



Inside: Phil Brown, p. 2; Gab, 3; Boop schedule, 4; Lori, 5; Garber, Drum Corps, 6-7; Murgatroyd-Harding: Griffith Park, Ridges, 8-10, 21-27; Grim Natwick covers, 11-20; Holly: Natwick Sheet Music, 12; Speedway Aerial, 29-30; O'Day, 30-31.

Uncle Dave's Write & Release

By Phil Brown
SWCHC President



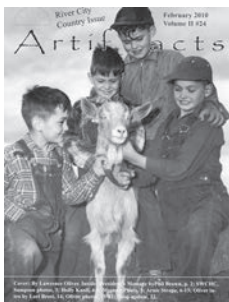
Although it seems like yesterday that it all began, it's been six years and this is the 25th issue of *Artifacts* that "Uncle Dave" has completed. Quite a milestone and another legacy Dave will leave behind for future historians. In fact, I was doing some research recently on one of our local banks and Uncle Dave pointed out that the information I was looking for was in a back issue of *Artifacts*. More often than not, when I "Google" something pertaining to our local history, I am referred to something Dave Engel has written. He says the same thing happens to him, proving, he says, that the Internet is full of unreliable sources.

As Director of the SWCHC, Dave has brought a wealth of local historic information to his position. Most recently, every exhibit upgrade here at the Museum has been touched by Uncle Dave. His uncanny ability to locate an old photograph or an old document never ceases to amaze me.

Dave likes to refer to his ability to "write and release" local history. In other words, over the past thirty years, Dave has probably written about almost everything pertaining to life in River City. He is the first to admit that he does not remember everything he has written over the years, but when asked about a certain detail about our past, Dave will produce the information you are looking for rather quickly.

We are very lucky to have Uncle Dave on staff here at the Museum. With the capable assistance of our Administrator, Lori Brost, and a new addition to our staff, Holly Knoll, we are poised to continue to offer our assistance to anyone looking to connect with our past.

With another exciting year ahead of us, we invite you to stop in and reacquaint yourself with your local history resource. We also invite you to enjoy the grounds of our beautiful facility that will once again be meticulously maintained by the Wood County Master Gardeners. And while you're at it, be sure to say hi and thank Uncle Dave, Lori and Holly for a job well done.



***Last months cover:
 Douglas, Kenny,
 Wayne and Russell
 Brockman - Goat:
 Dynamite.***

Remember when? If you ever had a crush on the guy at right or someone who looked like him, you will enjoy Kent Vasby's newsletter described on the following page.



Talking Grim

SWCHC President Phil Brown and Grim Natwick's cousin Jim Natwick at the Museum to discuss placement of an historical marker featuring the artist and animator.



Ancestry.com

Uncle Dave's wife, Kathy, and daughter, Angelica, recently engaged in genealogical research at the Family History Museum operated by the Latter Day Saints in Salt Lake City. LDS "The Mormons" are leaders in collecting and digitizing historical materials.

Uncle Kent

Right: A recent visitor to the Museum and online counterpart of Uncle Dave: Kent Vasby, Ft. Atkinson native and part-time resident here, married to Wisconsin Rapids Lincoln grad Judy Hanneman (1965). Vasby's email list circulates to interested members of the LHS class of 1965 and others of that generation. Led by Vasby's prompts, emailers contribute reminiscence, nostalgia and observation along with occasional social and political commentary. Vasby, class of '59, hosts a similar site for Ft. Atkinson. Email kvasby@small-bytes.net.



Photos by Uncle Dave



Schedule of Events

as of 4/7/2010; dates/times are subject to slight change



Nina Paley & Dave Coverly Art Exhibit at Central Wisconsin Cultural Center

- Exhibit of Nina Paley's animation film art and Dave Coverly's *Speed Bump* comic strip art
- **August 5:** Meet *Sita Sings The Blues* filmmaker Nina Paley at Reception 5 – 7pm
- **August 6:** Exhibit 10am – 5pm; Panel discussion with Nina at 2pm "Betty & Sita Female Icons"
- **August 7:** Exhibit 10am – 5pm; Tea with Nina at 3pm
- **August 8:** Exhibit 10am – 3pm
- Free general admission

Betty Boop Musical Revue at Gilbert & Jaylee Mead Auditorium in Centralia Center

- Betty Boop Revue – singing and dancing starring Broadway star Tommy Berklund and local talent
- **August 5:** One show at 7:30pm following the Nina Paley Art Reception at Cultural Center
- **August 7, 8:** Show times at 2pm and 7:30pm
- Purchase tickets in advance or at the door

Grim Natwick Film Festival at McMillan Memorial Library Fine Arts Center

- **August 6, 7, 8:** Fourteen film showings featuring early Betty Boop, Grim Natwick, Sita Sings the Blues, and Wisconsin filmmakers; film discussions follow each
- Free general admission

Family Movie Time at Rogers Cinema

- **August 7:** Popular animated film from Hollywood at 10am
- Free general admission

Betty Boop Bash at Centralia Center River Walk

- Betty Boop Bash – party, dancing, contests, optional 1930's/40's attire, hors d'oeuvres, wine, beer
- **August 6:** Begins at 6:30pm; Dance 8pm – midnight
- Tickets: \$20 in advance/\$25 at the door

Grim Natwick Hollywood Archives Exhibit at South Wood County Historical Museum

- **August 6:** Exhibit 4 – 7pm; Official Ceremony at 5pm with dedication of Grim Natwick Historical Marker; Guided tour of Grim Natwick Art Archives at 5:30pm with ASIFA-Hollywood director Stephen Worth
- **August 7:** Exhibit 10am – 5pm; Guided tours at 2:30pm and 4pm
- **August 8:** Exhibit 10am – 4pm; Guided tours at 12pm and 1pm; Ice Cream Social at 2pm
- Free general admission

Arts & Collectibles Show at Hotel Mead

- **August 7: 10am – 5pm**
- **August 8: 10am – 3pm**
- ARTS booths: Unique sculptures, paintings, ceramics, photography, jewelry, art clothing, and more for sale
- COLLECTIBLES booths: Step back in time with collectibles; add to your own collection
- Presentations by Denise Hagopian: Early Animators; Betty & the Hayes Act; Determine your Collection's Value; The Betty Revival; Japanese 1930s Betty
- BOOTHS ARE AVAILABLE TO RENT FOR ONE OR TWO DAYS; info at BettyBoopFestivalWi.com online
- Free general admission

Shine, Show & Ride downtown west side

- **August 7: 8am – 5pm**
- Betty Boop Fest information booth 8am – 5pm
- Rotary's Polio Run/Walk 8am registration
- Vendors, artists, food booths 10am – 5pm
- Musical entertainment with DJ 11am – 4pm
- Itty Bitty Boop look-alike contest for children at 1pm
- Motorcycle Registration 8 – 10 am; Motorcycle Judging 11am – 3:30pm; Motorcycle Awards 4pm; Registration form at BettyBoopFestivalWi.com; advance registration includes t-shirt
- BOOTHS ARE AVAILABLE TO RENT FOR ONE OR TWO DAYS; application at BettyBoopFestivalWi.com
- Free general admission

Shine, Show & Cranberry Hwy Motorcycle Ride downtown west side

- **Sunday, August 8: 9am – 3pm**
- Betty Boop Fest information booth 8am – 3pm
- Vendors, artists, food booths 10am – 3pm
- Cranberry Hwy Ride: Motorcycle Registration 9 – 10:30am; Ride 11am – 12:30 pm; Raffle prizes 1pm
- Motorcycle Ride form at BettyBoopFestivalWi.com; advance registration includes t-shirt
- BOOTHS ARE AVAILABLE TO RENT FOR ONE OR TWO DAYS; application at BettyBoopFestivalWi.com
- Free general admission

BettyBoopFestivalWi.com

Fan Us! **facebook**



Grim Natwick self portrait at right / courtesy of ASIFA-Hollywood

At the Museum

By Lori Brost

Museum Administrator

We have been busy this fall and winter, preparing for a new season with changes that will hopefully bring new life to the Museum. New items have been added to the Toy Room and the Doctor's Office. Changes to the General Store and Country Kitchen will outline our local history on the main downtown streets with pictures of important businesses of our past. Much of the popular Krohnographs photo collection has been condensed and moved to the second floor, bringing a refreshing look at the 1950s in the Wisconsin Rapids area. We have also made some bold updates to our Front Gallery that will both brighten and enhance our existing Grim Natwick display. Uncle Dave is especially fond of a collection of sheet music covers that fills an entire wall.

Many of these changes are inspired by events planned for the summer of this year. We at the Museum are looking forward to being a part of the upcoming 80th "Anniversary of Betty Boop" festival. We are also fortunate that we get to start the celebration early by hosting the International Animated Film Association display in the Buehler Gallery, our beautiful changing exhibit room in which we will also be showing Betty Boop films. During the festival, Stephen Worth of ASIFA, will be here to talk more about the display itself as well as about Grim Natwick, Betty's animator.

Delivery man had his hands full at the Museum – with printer contributed by SWCHC president Phil Brown. The large-format inkjet has proven invaluable in creating display materials for the numerous projects of 2010.

Local residents Betty Dawes and Dorothy Suskey have agreed to share their memorabilia collections with us. Please stop in to see these displays while they are on loan to us and if you would like to share your items as well, please contact me. This includes souvenirs, posters, books, clocks, statuary...anything!

During the festival, so that while you are out enjoying other events, you have plenty of time to visit, we will be extending our hours. Thursday, August 6th we will be open 10 a.m. - 7 p.m. Friday, Saturday and Sunday we will open at 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

The Betty Boop Festival committees are still looking for individuals who would be interested in volunteering. If you have time and would like to be part of this celebration, please contact either Marge Haas at 421-2983 or Kathy Daly at 421-1654.



American Legion Drum & Bugle Corps 1930 to 1956

By Earle Garber

Today you might say they were an “awesome” sight, parade-dressed in grey-blue, white canvas straps crossing each chest held by a dazzling brass breast plate with rows of brass buttons. Their helmets, topped with a flaring plume, added a foot to their height. American Legion Post No. 9 Drum & Bugle Corps marched strong, in a bold front led by towering Drum Major Erv Lutz [or Lust] and Drum Majorette Ethel Gibson. The members called her Emma Mae.

To honor WWI veterans, American Legion Hagerstrom Post No. 9 of Wisconsin Rapids was organized in 1920 and named after Charles Robert Hagerstrom, the first local soldier to die in World War I, August 4th, 1918, at the village of St. Gilles, France. He was twenty years old.

Two years later, Hagerstrom’s remains were returned to his home town, which was Grand Rapids when he left and, in 1920, when its name changed to Wisconsin Rapids, Mayor O.R. Roenius proclaimed a moratorium to honor Charley and the other vets. Services featured a massive parade from the Armory, located in what is now Veteran’s Park downtown on the east bank of the river, to Forest Hill cemetery.

Over the years, American Legion Post 9 added names like Rude, Clark and Young to represent a fraction of those who served our country, many who were unable to return home.

The American Legion Drum & Bugle Corps was established in 1930 to honor those who served in WWI. The founders likely never imagined their Corps would be sandwiched between two wars. Shortly after WWII, the United States armed forces moved on to South Korea, but by then, the Corps disbanded.

The Corps’ beginning was somewhat less auspicious than their finest hour. With little money or support, their first uniform consisted of black trousers and white long sleeve shirt (likely their own) held in place by a red silk cummerbund. The

hat had a black flat-rimmed crown one would associate with a group leading bull fighters to their death in the coliseum. With no records to reference we can only surmise the uniforms that took the honors at the state convention were provided soon after by local businesses and the Mayor, at the time G.W. Mead.

In order to fill their ranks with patriotic non-veterans, American Legion Posts were permitted to recruit musicians like my father. He immigrated to the United States from Russian Moldova in 1922, sixteen at the time, too young to serve in WWI and by 1941, with a wife and child to support, too old to serve in WWII. He quickly understood how precious this country was, purchasing war bonds monthly.

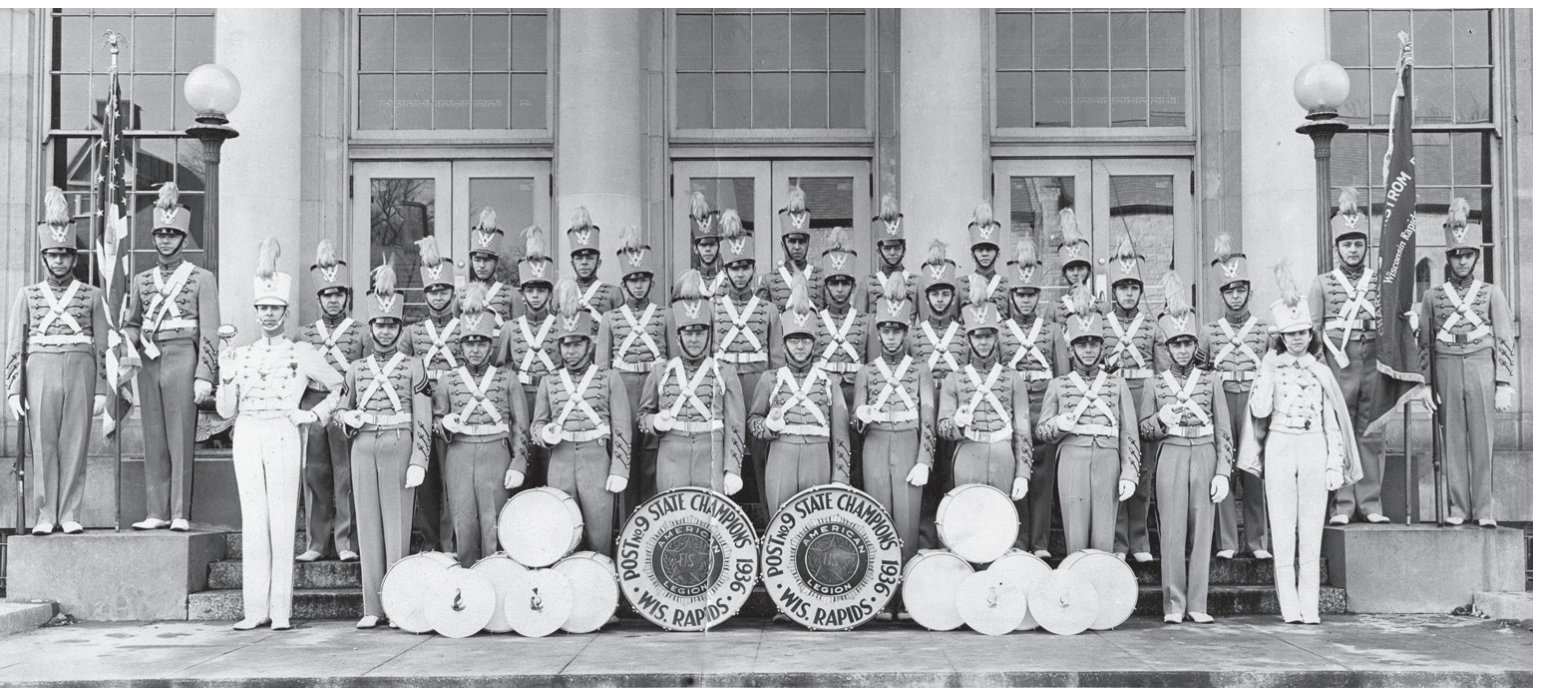
One photo shows the Corps on a typical Decoration or Memorial Day. Leading the parade are Lutz [Lust] and Emma Mae on Oak Street moving east toward Forest Lawn Cemetery. It’s 1936 and as state champions they will soon move on to the nationals in Cleveland. After the trip to Cleveland, they posed on the steps of the local post office. In 1949 a new group of Corps members posed in front of what is now East Junior High School with equally tall Drum Major Milt Bushman and charming Drum Majorette Pat Breed.

I was one of hundreds of children skipping alongside the pipers on Armistice Day, the Fourth of July, Veterans Day and Pearl Harbor Days. Mom and I would follow the Corps to contests annually across the state of Wisconsin. Seeing the color guard approach, then hearing the drums rap in cadence with brass blaring away made them important to us. I managed the Corps the last couple of years.

Year after year Post No. 9 Drum and Bugle Corps was led by a tall Drum Major and a charming Majorette in all white, a strong percussion section and brass instruments, available at the time; single piston valve soprano and a baritone horns, a form of bugle, soon to be forgotten. Today, television viewers see youth corps using instruments modified to bring out their best, playing pieces surpassing anything Corps of years past could conceive and doing field formations we would describe as major network entertainment.



Wisconsin Rapids American Legion Drum & Bugle Corps marches past Armory (center, with arches). The East Side landmark burned November 1938. *Photos courtesy McMillan Memorial Library*



1936 State Champion Post 9 American Legion Drum & Bugle Corps at Wisconsin Rapids Post Office

Back row “reading to right” according to Tom Taylor book at McMillan Memorial Library (misspelling correction attempted): Bernard Garber, Lee Huffcut, Orbey Belter, K.J. Hubbard, Von Holliday, Alvin Marks, Leland Kaudy. Second Row: Reinhardt Ziehr, Harry Sorensen, Grant Jacobs Jr., Wesley Fritz, Jim Gibson, Grant Jacobs Sr., T. F. Frier, Dewey Lockwood, Richard Kellogg, Bernard Ziegler. Front row, beginning with color bearers on left: Frank Rickman, John Podratz, Wm. Lust, Elmer Christensen, Andrew Schill, Fred Burt, Wesley Eberhardt, Floyd Lutz, Arnold Driscoll, Ervin Hinkley, Archie Gleue, Jessie Powell, Emma Mae Gibson, Wm. Harcourt, Wm. Pribbanow.

Griffith Park & The Ridges

Continued from Artifacts 23

By Auril Murgatroyd Harding

Not long after we bought the property [on the Four Mile Creek], we were approached by Sam Bartus, a race track operator. He wanted to build a track on the west end of the property fronting on Griffith Avenue [1960].

It was a natural amphitheater with a hillside surrounding a large level piece of ground at the base. We had often thought that it was probably used by the Indians as their dancing ground. We found many Indian arrowheads there. It was perfect for the race track, with the field as the track and the surrounding hillside a great place for spectator seats.

Sam Bartus

Bartus would pay us a certain percentage of his race receipts each week. He did fairly well in the beginning after the start of the races. But he was beginning to be short in our payments; he was not carrying race insurance and had not finished the building that he had agreed upon. We had no choice but to take him to court. This was a terrible experience for us, as it seemed to take all of our time and attention, to say nothing of the cost of it.

A flashy dresser, this promoter always wore a red sport coat, white shirt, and a black bow tie. His dark hair was parted on the side and slicked back. He had a mustache with a big smile. A beautiful large diamond ring sparkled on his finger. He drove a new red Cadillac convertible.

This man could talk people into most anything. He would rationalize his supposed losses with “the weather was bad,” “the crowd was small,” “expenses were too high,” and other excuses with which he actually convinced the drivers. After one race, he gave me a check that I knew was short. I tore it up in front of him because it was a ridiculous amount.

At the end of the third year we took him to court again and again with the same results. We were stuck with him for that 4th year, but fortunately it was the last year of his lease. When that year ended we were now the owners of a race track, which meant a new business for us to run.

Speedway

Of course [younger of two sons], David, loved that race track. He had been active in the pit area all the while and had many friends among the crew and the drivers. That was lucky for us because he had a great deal of knowledge in running a race track. He wanted so badly to be able to drive, but we would not let him do that. We felt that if he won a race the drivers would all think we had given him some advantage.

We had a general meeting with all the other tracks in the area and set up rules so that all tracks would be the same. This gave us a great deal of support.

We started racing the first Sunday afternoon in May. Susie Smart and I sold tickets at the gate. Her dad, John Smart, made up the charts for us, showing the rate – if it was adult or child and for how many people. That was a great help because people lined up a long ways and they came in fast for their tickets.

We had agreed with the drivers to pay them a percentage of our gate receipts, according to how they placed in the races. They had never trusted Sam and apparently thought all owners were the same.

We made every effort to show them in detail just how many tickets were sold and the exact receipts. From our share of the receipts we had the crew to pay; race insurance was expensive;

and advertising costs were high, but we did well at that.

John was not particularly interested in the operation of the track. He was really excited about improving it. He built a judges and announcers stand about 15 feet up above the edge of the track area. He built a long blacktopped entrance path from the ticket stand to the seating area and lined it with flags. He moved the pit area from the stands.

When Sam first started racing he just had his spectators sitting on the ground on the hillside. He finally added a few benches. John built a lot more sturdy seating and many more benches on the hillside.

We bought two cars from a dealer in Black River Falls, mostly because this man had a very successful race car and driver. He agreed to send his car down to our track for the races.

One of our cars was a convertible. John rigged up a "fin" to be temporarily attached to the rear of the car. From this fin he could shoot a fireworks bomb. He drove the car at the head of the racers, shot off the bomb and the drivers took off. I always quit selling tickets to go watch that start.

One night, we had company, Jack and Gerrie Casper. We all were watching John take off. But when he shot the bomb, it fell in the back seat and exploded there. I saw John bend over in the driver's seat. I was scared to death that he had been hurt. But up he came and drove the car from the track. That bomb blew out the back seat completely, but never hurt John. He had bent over to see why the bomb was not going off as it should. The good Lord was with us that night.

Dick Trickle

One of our favorite drivers was Dick Trickle. He was very young, but already married. He was looking for a house, but had no money to buy. John found a home for him and helped with the financing. Dick was very good and was soon able to handle the financing himself.

One thing we didn't know was that Dick was not 21. He had lied about his age when entering the business and was racing at all the tracks. If he had had an accident we could have been in serious trouble, because our insurance would not cover him or his actions.



Competition

After about three years, Sam built a larger track between Wisconsin Rapids and Plover [Golden Sands]. He offered the drivers more money than we were paying. We upped ours but not as much as he did. He raced on Sunday night the same as we did, so that left us in a bind.

Sam was not able to open his new track at the beginning of the season, so we had six weeks to get a head start. It rained every single Sunday for those six weeks.

After Sam opened, we changed our race night to Friday, thinking we could keep going. But the crowds dwindled down. The track in Wausau became available for rent, so we rented that for two years, racing on Saturday night. But that didn't work out either.

So we found ourselves out of the racing business. David continued to follow his idol, Dick Trickle, for many years. Dick graduated from the smaller tracks and entered tracks big time, racing all over the country. He was considered the rookie of the year when he started racing at the larger tracks.

Four Mile

About the time the race track was being developed, we built a pond in the swampy area along the Four Mile Creek. Uncle Guy Potter let us use his equipment and operator at a very reasonable price. He dug out all the swampy area, creating a good sized body of water which covered a large part of the lower land. John must have loved water, because it was the second pond he created.

John sold the old Kellogg Lumber Company holdings across the street from the old court house to a real estate developer, who had no interest in the buildings. John decided he could use the buildings out on our new property, so he had them moved there. This was the first of many buildings he moved.

The old Texaco office was moved from downtown; a garage, and another older shed were brought in. It almost got to the point where if anyone had an old building to be moved they called John. He also moved two Quonset huts from town to good locations on the new pond. One was right down on the edge, and the other on a hill overlooking the water.

The Kellogg Office building was moved to a location on Griffith Avenue, at the edge of the pond. The lumber storage area was put at the top of the hill overlooking the pond and the house on Griffith.

The Ridges

When John purchased the land on which the Ridges Golf Course was eventually constructed, everyone wanted to know why he bought it, as it was awfully poor for raising grass. John had made a study and believed that he would have to irrigate anyway, and the chances were that we

would have golf a week earlier in the spring than if the course was built on heavy clay soil.

He knew that land was poor, because one day while riding with Grandpa Rowland, coming from his farm into the city, John asked, "Grandpa, what is in the field over there?"

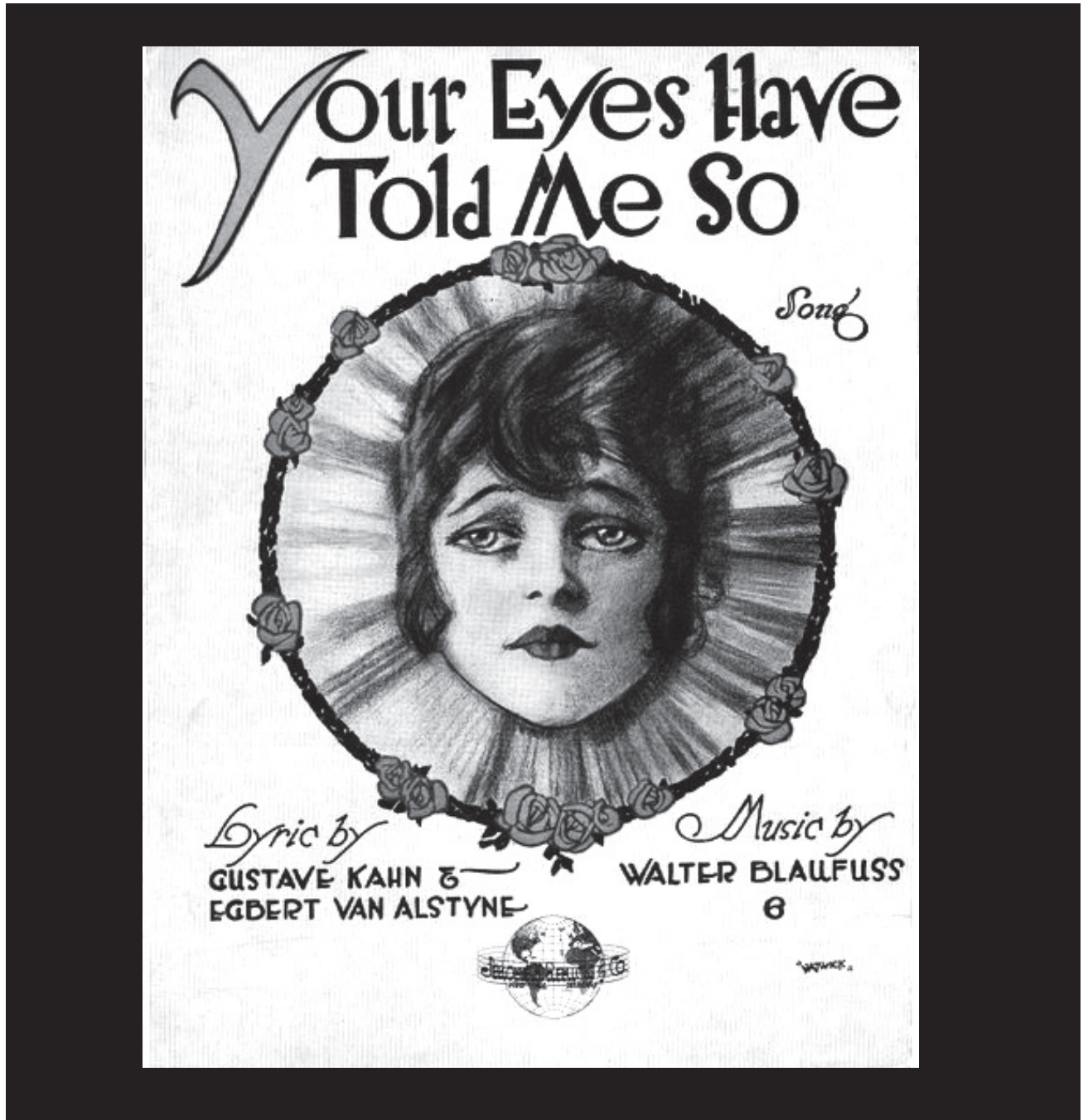
Grandpa's answer was, "That is what people call a blow hole. They have farmed so much without having anything to put back into the soil, that the vegetation became weaker and weaker, almost like a desert. These people didn't know how to farm their land, so everything blew away but the mortgage!"

I did not feel that we had enough income to build a golf course. John was quite determined to go ahead. We visited the Christofferson's equipment store down in Janesville. They had a riding grass mower on sale. I thought and thought, then gave John a "Yes" sign and we bought it. My husband knew that I would go along with the golf course project.

We visited many famous golf courses in the South to get familiar with the golf business. We stayed at a golf resort in Alabama where we were introduced to the game. It was a great place, served good meals and had nice rooms. We talked with the manager and he recommended other courses around the South to see. When it came time to leave, we went up to pay our bill and the manager said it was on the house, no charge to us. John and I were stunned. The gentlemen told us he was real interested in what we were doing and would like to let him know when we started building.

Griffith Park & The Ridges *Continued p. 21*

The Art of Grim Natwick



Cover by Natwick
1919

The Natwick Sheet Music Covers

By Holly Knoll

Young Myron "Grim" Natwick [1890-1990] did not originally want to become an animator but he did want to draw. So, after leaving his small hometown of Wisconsin Rapids, he went to art school in Chicago.

Like most other art school students, Natwick worked several jobs at one time. He was a waiter. He and a family friend sold books. On weekends, they would pack up boxes and sometimes the company would send him on errands to Illinois and Wisconsin to visit the small school houses. His other job, as a supernumerary or "walk on" actor, he got through a friend. This friend would dig up small non-speaking roles in plays and a group of art students would dress up as soldiers or other like parts and stand-in on stage. Usually they would receive one dollar a night

Also, while in Chicago, Natwick got a job with a commercial lettering service, illustrating small jobs such as postcards. This may have been his most important job to that point.

While working odd jobs, Natwick suddenly got a request from a former friend back home. His friend, who was fairly brilliant, had written a song but needed someone who could draw the cover art for him. So, he instantly thought of his dear friend Grim in art school.

Natwick agreed but felt that he was not talented enough to illustrate the cover quite yet. So, instead, he borrowed the head of a girl from the Gibson Girls. He then did the lettering himself to complete the cover. Little did he know at the time but this would eventually lead to much greater things.

After he had completed his friend's song cover, he got the idea that maybe some other song writers would be able to use his art. So Natwick took the

one song cover that he had done down to a song writer in Chicago, probably named Bob Graham, who exclaimed, Natwick recalled later, "Gosh, yeah, that's pretty good, we could use it." So he handed over some sheet music for Natwick to draw up.

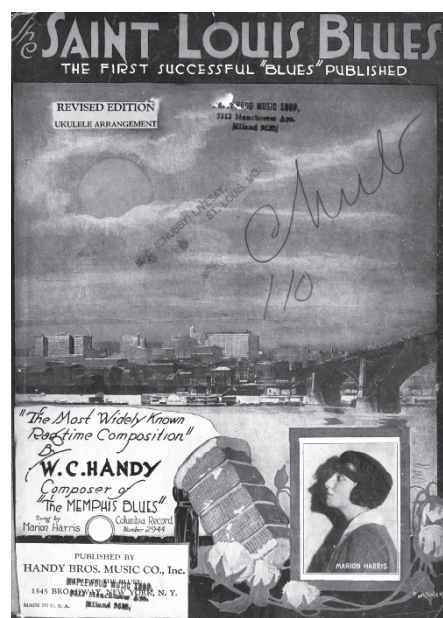
Although the young Natwick knew that the song cover illustrating business was not always steady, he took the job because he heard that it could be quite lucrative. He turned out to be very good at

this and soon began talking to other publishers in the business. Over the next two to four years, he illustrated around 200 pieces of sheet music.

Most notably, he drew all of W.C. Handy's covers, beginning with "St. Louis Blues." Handy had decided that he liked Natwick's work and put him up in a room located in the center of Chicago so Natwick could draw all his covers. With the steady income, Natwick decided to stop working for the letter outfit in order to fully pursue sheet music cover illustration work.

Many of the covers he illustrated were during World War One with the songs revolving around Americans hating the Kaiser and how they were going to go "over there" and beat them up. At this time, Natwick was cranking out one cover a day for H.S. Talbot. However, he soon was drafted, which put his career on hold for a little while.

When the war was over Natwick went to study in Vienna for three years and then shortly after moved to New York. He still wanted to pursue illustration work but first make enough money to get started. Around this time, Natwick began to get pursued by animators for his intricate detail and life-like feel when drawing the human body. This was when his life began to dramatically change and he moved on to the world of animation.



1914

CABERAVINGS

By *Richard A. Whiting*



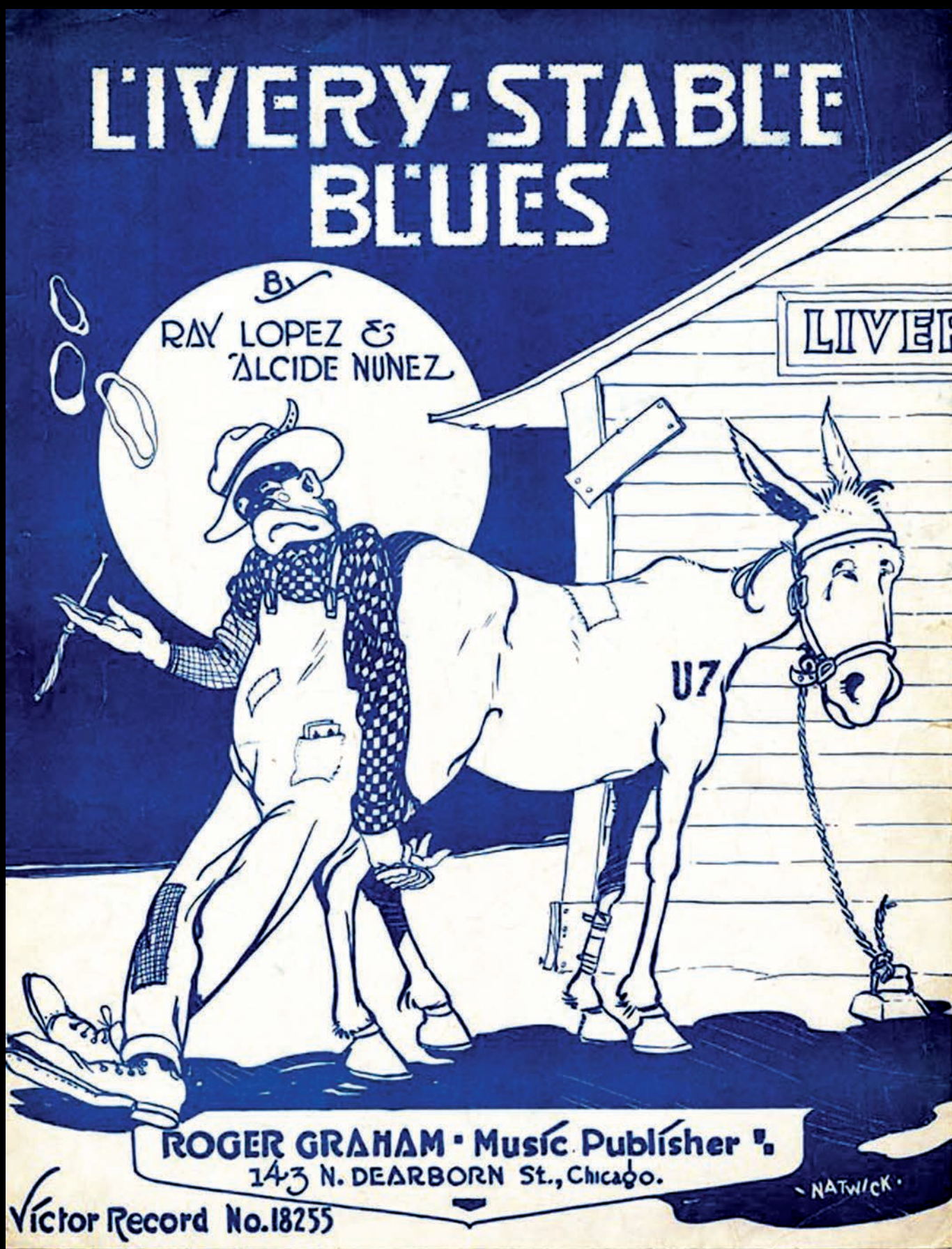


Mammy O'Mine



Words by
W^m TRACEY
Music by
MACEO PINKARD

Music Publishers







BRING BACK MY SOLDIER BOY TO ME

Words by
WALTER HIRSCH
Music by
FRANK MAGINE

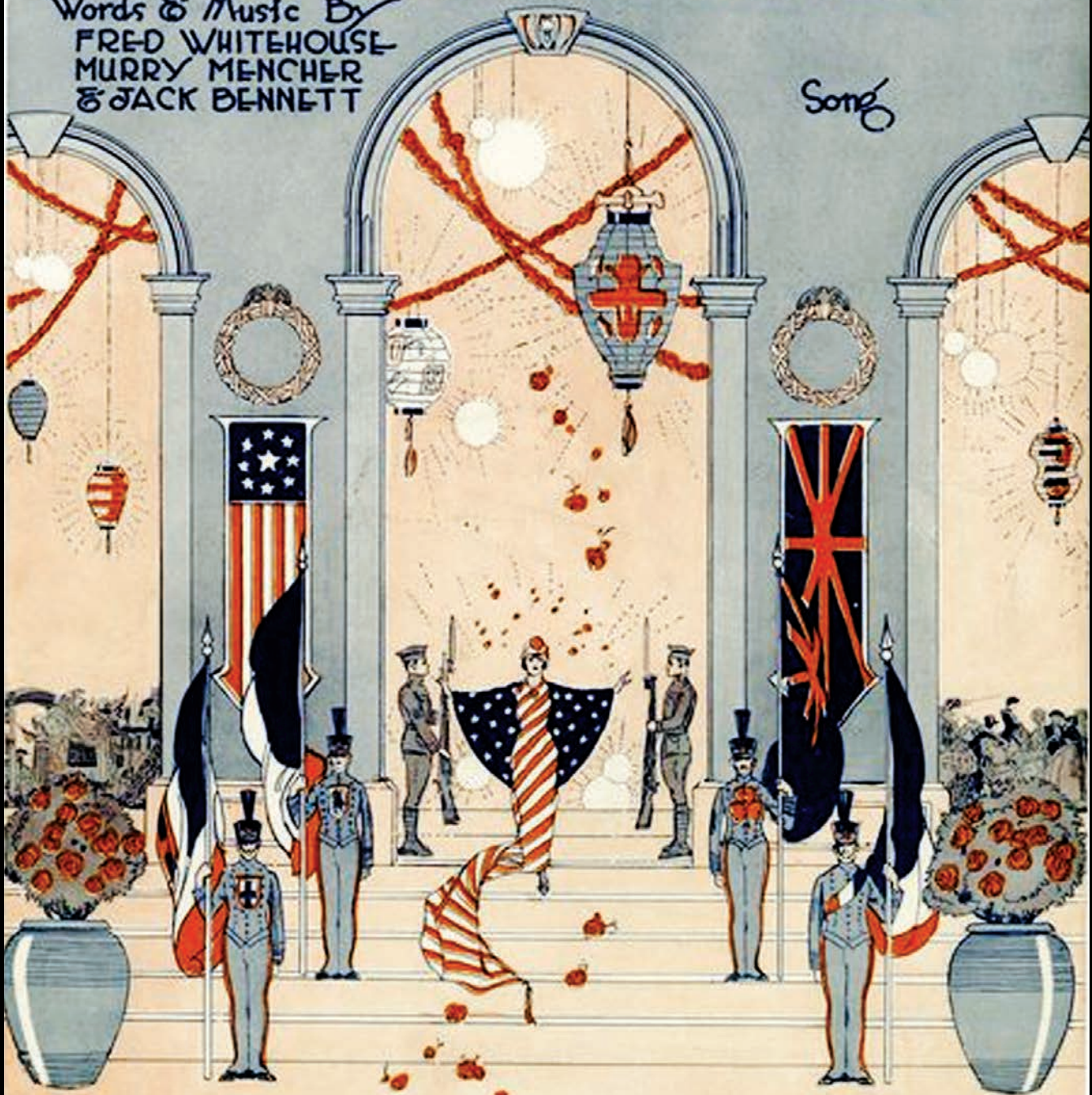




AT THE LEAGUE OF NATIONS' BALL

Words & Music By
FRED WHITEHOUSE
MURRY MENCHER
& JACK BENNETT

Song



WATKINS

THIS NUMBER ON ALL
PHONOGRAPH RECORDS
AND MUSIC ROLLS

Music Publishers
Goswami & Broadway
New York

Continued from page 10

Imaginative Reuse

We improved the upstairs of the old lumber storage building. The court house in Wisconsin Rapids was being torn down. The large single pane windows of the building along with other parts were on sale. John bought the windows. There were about twenty of them. They were used in remodeling the upstairs by creating a whole east side of windows installed at a slant. This made the room very light and airy! Airy because there was a lot of air coming in between the windows.

We installed electricity and water. A local large home was being demolished and some of it was for sale. John bought a huge bathtub and other bathroom fixtures which he put into our upstairs. By adding a used electric stove and refrigerator we were all set to spend an occasional night there, just for the fun of it.

House on the Rock

When we talked with a banker he simply told us that building a golf course was too big a project for a single couple. It would not only be the original cost, but constant upgrading. He said "Don't do it!" So we did anyway.

[Older son] Paul was leaving for Thailand to be in the Peace Corps. John and David were both needed as the course was being built so they said goodbye to him and Gloria and I drove him over to the Stevens Point airport. We cried when we gave Paul a last kiss and wished him well. He was to be there for two long years.

We looked around for someone to design the golf course. We consulted a very prominent designer. He came to take a look and didn't feel he would want to work on the project. A designer from Southeastern Wisconsin heard that we were looking and approached us. He took us to see a couple of courses he had done. Then as a special

treat he took us to "The House on The Rock." The builder of that was a good friend of his.

We were allowed to visit his place and had to climb up a ladder to get to the entrance. We were really impressed with the building and also the contents. Then our guide took us down to a newer building where the owner was living. We had coffee with him and he told us of his future plans to build a much larger museum adjoining his living quarters. Today "The House on the Rock" is one of the state's biggest tourist attractions.

Building a Course

In spite of all that attention, we hired a couple

men from Cherry Valley, Ill., recommended by the Christoffersons to do the designing and construction. They brought along their own crew. We set up the downstairs of our building as a bunk room to accommodate them.

Gloria and I cooked meals for them in our upstairs. The men really enjoyed that food and they ate a lot. That was

a great time for us, fun and exciting. But finally the crew got tired of using the creek for their cleaning up. They told us if we would buy the equipment, they would install a shower in their bunk room. So, we did.

David helped with the construction when they needed a truck. We hired Paul Bassuener to do the heavy machine work.

John and Marion Smart helped by picking up brush on the fairway areas. They were always helpful in our extra projects. September came and we were not quite ready to plant the grass seed. By the middle of the month we were all set. Because it was taking such a chance planting late, we only used half the seed, saving the rest to plant in the spring.



Auril and John 1970

During the winter, we traveled south again, looking for attractive signs. We took many pictures to have as reference. We used one of them when we built our sign, facing Griffith Avenue.

March 1964 arrived. We planted the balance of the grass seed at the end of the month. An unusual thing happened with our planting. The fall planting came up very good and the spring planting was almost washed out. We surely made a mistake by not sowing all the seeds in the fall.

We felt that we needed to be out at the Ridges all the while, now that it was nearly time for the golf course to open.

We moved a lot of our furniture from Two Mile out to the upstairs in the Ridges Building. My folks moved into our house on Two Mile Avenue.

I cried when we went to bed that night. I loved our house where the boys had grown up. But when I woke up in the morning and saw a glorious sunrise out of our east window, I realized that I could live with this place.

Front Nine

Once again the Christoffersons helped us. We needed a golf course superintendent. Their country club in Janesville had an assistant superintendent who wanted a full-time position. We interviewed Ron Greunewald and he agreed to work for us. David and Ron got along real well, so David helped some when he wasn't trucking. However, David didn't think as much of the golf course as the race track.

We set up our Airstream trailer temporarily to use as a pro shop. An awning built in front of it gave us more room. Our goal was to use the lumber building for our permanent pro shop. We hired a carpenter and John was busy improving the building's first floor. He made it into two separate rooms with the stairway leading upstairs and a hall leading to the downstairs steps on the south end of the building. We already had the outside door on the south end, so another door was built in the front entrance on the west side.

Back to the bank for more money.

Our friend Dick Feih, a pro shop supply salesman set us up with the necessary merchandise for sale. John and I knew nothing of what was needed or probably even why it was needed. Dick was an excellent golfer himself. He tried the course and found it good. He especially liked the number nine hole and was proud that he could hit the ball from the tee over the valley and to the top of the hill which was a good distance away.

Bob Jones, who worked as our salesman in the [Winn & Murgatroyd] real estate office, brought along his three golfing buddies and they became our first season ticket holders. They, in turn, brought other friends and our season ticket holders grew. We hired Susie Smart to run the temporary pro shop for us. Our nine-hole golf course was ready for play.

Opening Day

The big day finally arrived on June 6th, [1964] when we opened the course. The grass was skimpy but growing well. To honor the event we asked two members of the Bulls Eye Country Club, Theodore Brazeau and his friend, Ray Love, to play the first round. They were both over 90 years old.

We had no golf carts, so they walked the nine holes. To get even with our friend Lloyd Foster, we asked him to be their caddy. [Methodist] Rev. Foster had been the person who really got us into building the golf course. So he not only had to walk the nine, but had to carry their bags as well! They enjoyed the course even though they came in all tired out.

We were looking for carpeting for the new pro shop. We contacted Dick Kupsky to get an idea of cost, quality, color and everything else. He came to look us over.

He saw the trailer and laughed loud and long. When he could stop he said "You mean you're going to carpet this thing?"

When we showed him the new shop he was quite surprised and gave us all the information we needed and sold us a red figured carpeting that would hold up well under the golf spikes



John Murgatroyd

in the player's shoes. He and his wife were so impressed that they became season ticket holders.

We had so many gophers on the course that we designed our first score cards with a gopher on the cover. Mother said that John was like a gopher because he was always digging around somewhere.

One Monday morning, John and I drove over to Stevens Point to give the radio station our race news. Coming back we ran into a fierce windstorm. When we arrived at the golf course, we found Susie crying. The wind had blown the awning apart and things were scattered all over. We had no choice then but to move into our permanent building.

Bar

Now we had a room especially for the bar and one for a good-sized pro shop. We applied for a liquor license which was emotionally hard because neither of us ever drank liquor. But a golf course demands a bar. My mother was horrified. She came out to look over the pro shop but would not even step into the bar room.

Mother and Dad tried only once to play golf. It took them so long – over a half hour and they had not even reached the first green. We had to ask them to leave the course so others could play without having to wait so long.

When we moved into our new building, we hired Ray Lecy to tend the pro shop. He had been Paul's basketball coach in [Grove] grade school and we all liked him a lot. However, after a month he told us he had better quit because we had not even taken in enough to pay his salary to say nothing of our other expenses. It was sure good of him to handle the matter the way he did and we appreciated that.

Susie came in to help us again. We always paid her, but not at the highest rate as she was satisfied to work for less because she was so interested in the success of the golf course. Her parents helped out also without pay as much as they could.

John and I had to get acquainted with the bar operation. That was really difficult because we didn't know the names of the drinks or even what went in them. We had a bar book which gave directions. We installed an automatic push button device that measured one helping of liquor needed for the drink with three separate buttons; whisky, gin and vodka. We took turns tending bar, if you could call it that. On one occasion, I pressed the button a little too long and it dispensed a double shot. Then this gentleman ordered another and John did the same thing. That poor guy barely made it out of the clubhouse.

After that first year, we were able to hire a bartender, my brother Bud, for the busiest hours. Then we got rid of that pesky shot dispenser machine.

Restaurant

There was room enough to install a kitchen. We started making fresh doughnuts each morning, using a doughnut machine. The early morning golfers really went for those fresh doughnuts and so did we. Sandwiches were easy to make so we branched out a bit with them.

Janet, brother Bud's wife, was our first cook. She did a tremendous job. I tried to do a hamburger one noon. When I tried to flip it over, the hamburger fell on the floor and that was the end of my cooking.

We charged five cents for a cup of coffee. I remember that I felt just terrible when we had to raise it to ten cents.

When the old [Wisconsin Rapids] library was torn down, John had purchased their crude elevator. We installed it between the bar and the kitchen, with a door on each side so both the kitchen and bar could access the extra supplies in the basement. One had to pull the unit up and down using a large rope. The cooks got tired of tugging on that heavy rope so we had the thing electrified. Now, because it ran by electricity, we had to have a state inspection every six months, at a cost of fifty dollars. I guess that was cheap enough, but it increased our expenses.

We added more space all around the east and the north sides of our building. We used a bank of windows on the east side. They overlooked the golf course, so this made an interesting room. We installed outdoor carpeting on the dirt foundation.

Back to the bank for more money.

My dad was so interested in our project. He drove out every morning. He would have a cup of coffee, then pick up our deposit and take it to the bank for us. One day as I looked out the upstairs window I noticed him coming in to the pro shop. Instead of the quick light step he usually had, he was shuffling along. Oh dear, I thought, he is getting old.

We started a Sunday night golfing club composed of our season ticket couples and we served a meal at the end of their golf game. This worked out well, because we were able to get income from both the meal and the bar. Janet and Bud handled the bar and food. Janet came up with some wonderful dessert recipes which we continued to use all our years at the Ridges.

12 Hole Golf

It wasn't long before we added three more holes to the golf course; number 10, 11 and 18. We were probably the only course in the state that had twelve holes. Number 10 was extremely difficult to build as it had so many old tree stumps and was filled with peat moss.

After it was finished it was a beautiful scene to look at from the clubhouse dining room windows. John built a fountain in the pond below the tee and people always asked for window seats. They complained when cold weather came and we had to shut the fountain off.

Back to the bank for more money. We continued to pay the interest, but couldn't make payments on the principal.

Back Nine

The next year we built the remaining six holes. The back nine was more difficult and more beautiful than the front. Building number

12 was difficult. We had to dig dirt out of the crick bottom to fill in the base of the fairway lying below the hill. Then construct a bridge leading to the island where the number 12 hole was located. Our local neighbor boys were hired to hand pick up stones and brush.

We needed bridges to cross the creek.

Good friends and season ticket golfers, Herb Jackson and Arlie Dent, had high positions at Consolidated Paper Co. The Company was getting rid of some old bridges so they told David about it. He had a big project getting those bridges back. He used the backhoe and our pickup. Ruined the pickup but finally succeeded in getting them back and in place over the creek. Now we had three Ridges Bridges.

Back to the bank!

Billy

Earlier when we had built up the clubhouse, we hauled dirt from the hole which was to be the basement to a huge pile on the edge of the parking lot. This made a nice mound, covered with grass. We just had to have a goat there. We did, and that goat was a great success. Folks would bring their children out to see Billy Goat and then stay for dinner.

John and I were out walking the goat one day when Billy ate the blossoms off the lupines I had planted.

I was so mad at that goat and at John for having him that I said, "When you die, I'm going to throw that goat right in the hole with you!" Then I was ashamed of myself.

One day a guest came rushing in after he had returned to his car from lunch and told us the goat was on the roof of his automobile! Several times Billy got into the clubhouse.

On Halloween, high school kids would take the goat and hide him. We got a call from the high school principal that he had found the goat in his yard. A couple of more times we had to rescue Billy. It was no fun hauling that goat in the back of our car. We finally decided to lock him up in the maintenance shop on Halloween night.

Billy Goat at the Ridges*Photos from Auril Murgatroyd Harding***DNR**

We soon had a visit from the DNR telling us we should not have dug anything from the creek bed when we built the number 12 hole.

We had checked with our attorney, Jack Potter, my cousin, who had told us that at that point there were no rules about disturbing a water way. Apparently that had changed just before we started digging.

At any rate we went to court to fight the fine that they were assessing us. The trial recessed at noon, to start again in the afternoon. We went home for lunch trying to relax a bit.

Arriving back in court as I sat waiting and I discovered that I had left my apron on and right here in court I was wearing it. Off it came.

The result of the hearing was that we would be relieved of the fine. A victory for us. But our lawyer's fee was \$500!

WFHR Tournament

We were concerned as to whether golfers would like that more difficult back nine with all its water hazards. One of them came back to the clubhouse complaining about how many golf balls he had lost. I remarked "I suppose you won't play again then."

His answer was "Hell yes, I'm going out and lick that thing!"

Our back nine was a success. We now owned one of the best public golf courses in the State.

Advertising was a necessity. We used our city newspaper and the local radio station. Jack Gennaro, the manager, became quite interested in our individual effort to build and maintain a golf course. He suggested we have a golf tournament which he would sponsor. We sold a lot of tickets and it went very well.

Jack continued to sponsor this tournament

for many years. It helped us not only with the tournament but in drawing others to our course.

My nephew, Webbie Winn, played in these WFHR tourneys, and placed in many of them. Because he lived just at the foot of the hill from the Ridges and had free golf, he spent many hours on the course and became an excellent golfer.

Fish Fry

One of us came up with the idea of serving Friday night dinners. I thought having a special salad bar would be a good idea. I had seen a small one somewhere on one of our trips. There were none in Wisconsin Rapids, so it was a new idea for the area. I found an excellent recipe for beer battered fish in one of my many cookbooks.

We had decorated our clubhouse with many antiques. I loved old things and had quite a few. I continually shopped the antique shops and bought more interesting objects. We had a lot of old-fashioned dishes to hold the salads. We set up a few banquet tables in our extra space and covered them with plastic table cloths. On Friday night we served about forty people and that was pretty good. The next Friday we did fifty dinners. Linda Stoner, our real estate office secretary, helped out as a waitress along with her mother-in-law.

We took another trip down to Florida in January. We visited the Feldts, the Wooddells, the Engels, and the Suckows. We were so envious of them as they were all our age and retired when we were working our heads off running a difficult business. The telephone rang at the Feldt's and it was for us.

Gloria was calling to say we had 100 people on Friday night and we needed more tables, dishes and silverware. We hurried home, ordered the dishes and silver, bought up more table covers and set up more tables. From then on our Friday nights increased steadily. I knew good food and that was what we served. All of our salads were homemade and fresh.

We had to give up the antique containers because they kept breaking. Now I began shopping for antique round tables. We started with one of our own. This happened to be a table

that John's mother and father had purchased from a store in Milwaukee when they were on their honeymoon. We found more tables at the antique stores. John's uncle, Roy Murgatroyd, refinished them as we got new ones. His daughter Lila (Mrs. Jim Miller) helped out in the pro shop and had told us about her dad's hobby. I acted as hostess and enjoyed meeting new people. I also did the cashiering. Our Friday nights became so popular that we began serving 200 people, then 300. I could no longer keep up both cashier and hostess, so Lila became the hostess. I could help her in the early evening, and then go to cash register for the rest of the night.

Rodeo

We had given up the race track operation in 1965. Mel Potter approached us on the prospect of having a rodeo there. Mel was a national champion calf roper and was very familiar with the rodeo operation.

Sounded good to us. He made all the arrangements for the rodeo and John and his crew prepared the necessary set up. The Kiwanis Club sponsored the show and sold tickets. Two nights were scheduled. We did very well the first night, but not so well on the second.

The following year we decided to do the show again. Kiwanis chose not to sponsor this time, so we were on our own. We advertised that a family carful would cost only \$10. Boy oh boy, was that a mistake!

We got carfuls alright. Several times as many as fifteen people would get out of a car. This was no longer just a family, but family and friends. We broke even the first night and lost a bundle the second night.

The track people at the Dells offered to rent our track and put on races. We agreed. However they did not do well, so that didn't work out either.

Uncle Dave recalls that his family, long time neighbors and friends of the Murgatroyds, were among the first golfers at the Ridges and that Auril was his first employer.





Griffith Park Speedway 1961

(Uncle Dave archives)



Photos from Tim O'Day

Jere O'Day, left

Jere O'Day, My Ol' Man

By Tim O'Day

My ol' man was a stock car driver, a free wheelin', hard drivin' short track hero. He believed pedal to the metal was the only way to go. At tracks like Crown's Speedway, Griffith Park, Dells Motor Speedway and more – from Tomahawk to Slinger, Wausau to La Crosse – he ran the summer circuit three to four nights a week.

He was content to leave the oil stained, hard packed dirt of the pits to his partners, guys like Minnow Moll, Moose Peterson or rough and tough Chuck Spencer, shade tree mechanics who knew the inner working of Hurst shifters, Holley carbs, Sifton gears and close ratio gears better than they knew the back of their own hands. These were men who could weld a roll cage, pound out a dent, change a tire or adjust a valve in the short time between races. They were the engine builders, the fuel pump rebuilders, the guys who had your back if push came to shove and the competition wanted to contest the race results in the parking lot after the night was over.

My ol' man was a stock car driver. He competed against drivers like Lyle Nabbefeldt, Marlin "Shoes" Walbeck, Billy Wirtz, Augie Winkleman, Dave Marzofka, Tom Reffner and more.

On a good night, the car was fast, the checkered flag flew, the crowd cheered, a Trophy Girl waited to be kissed and everyone wanted to be your pal. On a good night the purse was big enough to cover expenses and buy some beer for the late drive home...on a good night.

On other nights a fouled spark plug, a flat tire, a busted rear end or a bad wreck could keep you out of the money. On a night like that all you could hope for was a roll over (always a crowd pleaser) because a roll over might put you in the running for the hard luck award, a free case of beer.

On a night like that you loaded the car on the trailer, thanked the good Lord nobody got hurt, kissed the wife, laughed at the kids and said; "We'll get 'em next week." It was all about the racing...the outcome never really mattered.

Win or lose my ol' man was a stock car driver. He knew the value of putting on a show, he loved racing and respected the men he competed with. At the bar after the races his hand was never slow when it was his turn to buy a round.

He was a stock car driver and pretty damn good at it. Fast timer, Trophy winner, Track champion and Wisconsin Short Track Hall of Famer. Jere "Leadfoot" O'Day. My ol' man.



Mike, Sherrie and Pattie O'Day

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

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



Artifacts, a local history magazine and newsletter for the South Wood County Historical Corp. welcomes contributions of writings and photographs relevant to the greater Wisconsin Rapids area. For a year's subscription and membership send \$20 to the address above. Questions? Contact Lori Brost, Museum Administrator and assistant editor, 715-423-1580. lori@swch-museum.com

Not just Betty's boob

Our favorite son, Myron "Grim" Natwick, is celebrated for "animating" the motion picture cartoon character, "Betty Boop." But he did more. Besides rendering "Snow White," "Gulliver," "Mr. Magoo" and numerous celluloid icons, Natwick lent his talented hand to both fine art and pop. For example, in this issue can be seen picturesque sheet music covers the LHS grad composed after leaving River City for the Big City.

Whether in Chicago, New York or Vienna, Natwick corresponded with friends here, contributed to local publications and visited periodically. In the early 1980s Uncle Dave interviewed him at the home of John Natwick. The garrulous nonagenarian settled into an easy chair, started talking and didn't quit until John ushered Uncle out three hours later.

Grim Natwick died in 1990 at age 100. In 2000, SWCHC Museum director Pam Walker dedicated a large room to an exhibit of Natwick's art. This year, that effort will be expanded to coincide with the inaugural community-wide homage to alliterative bilabials – the "Betty Boop Festival."

