hide-and-seek cornfield that stretched to the Milwaukee Road tracks and down the dirt road to the Levandoske house. "And I would stand by my grandfather's chair, and he would say, 'Give me a song, and I'll give you a swallow of beer.' And I sang, and he gave me the whole glass, and my mother shook her finger at my grandfather, and he just laughed and surveyed the world with his cynical, merry eyes and realized he was the center of it."

Grandpa Perry Griffith died in 1967; Bill Granger, April 22, 2012, at Monteno Veterans home, Ill., 41 years after his 1971 landmark story for the Chicago *Sun-Times*: "Wisconsin Rapids—Microcosm, U.S.A."

Trouble in Paper City

43 years ago but seems like tomorrow.

On March 21, 1971, *November Man* author Bill Granger, profiled here last month, published a benchmark story in the Chicago *Sun-Times:* "Wisconsin Rapids—Microcosm, U.S.A." In a cadence reminiscent of the "Music Man," Granger said there was trouble right here in River City, "the same trouble you find everywhere else," war, poverty, drugs, surly teenagers and social change. "But for this central Wisconsin paper-mill town, all these problems are new and very frightening."

Granger recalled a city of industry, conservatism, complacency, full employment, lunch buckets and beer—until November 1970, when the first of 245 workers were laid off by Consolidated Papers Inc.

Also the previous winter, the state had cracked down on "a half-century of mill pollution," teachers here struck for the first time, children took to smoking pot, embattled police wore American flags on their jackets, bomb threats surfaced at the mill, several Democrats were elected, and, said Granger, "the confusion of the rest of the nation came to Wisconsin Rapids."

Perhaps provoking Granger's bleak portrayal was the forced early retirement of his uncle, Cliff Parrett, at age 62, from Consolidated Papers Inc.

Granger visited the Hiawatha bar with a younger uncle, mill worker Jack Griffith, who said, "I guess the depression is just starting here, and…since it took so long will take a long time to get stopped."

At the Golden Eagle beer bar, Granger found Jackie Ashbeck, Kathy Ellis, Dennis Nordstrum, Ralph Middlecamp and Steve Wipfli, young people who didn't see much opportunity here. At Brauer's clothing store, where Uncle Cliff Parrett had taken a part-time job, another employee, a bearded Army veteran, said, "This is a great town to grow up in and a great town to grow old in but there's nothing in between and I'm leaving the first chance I get."

At his Consolidated office, company president George W. Mead II told Granger, "There's no doubt that in our industry there is a recession. We've cut down the overtime and we've laid men off and retired men early."

At city hall, Mayor Donald Penza defended his new industrial park. "We've got a downtown that is in trouble and now we've got the layoffs at the mills. We're gonna lose those families and we need them."

At the Elks Club, Granger met Marvin Love, 7th Congressional District Republican chairman and Harold La Chapelle, Wood County district attorney. The two agreed more industry was needed. "If that would bring more blacks into the area, then I say good, I welcome them," said La Chapelle.

Father Andrew Karoblis of Saints Peter and Paul said he had warned of tough times "and now it's come. The whole life of this town centers around the mills and they made the mills their god."

At the police station, Sgt. Ed Heiser and Cpl. Donald Swanson said a police strike had been considered, because, said Swanson, "Trouble is, public employes just don't have any bargaining power like private employees do." Likewise, a teacher lamented that, "I thought I had built up credit in this town over 21 years and then when we went on strike, people drove by and rolled down their windows and called me a Communist."

"Microcosm USA" took a hard stance, but more commonly, Granger was soft, as in a June 30, 1985, Chicago *Tribune* column.

Granger was thinking about the 50-year wedding anniversary of his mother's sister, Florence Griffith Levendoske, and her husband Irv. Recalling Florence's "little house" in Port Edwards, with its outdoor privy and pump and stacks of firewood, Granger said his aunt probably didn't have "a million good memories," as he did, "because adults see these things differently than kids do, especially kids who come up visiting in the summer from Chicago."

There were a few chickens in a yard, he said, but not as many as kept down the road by his beloved Grandpa Griffith. But, by 1985, Granger wrote, "Grandpa is gone. And so is Grandma. And so are my mother and my father. And so is Mary. And so is my brother…

"And others who have monuments in the little graveyards in the little towns built by paper mills around the once-great rapids of the Wisconsin River."

Now one of those markers is for Bill Granger, his ashes buried in the plot with his parents William and Ruth Granger at Forest Hill Cemetery, Wisconsin Rapids.

1964, Two Mile Avenue, 1957 Ford featured here in “Gulf of Tonkin” p. 96

Eggs

His athletic wife had been depicted on a Wheaties box in 1935. His leaping figure appeared on a box of the notable breakfast cereal in 1936. He was the last National Football League "gridder" to play without a helmet. His final professional game was the 73-0 playoff win over Washington in 1940. They called him, "Eggs."

He was born in Nekoosa, Wis., July 4, 1913, sixth of nine children, to German-Americans Gottlieb, a mill worker, and Julia.

On Nekoosa's Alexander high school basketball team, Eggs, a guard, helped defeat Wisconsin Rapids 14-13 by throwing up a series of "uncanny" shots. "The finest example of high school athlete…captain of the 1930 team," said the Nekoosa yearbook.

His name was Edgar John Manske.

"Words are inadequate when used to describe the prowess of Edgar on the basketball floor but to quote a neighboring sports writer, "'Eggs' Manske's high school basketball career is over, but the memory of his presence will linger in the minds of all who witnessed his final game." In football, "At heaving and receiving passes he was unexcelled. His brilliant defense work was an important factor in the team's success."

Moving on to Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., Eggs continued to impress as a point guard in basketball, receiving All Big Ten honors in 1933 and helping win the conference championship. On the football team, Eggs played receiver and defensive end. He was named the Wildcats most valuable player in 1933 and a member of several "all-America" teams.

Hard-shelled Eggs was famous for starting games with his helmet on but then ripping it off, a product of his highly emotional play and, said one writer, a good way for the "dashing flanker" to show off his "waving wheatfield" of hair.

His play for the first-ever college All-Star team against the NFL champion Chicago Bears in August 1934 got unflattering attention from the Chicago Tribune. "In the first quarter Eggs Manske, 175 pound Northwestern end, recoiled three feet from the concussion when he tried to block 220 pound Bronko Nagurski out of a play."

After graduation, Eggs joined the Philadelphia Eagles in 1935 and 1936. He made second team "all-pro" as a rookie and led both the Eagles and the league in several categories.

While at Philadelphia, he married fellow celebrity Jane Fauntz, a "campus beauty queen" and Olympic diver, whom he had met at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair.

Except for a 1938 interlude with the Pittsburgh Steelers, Eggs played for the Bears from 1937 to 1940, when the federal census recorded: occupation, "foot ball player"; highest grade completed, fifth year of college; and income at age 27, $1,757.

As a receiver for the Bears, Eggs enjoyed numerous "duels" with Green Bay counterpart Don Hutson, such as the Packer win in 1937 when each caught a pass for a touchdown.

He pursued a law degree at Loyola University but did not continue in the profession. Eggs was coaching football at Holy Cross University, Worcester, Mass., prior to being drafted for WWII. During officer training at St. Mary's Preflight School in 1942, he also played football and earned All-Service All-America honors. His daughter later said Eggs was appointed Lt. Commander on a patrol squadron in the Pacific.

A post-war 1946 *Daily Tribune* column said the Wisconsin theater here showed a short feature of Jane Fauntz Manske making statuettes in her studio, an enterprise she had begun while Eggs was at war.

Eggs returned to coach at Boston University, moved on to the University of Maryland and finally became assistant coach at the University of California-Berkeley, a team that competed in the 1949, 1950 and 1951 Rose Bowls.

In 1952, at the age of 40, when the popular recruiter resigned from Berkeley, columnists called him an "uninhibited Golden blond type," glamorous, sincere, enthusiastic, imaginative and daring. "If Eggs Manske, soon to be Oakland's handsomest automobile salesman, were a betting man, he'd put his money on Wisconsin to beat U.S.C. in the impending Rose Bowl game."

The Badgers lost 7-0.

In 1954, Eggs considered a run for Congress but moved on to teaching biology at Berkeley High School from 1955-1975.

The Nekoosa native died in California of complications from hip surgery on Jan. 27, 2002.

Parking Lot Wars

While maintaining a desk at the *Daily Tribune*, my attention was once focused on the small lot adjacent to the south, created when the former Ritchay funeral home structure was razed. I hoped the *Tribune*, which had a small, cramped and filled space to the west, would purchase the property so I wouldn't have to park on the street; but the firm demurred and Consolidated Papers Inc. snagged it for River Block employees who already had a parking lot—created in part by the demolition of yet another former *Tribune* building on First Avenue South.

That same lot next to the *Tribune*, which Incourage Community Foundation attempted to buy from Consolidated successor NewPage Corp. (now Verso Corp.) for $65,000 instead was sold to Muppet Properties LLC, Wisconsin Rapids, for $100,000.

The January 23 *Tribune* signaled the most recent chapter in which the city of Wisconsin Rapids agreed to sell another parcel to Incourage. This is the once-coveted space between the *Tribune* building and the Centralia Center in the area of the former Wal-Mart extension of Rapids Mall.

If you've been around for a while, you might call the latest parking opportunity "the old Woolco lot." If you're even older, it was the West Side Market Square, though you may not recall anything being marketed there. Or if you're long dead, there was the Centralia schoolhouse, surrounded by houses and gardens of the local French-Canadian immigrants.

I like the story about the school kids who lost a ball and the schoolmaster went to pick it up in the yard of a Frenchman who seized the teacher by the hair; after which he screamed and ran. The "hair" was a toupee that had come off in the Frenchman's hand.

The parking lot conflicts of the 21st century provide an uncanny parallel to those that occurred when the very same *Tribune* building was in the 11th hour of its big building project.

As publisher William F. Huffman Jr. explained in a front page March 18, 1958, story, the *Tribune*, having purchased the Staven house property and the former Commercial hotel site, had tried to obtain an additional piece of city-owned land "at the rear," or west, of the downtown site on First Avenue South.

In the process, the *Tribune* went through several cycles of trying to obtain the property but being frustrated as they were outbid by named and unnamed competitors. While the city council deliberated the situation for several months, the *Tribune* proceeded with the design of a building suited to the First Avenue location, feeling the "urgent necessity" of solving the property problem in order to begin work in the summer of 1958.

In a final attempt to resolve the issue, an appraisal was being made, but another second party came forward at a Common Council meeting and put forth a higher price. This bidder was the Thorp Finance Corp., wanting a building site for its office.

"Saddened at this turn of events after two years of attempts to obtain the property," declared the *Tribune*, "and feeling that a new round of bidding would further lessen our chances to obtain the property and might push the cost far past the true value, we began to look for other locations."

Found was a three-acre tract owned by Nekoosa-Edwards Paper Co. just inside the north village limit of Port Edwards, "only 4-5 minutes by car from downtown Wisconsin Rapids." The move, explained the *Tribune*, would be in line with a trend in recent years as many industrial plants and newspaper plants chose edge-of-city locations.

An agreement to purchase was signed and the *Tribune* said it had abandoned all hopes of building downtown.

But after the *Tribune's* dramatic statement, Thorp withdrew its offer and the Common Council, called into special session on March 19 by Mayor Nels M. Justeson, approved sale of the city-owned land to Huffman Realty.

The sale was soon accepted by the *Tribune*, which explained, "The wide-spread public response to a move, the intensity of which we had not foreseen but which we immensely appreciate, was a factor in our decision to return to the original plan."

Maybe the Tribune had never intended to move to Port Edwards. That they did not resulted in a unique landmark with a yet-undetermined destiny.

March 1862

March is one of several "cruelest" months here, when winter's bitter winds intermittently defy spring's awakening.

In the rustic days of River City, there was another problem. Seasonal thawing corrupted the convenient thoroughfares of February's ice roads but didn't yet offer the alternative of April's navigable water. On this topic comes a tale of daring do-or-don't, typed up from a microfilmed newspaper over 30 years ago.

The March 1, 1862, account referred to "John B. Lovingstone, a clerk in the Galena, Ill., based lumber establishment of Howe & Rablin," a firm whose papers I have explored in the Galena courthouse. Howe famously promised money that never arrived, while lending his name to a prominent school here.

Speaking of names, "Lovingstone" is rare, so the clerk's name could have been Livingstone or, more likely, Livingston. The usual Internet sources do not identify him.

According to the account, which is mimicked here, L. attempted to cross the Wisconsin river on the ice "and very narrowly escaped a watery grave."

From where the writer stood, L. had started from the "opposite" or west side, then the village of Centralia, intending to strike the shore on "this side," the twin community of Grand Rapids.

Typical of March, the river for a considerable distance had been gorged with ice for two or three days. There was no bridge and the ferry had experienced difficulty making its regular trip back and forth between the two settlements.

In the absence of any information to the contrary, said the report with tongue in cheek, it is to be supposed that L., being rather a wide-awake young man, concluded he could make much better time crossing the river on the ice than the ferry boat.

At first, the ice seemed tolerably firm all the way across and no danger in this respect was apprehended. The only risk was that the ice might unceremoniously take a notion to move downstream at any moment. But L. didn't stop to consider that possibility, though he armed himself with a plank just in case and set out on his journey.

L. got on very well for a considerable distance but as he neared the middle of the river it became evident to both him and the spectators who had gathered in large numbers on either shore—that the ice was about to move. Great blocks in the portion of the river where the current was strongest began to give way with a dull, grating crash and a general commotion was everywhere visible in the whole field of ice.

Suddenly, what a short time previous seemed a solid block divided into innumerable fragments and went crashing, surging and tumbling downstream in a swift and somewhat terrific manner.

The crowd of spectators upon the levee on the Grand Rapids side began to increase at this point and to watch with the most thrilling interest the movements of the solitary adventurer who was struggling all the while to keep himself from being drawn underneath or being crushed by the surging cakes of ice. L. could be seen making his way steadily forward at one moment, leaping from one block of ice to another, and the next sinking through and almost disappearing from view but all the while clinging courageously to his plank "and struggling with the watery element heroically."

Six times L. was seen to fall through the ice and sink into the water up to his shoulders and six times to skillfully extricate himself from the jaws of death, greatly to the relief of "at least a thousand" spectators. Finally a coil was thrown "from the steamer Platte Valley," (an unexplainable reference to a Civil War vessel more likely located elsewhere).

L. caught and clung to the rope with a death-like grip and was speedily drawn ashore, although in an exhausted and almost insensible condition. His hands and face were covered with blood, his clothes torn and his entire person severely bruised and battered.

The injured lumber company clerk was taken to Maguire's drug store, presumably in Centralia, and properly cared for, said the wry journalist, "and when he returns to the east side he will in all probability take the ferry boat."

Forgetting Frank Compton

You probably don't remember anything about Frank E. Compton.

"F.E." was born here in 1874, one of ten children. His forgotten father, Henry Harrison Compton, a "big hearty horse trader," owned a general store and was the sheriff of the county.

Young Frank began his ultimately successful though forgotten business career selling newspapers after school. He won a blue ribbon at the county fair for an exhibit labeled, "Fifty-seven Choice Varieties Gathered from One Tree in H.H. Compton's Orchard."

After an accident in 1893, the year Frank finished high school, the elder Compton lost his store. Frank paid his way at UW-Madison by selling books for the forgotten C.B. Beach & Co., Chicago.

At UW, Frank helped found Theta Delta Chi fraternity with Rapids boys Isaac Witter, George Hill, Percy Daly, Guy Ford and Theodore W. Brazeau, his debating partner.

Compton prospered as a salesman, purchasing Beach books in 1907 and renaming it F.E. Compton & Co. Publication began in 1922 of the soon-renowned *Compton's Pictured Encyclopedia*, designed for grade and high school students.

Three years after the death of Compton's first wife in 1914, he married Annie Howe Cothran, divorced daughter of President Woodrow Wilson's sister. Annie died on a ship en route to Tahiti in 1936 and was buried at sea.

In 1938, Compton married Gloria Wainwright, who later told T.W. Brazeau that, "Frank was a Wisconsin Rapids boy and very proud of it." Wainright concluded a Nov. 22, 1960, letter: "As you know, he and I made more than one 'pilgrimage' to the scene of his boyhood so that I could more readily visualize the setting in which he grew up."

Compton, by then an obscure émigré from River City, died in 1950. Ten years later, he was brought to mind again when Brazeau, a prominent attorney and founder of the South Wood County Historical Corp., engineered the gift to Lincoln high school of a large oil portrait of Compton.

On Jan. 11, 1961, Brazeau wrote to Compton's widow, Gloria. "The presentation took place in the big gymnasium and there were about 1500 present, including all of the high school, and everyone was enthusiastic about the portrait and about the life of Comp."

LHS principal A.A. Ritchay accepted the gift at a 9:25 a.m. assembly; student council representative Audrey Vallin sent a thank you letter to Gloria.

Of the painting by Francis Henry Beaugureau, Brazeau said, "May this portrait remain here for many years so that we shall never forget what Frank E. Compton has done for the world in the educational field, and what credit he has shed on this, his school, and the city of his birth."

T.W.'s grandson, Nicholas Brazeau, and I were in attendance as LHS sophomores that day. Nick says he remembers it, but I don't. In the past half-century, I have met few residents who could identify Compton by image, reputation or profession. His portrait was forgotten in a back room of the library at the former high school that had become East Jr. high.

Fortunately, my wife, Kathryn, as East librarian, showed "the Compton" to me and assisted in migrating it to the South Wood County Historical Museum where it hangs prominently by the staircase and is assumed by most visitors to be of Compton's fraternity brother and former Museum building owner, Isaac Witter.

The file of letters from the collection of T.W. Brazeau that was used for this story was donated to the Museum by Nicholas J. Brazeau Sr.

Another distinguished ex-resident forgotten at home is yet another fraternity brother, Guy Stanton Ford, then-youthful principal of Howe high school at which Brazeau had taught and from which Compton graduated.

Ford took leave as Dean of the Graduate School at the University of Minnesota, to be original editor-in-chief of Compton's encyclopedia.

If Compton lives on in the greater world, it may be due to a brief Wikipedia entry delivered by the very same Internet that killed hard copy reference works. Indeed, the digitized passage was taken from the 1988 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, current owner of publishing rights to F.E. Compton & Co. products—from which I learned something, Frank's middle name.

Elbert.

Leaving one last question to be pondered by Facebook-befuddled bloggers and tweeters of the new millennium:

What's an "encyclopaedia?"

Sand Hill

For an edge-of-town boy in 1960, there were four ways to walk home.

•The first started at the Friendly Fountain corner of East Grand Avenue and led down Third Street South.

Under street lights and elms, the polite manors preserved a past the boy didn't know much about; although, as embryonic chronicler of River City, he sensed the ghost of something.

By mid-20th Century, some of Third Street's high society residences had been re-purposed as institutions. As the boy who walked home passed by after midnight, between him and the Wisconsin river were the dark windows of the T.B. Scott public library, Odd Fellows lodge and American Legion clubhouse.

Marking the end of residential respectability, facing Third, was Riverview Hospital, where the boy and most of his friends had been born. Across Dewey Street was the Garrison Handy clinic, harbinger of mergers to come.

To the right, the "Northwestern" railroad bridge. Ahead—only a few fateful steps to—the wrong side of the tracks.

That was Sand Hill, where the extension of Third Street angled to the east and provided the most efficient and picturesque route home. The gritty plateau enjoyed a reputation for underdogs in small shacks on cheap lots with bad lawns and unpainted outhouses. Many a city scholar feared the venture south of Daly Avenue and the boy who walked home avoided solitary pilgrims on sabbatical from the several neighborhood bars.

In the bright light of day, however, most Sand Hill residents behaved as well as their Quality Row brethren. For instance, the boy and his church-going family had lived on both sides of Clyde Avenue where, yes, his bike was stolen—but his dad quickly and without mayhem, retrieved it.

As the boy traveled south past Third Street Grocery and approached Airport Avenue, the hardscrabble miscellany metamorphosed into a lineup of brand spanking new ranch-style houses signaling the end of the real Sand Hill and the beginning of contemporary Grand Rapids.

•The second way home was open, scenic, safe and sweetly lonesome. Where Third Street split off on the shorter route, First ran straight south for the entire two miles.

On the left, the grid of streets and subdivisions slumbered.

On the right, for the first mile lay a dark big-bad-wolf woods that opened into a view of smokestacks on the horizon—the Port Edwards and Nekoosa paper mills, looking like ships steaming up the pulp-country Amazon.

In the midst of the uninhabited west was the site of the burned-down Skyway dance hall, followed by the intermittently-abandoned airport and, rounding the corner east onto Two Mile Avenue, ruins of a World War II prisoner of war camp that extended along south side to Sampson Street.

•The third way home and best route from the high school was Lincoln Street, past Witter Vocational School and Wood County Teachers College. A few blocks across the same Northwestern tracks were Parson's Grocery, Lincoln Street Bar and halfway home, Grove School.

One Mile Creek crossed under Lincoln between the Harry and Bernard Garber homes and, after the boy turned and headed west on Two Mile Avenue, the "crick" flowed through the Endrizzi water wheel under Two Mile into Murgatroyd's "Murwin Pines," a play paradise for neighborhood kids far removed from Sand Hill.

•The final way home was 8th Street, where reminders of good times out on the two-lane highway blended with portents of Appleton to come. Interspersed with story-and-a-half houses were:

IGA Foodliner; Freimund's Charcoal Grill; Galles Radio & TV.

Starlite Motel; Oestreich Restaurant; Terrace Gardens; Merchandise Center; Super Valu Market.

Neipp's hardware; Manion's Ben Franklin; Lewis Shoe Store.

Johnny's Rapids Inn; Pasquale's. Len's Texaco. Siesta Highway Motel. Wilbern's; Bowlmor.

Bea Tork Beauty Shop; Chalet Motel; Eaton's Drive In.

Recently defunct was the Snack Shack café just north of the boy's first alma mater, Two Mile School, where, from 8th, he turned west, past the new Woodside School, past Lincoln Street, and down again into One Mile Creek valley, almost home again.

Four ways to go and no matter which he took, he came to the same place.

Come to find out that place is here in 21st Century River City, where a reasonable semblance of a ghost tells about a boy walking home a long time ago.

May 2015

The Uniform

It's been hanging for a few years now, this story—along with the army uniform that I look at every day in my office.

It's easy to recognize that the wool pants, combat jacket and overseas cap date from World War I. I supposed the wearer had been killed and the uniform returned to his survivors, along with letters tucked in a pocket.

But the death of the soldier to whom the envelopes were addressed did not come until May 23, 1958, 39 years after "the war to end all war." Walter Jacob Gunderman was 67 when he died of a heart attack and was buried in Calvary Cemetery here.

Gunderman, called "Wally," was born in Wausau and moved with his family to Wisconsin Dells and Mauston, Wis.

When the U.S. declared war on Germany in April 1917, Wally registered for military service at Manning, N.D., where he worked as a farm laborer. His draft card noted blue eyes, brown hair and medium build.

By our standards, the uniform is small. My wife tried it on and estimated a woman's size 10.

On April 2, 1918, Wally was sent to Camp Grant, Rockford, Ill., and was assigned to Battery E of the 123rd Field Artillery.

The soldier and, presumably, the uniform, were overseas from May 1918 to May 1919 and saw action in France at Saint-Mihiel and Meuse-Argonne.

After discharge at Camp Grant in June 1919, he returned to Mauston.

In 1920, Wally opened Nekoosa Tire Shop and gas station, Nekoosa. He married Eunice Dolan at Rockford in 1933.

In 1942, his World War II draft card showed Wally to be 51, still living in Nekoosa with Eunice. Too old for combat, he was employed by Badger Ordnance, near Baraboo, Wis., making gunpowder.

After the war, the Gundermans moved to Wisconsin Rapids, where Wally worked for Bethke Chevrolet until he retired in 1953.

At the end of World War I in 1919, the American Legion was chartered by Congress. When he returned from France, Wally helped found Mauston's Legion Post 81, transferring in 1920 to Post 381 at Nekoosa of which he became a commander and adjutant.

In 1947, he joined Hagerstrom-Rude Post 9 in Wisconsin Rapids, where he also became commander. His wife in 1941 was president of the Legion auxiliary.

But the letters in Wally's pocket were not from his wife-to-be.

Gladys Niles, La Crosse, a 1917 Mauston high school graduate, on April 25, 1919, postmarked a missive that said, "It seems to take a month for a letter to go between Lorentzweiler [Luxembourg] and La Crosse."

Gladys wrote again, relating a "wonderful" experience late at night when she got stuck in mud "with the Ford" that didn't have good lights.

"The folks we had been to see kept telling us we'd get stuck going home. We got nearly out of the worst mud hole when [Tin] Lizzie [the Ford] refused to go farther."

Gladys said her sisters, Genevieve and Vera, "tried to push and we tried all the things we could think of until I killed the engine then we couldn't get the engine started so we walked home.

"The next morning Pa came out with us and cranked it up. I got in, backed up farther than I could the night before, gave her the juice, and away we went just as easy as could be.

"You can imagine how I got teased the next day."

Gladys added that, "A company of negro soldiers with army trucks went over our road from Mauston to Elroy a little while ago and just about ruined the macadam" by getting stuck "about every other thing along the road."

With the war coming to an end, in another letter from the pocket, Wally's sister, "Deal" (for Odelia) remarked, "Clayton Betts is home. They say he looks fine."

On May 5, 1919, she wrote, "I'll be glad Wallie when you get back.

"Vickers have bought a Ford car. Most every one down in that country have cars now.

"I suppose you see in the paper that they are going to have quite a celebration here the Fourth. Do you get the Mauston Star?

"I am going to learn to drive this summer. When you get back I'll take you for a ride if you won't be afraid of my driving."

"Heaps of love from Deal," she wrote at last.

"Hope you are on your way home."

Don

"Beloved Don," Mom wrote to you, July 6, 1991, while at home watching golf on TV. "What fine times you and I had golfing."

You, her only love for 52 years. To me, you were "beloved Dad" for almost as long.

When you had reached the age I am now, still markedly youthful and vigorous, you told me a "spot" showed up on X-rays of your lungs. Two years later, at 72, you died at the Marshfield hospice, May 18, 1991.

Mom continued to live in the house you built. It was from that home she wrote to you, and in it she died, suddenly and peacefully in 1999.

Now, I have been rereading a set of "letters" she began shortly after your funeral and, as she did, I will address you *in absentia*, encouraged by several references Mom made. In return for a snapshot received from Florida, she replied by sending, "the beautiful tribute Dave wrote to you in The Tribune."

Later, she said, "Dave returned your auto bio. I reread it and felt close to you." Again, "Proof read Dave's book—two tributes to you and one to [daughter] Kathy [1946-1988] in it. Quite a legacy for posterity."

When she read a daily devotional in the "Upper Room," she wrote, "I hope you have forgiven me for all of my impatience with you and your illness. You always were a better person than I—as I realize how very much spirit you had, to face your pain like you did."

Almost every day for breakfast and "after church," Mom visited "The Mead" restaurant. "That was surely a special place for us, wasn't it?"

On Wednesdays, she brought flowers and prayers to you at Restlawn cemetery. "A few roses to put in a vase near your picture." In May, rhododendrons. Christmas, a dozen silk roses.

And memories.

Driving home, on the radio, Russ Morgan's "Does your Heart Beat for Me?"—the bowling alley at Menasha, she wrote, "when we were dating. They were playing that when you picked me up."

By the old homestead near Seymour, Wis.—"the side road where we parked!!!"

"The day you gave me my diamond in Terry Andrae Park. The glint in your eyes was so special."

Viewing a race car on TV—"fancier than the one you and Roy had or the ones with Flash Williams [your stunt car] but such good times we had in it."

Pearl Harbor—"you and I with Wardeen and Henry planning their wedding."

Breakfast at "Pink Restaurant,"—"our days in Neenah the first 3 months of marriage."

Lawrence Welk—"Gypsy Rose Lee at the Minnesota State Fair."

A walk to Two Mile Creek—"made believe I was walking with you at Silver Lake."

A card made for Eileen [Keating] "of all the good times we had, camping, dinners out, steaks, State Fair, etc."

Listening to "the tape of our nostalgic trip to Seymour in 85 and it was so wonderful to hear your voice and it seems like I visited with you, so I hope that soon I'll dream about you."

And the tape of an Engel reunion—"so that the memories will go back to before you were sick."

Son Ken's birthday—"when he was born 36 years ago, you almost had too much heat when you painted the clothesline posts in the sunshine."

Dinner for Ken—"so strange cooking again for more than one. I'll never forget the last meal I made for you, eggs, bacon, hash browns, and toast."

Flowers, prayers, memories…and tears, "as I raked and filled bags of needles."

When your name was in the paper about memorials to MSTC, "I cried and cried and cried."

Tears on daughter Kathy's birthday.

Tears, looking at photos from the retirement party.

At a funeral, "it hit me."

When Judy Urban brought over a gloxinia; at church during the Lord's Prayer; digging out a shrub you planted; tears, replacing your lawn sprinklers (feeling like a traitor).

Barbara Mandrell singing "Tennessee Waltz," Eddie Arnold, "Make the World Go Away," Willie Nelson, "You Are Always on My Mind," Dottie West, "Release Me"—how wonderful it was to dance with you.

Now and then, a haunting.

After a bridge party, the back door squeaking and it seems like you, like old times, but it is only a card player, Alice, coming late without knocking.

"Oh, how I would love to have you walk in that door—or any door—."

June 2015

Silver Threads Among the Gold

As a Preway employee, Nyal Forstner is credited with inventing the freestanding metal fireplace.

As a beatnik, he is remembered as "Fuzz" Forstner, most likely a nod to his furry chin.

Some 50 years ago, I was hanging around Fuzz's pad on Avon Street with Mike Ebsen, my friend and his neighbor. Fuzz wasn't home so I was free to examine his habitat, complete with the abstract art constructions he was known for.

It is possible that I also saw an old-fashioned shaving mug bearing the name "Eben E. Rexford" in gold letters. Later I learned that the anomalous cultural artifact had been earlier displayed on the Second Street North barber shop shelf of Fuzz's dad, Art Forstner, who told his story to the *Daily Tribune* in 1940.

Forstner said he had known Rexford at Shiocton, Wis., where Forstner ran a barber shop from 1911 to 1916. "We lived across the street from each other and each day he used to come into my shop, sit down in a chair in the back, and write for a couple of hours."

In those days, said Forstner, every customer had his own shaving vessel on a shelf in a barber shop. "When the state board of health cut that out, Eben told me to keep his mug as a souvenir."

Rexford was "quite an old man then but did a lot of writing on flowers for magazines," Forstner told the *Tribune*. More importantly, the barber's pal had written the lyrics for one of the world's most famous songs, "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

Forstner said Rexford told him he had sold "Threads" and "Only Pansy Blossoms," for $3.50 a few years after the Civil War.

"Someone really made some money by putting the words into music," said Forstner. "Eben used to say to me: 'I wonder which poem I got the $3.50 for.'"

Forstner recalled Rexford's funeral. "I was just a kid then, only 24, and some of Eben's friends were 'put out' that I should serve as pallbearer."

A native of New York state, Rexford taught school for two years, then entered Lawrence college, Appleton, Wis., where he wrote "Growing Old" on the flyleaf of a textbook while he was supposed to be listening to a lecture. He touched up the poignant phrases at home, spending less than two hours on a slight effort that would be purchased and set to music by New Yorker Hart Pease Danks and copyrighted in 1873 as "Silver Threads Among the Gold."

Rexford said he first heard the song that would sell three million copies when Oneida Indians gave a concert in Shiocton.

In 1916, "Threads" was named best Badger State song and in 1932, it won a New York radio poll as America's favorite.

It was one of the first songs to be mechanically recorded, first by Richard Jose in 1903 and later by the likes of Bing Crosby, Jerry Lee Lewis and Jo Stafford. It was performed as a "photoplay," a silent film where live musicians added the score.

Rexford also had a hit with the cowboy poem, "The Ride of Paul Venarez," also turned into a song, "Billy Venero," recorded by Marty Robbins, among others. Rexford was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame in 1970.

His poems were published in *Girls of Today*, *Frank Leslie's Popular Monthly Magazine*, *Lippincott's*, *New York Times* and *Current Literature*. He also wrote fiction.

The subject of most of Rexford's commercial writing was gardening, published in *Ladies Home Journal*, *American Homes and Gardens*, *House and Gardens*, and *American Home Monthly*.

For more than 20 years, Rexford served as organist at the Congregational Church of Shiocton, Wis., where he supported himself by writing, as a postmaster and as clerk for the surrounding town of Bovina.

Rexford received an honorary doctorate from Lawrence University, in 1908. He is buried at Bovina Cemetery, having died of typhoid fever, Oct. 18, 1916, at age 68.

Although I am two years older than that as of this month, a portrait reveals Uncle Eben retained even less hair than I do. In honor of our condition, I present his lyrics, slightly altered:

Darling, I am appalled.
By silver threads among the bald;
As they depart my brow today
Life and follicles fade fast away

In response, your last apt and encouraging word is worth looking up:

But, my darling, you are forever cute,
Always young and fair to me—hirsute.

Telling Tales the Old-fashioned Way

Nowadays, it's easy to write a local history story: copy it from a newspaper archives website.

A decade ago, it was one step harder: punch the print button on the microfilm machine at a library.

Before that, the columnist was likely to be cribbing from an actual old newspaper—like the crinkled and crumbling Grand Rapids *Tribune* I'm looking at now.

Why did someone 96 years ago set aside that particular issue? Maybe because, besides myriad typos, it boasts two front pages, both dated June 12, 1919.

Or maybe because soldiers were coming home from World War I.

In the *Tribune*, a call was made by the American Library Association to have fresh fiction books sent to "the Yanks" to be enjoyed while waiting for orders to come home and during the uneventful return trip across the Atlantic. Our own Capt. Guy Nash said he had enjoyed the libraries on the naval cruiser that brought him back from France.

Some soldiers didn't come back. As previously recounted here, Winnebago heroes who died in the war were honored at the local Indian Agency.

And, at his home town of Marshfield, Sgt. Willard D. Purdy was declared a hero for what he did in France—returning from reconnaissance and collecting grenades at roll call, when one of the pins fell out and Purdy commanded his men to run, seized three of the grenades, held them against his stomach and was blown to bits. Almost immediately, the then-new junior high school in Marshfield was named for him.

At home, manufacturer Prentiss-Wabers Co. (Preway) reported orders for Kamp-Kook-Kits exceeding 50 per day, many "from the west where the people are great travelers and more prone to go on camping trips than they are in this section. Many people now make a summer trip who never thought of it before the automobile came into general use."

The local Johnson & Hill department store displayed pearl buttons and the shells from which they were taken in one of their windows to educate Grand Rapids people that "the little white pearl buttons distributed over their clothing" came from clams harvested in the river nearby and processed at Fremont, Wis.

For the swimming pool on the east bank of the river, a large opening through the new concrete dam provided fresh water to be drawn out every night and refilled the next morning. Plans for the next year included two new bath houses designed by Rapids architect A.F. Billmyre, surrounded by a public park and play ground.

The popular pool had been attracting not only boys and girls but working women and men, including automobile parties from Marshfield and Stevens Point.

At the Elks Club, a large crowd gathered for Hospital Graduation Exercises as Geo. W. Mead, president of the hospital association, presented a diploma to the lone graduate, Miss Ruth Lundquist. Mead followed up with a party at his house with musical numbers and dancing.

Meanwhile, the improbably-dubbed Alex Tarzanski of New Rome was doing what he could to arrange a meeting with Nurse Lundquist.

After an argument, he left the house in a funk to lie down in some brush about where the Shotzke boys had recently shot a wolf. So when the Shotzkes saw something move in the grass—thinking it might be a wolf, they let 'er rip with a big "Got'm!" and heard a yelp that sounded pretty lupine.

But a second howl made it clear; they had shot a man, Tarzanski.

An auto was secured and the nimrod Polanders started for Rapids but the conveyance broke down. They snagged a second car that also failed so neighbor Vic Lipsitz was employed to haul the victim to town, where he was placed in Nurse Lundquist's hospital and survived, as of last notice.

Finally, a fable about the naming of Milladore.

"No one would think from a casual observance of Milladore to the northeast of us, that the name was chosen because a man read an old English novel in which Lord Swellchest, of Milladore, wooed and all but wed Lady Highheel—but it's so."

The name had been Mill Creek but there were too many Mill Creeks so station agent Orlow Everts came up with a better name, supposedly from fiction. That is according to the story he told at his golden wedding in Ashland, Wis., in 1919, undoubtedly with the same twinkle in his eye as when he told the story in 1875 for the first time.

Kind of suggests you can't believe everything you read in the newspaper, whether online, on microfilm or falling to bits in your own hand.

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Penultimate Memoirs

Stories from the
Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune
2009-2015

Dave Engel

Something
has
to
be
second
to
last

Penultimate Memoirs