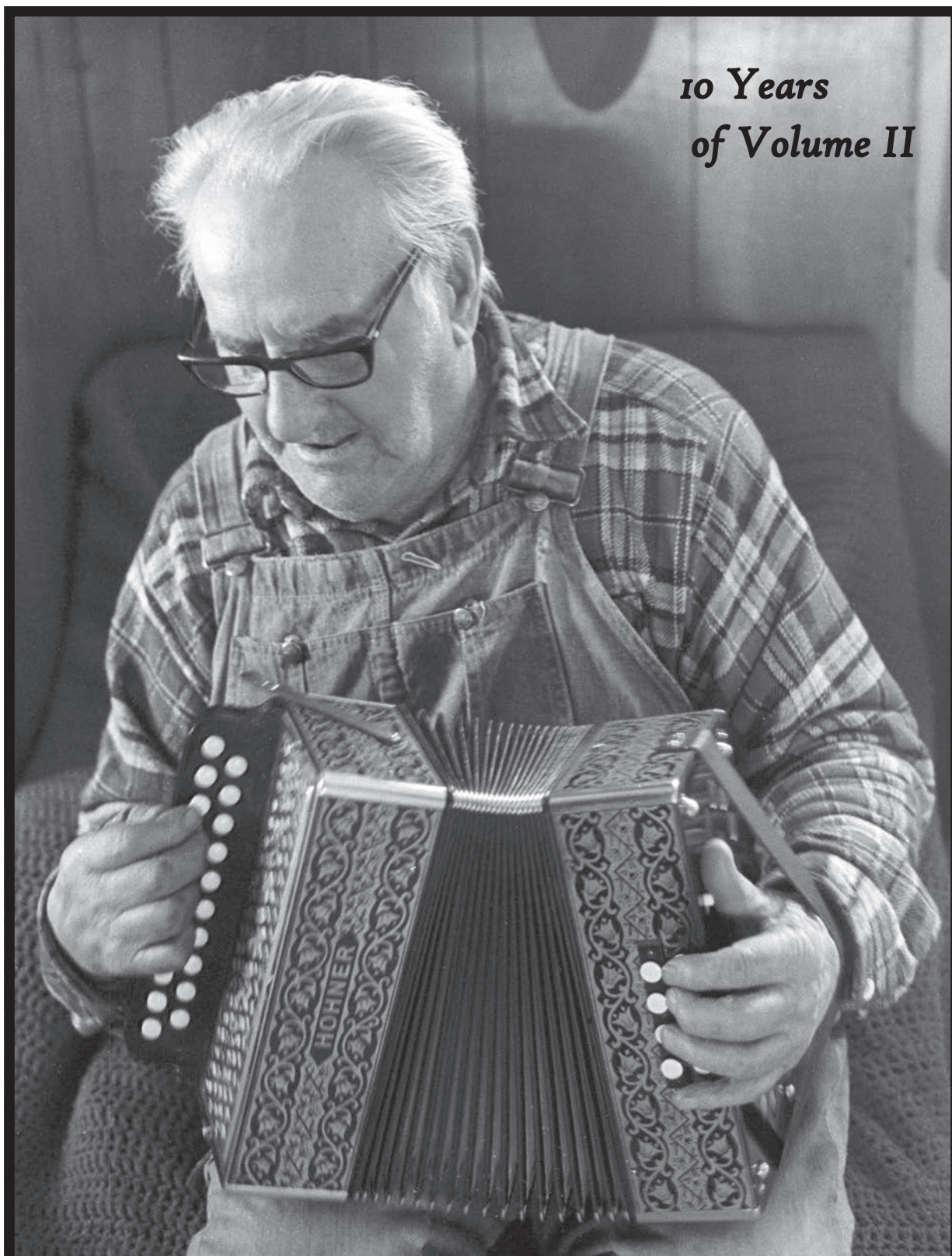


# ARTIFACTS



Cover: Joe Capek by Dave Engel, 1987. President's message by Phil Brown, p. 2; Museum photos, 3; Rotary signatures by Lori, 4-5; Memories, Jobs, Montgomery Ward, by Bill Hartley, 6-9; Artistic Photography, 10; Photos by Uncle Dave, 11-25; *Looking at the Beams* by Terry Stake, 26; Photos of Ellen Sabetta, 27; POW camp by Gene Johnson, 28-29; National Guard history by William Parker, 30-31; Bill Voight, 31.

SWCHC President Phil Brown

## The Big 4-0

This edition of *Artifacts* is even more special than usual.

Since the early days of the South Wood County Historical Corp., newsletters were put together by volunteers like J. Marshall Buehler, the eminent Port Edwards historian who is still an active contributor [see “Nepco Lake” in #39]. During director Pam Walker’s term in the 1990s, the newsletter was published as “*Artifacts*” with stories by current editor (Uncle) Dave Engel. When Uncle Dave, after a few years off, returned to our board of directors ten years ago, he began “Volume II,” combining the newsletter with a local history magazine.

The first issue of Volume II came in May 2004 and featured the work of a former *Tribune* photographer, Don Krohn, who would be very generous in providing photos for many issues of *Artifacts* to come.

At the time, these *Artifacts* were part of a three-year plan that would take him to retirement age and we honestly didn’t think Uncle would be doing *Artifacts* for the next ten years. Another three-year plan was followed by four more non-plan years and, after all that, we are now holding #40 in our hands.

This means 40 more feathers in Uncle Dave’s history beret. Topics of books he has published include “River City,” northern Wisconsin, Upper Michigan’s Copper Country, and Bob Dylan’s boyhood in Hibbing, Minn. He and I put together a book about *Cranmoor: The Cranberry Eldorado*.



Volume II, #1

Dave has also contributed to books on Winnebago county, the League of Wisconsin Municipalities and Madeline Island, all the while continuing his *River City Memoirs* series in the *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*. In case you didn’t notice, he has also added some rather artistic photography, as this issue will show.

Many readers do not realize that Uncle Dave is responsible in many ways for every word, punctuation mark, picture, pixel, paper, molecule, iota and blob of ink that makes up *Artifacts*. And

as soon as one issue is put to bed, he is already thinking about the next.

Now that his normal retirement age has passed, Uncle has another three-year plan: to reduce his work load a bit so he can wrap up a number of other projects before the old Smith Corona blows a head gasket. He will continue *Artifacts* as you know it but on the basis of not four but three issues per year, appearing in June, October and February.

The editor and I appreciate your support this past decade and look forward to adding up more than a few numbers in the future.

**3** cheers for

**10** years of *Volume II*

**40** issues of *Volume II*

**21** years of “*Artifacts*”

**34** years of *River City Memoirs*

**55** mph: *Uncle Dave can’t drive that speed*



**Cover:** Joe Capek (1897-1990) a Bohemian from down by Petenwell before Petenwell was a lake, told his story in 1988's *The Fat Memoirs* in which he said he typically rode a bull to the polka dance, wrestled with Nekoosa's Strangler Lewis and was drafted for WWI.

## Featured in this 10th Anniversary edition...

Photos from the 1980s by *Artifacts* editor (Uncle) Dave Engel, then a contributor to the *Wisconsin Rapids Daily Tribune*.

### *Upstairs Downstairs*

Below: They were at home with Isaac and Charlotte Witter, working in and around what is now the Museum building. In the 1930 census, Krumrei was listed as gardener and "schauf-feur." Housekeeper Gloden lived on the third floor with her husband Wilfred and daughter Leann. See *Fat Memoirs* (1988) for an intimate look at Witter's downtown abbey.



Otto Krumrei 1902-1998



Christine Andres Gloden 1907-1994

Dave Engel for the *Daily Tribune*

## Rotarians pen John Hancocks

By Lori Brost  
Museum Administrator

It's hard to believe I am starting my seventh year with the SWCHC. In that time, I have met people I have enjoyed talking to and hearing their stories. Some have been happy childhood memories, some have shared the pain or sorrow of family loss and some have inspired stories of my own.

For instance, a few years ago, SWCHC member Bill Hartley relayed a story about a favorite childhood toy, a wooden elephant which was purchased at Coast to Coast.

His recollection reminded me of a favorite doll I had as a child, named Homely, an old friend I hadn't thought about in years. That was in August 2010 and since that time I have prodded him to write for us again. Recently, I found a message he had sent me back in 2010, which had gotten buried within my inbox. That e-mail included a few of the stories that can be found within this issue.

Just before Christmas, I received another package from Bill with a note stating that "this find" was listed on EBay and was located in Neillsville, Wis. He thought it should be with us so he purchased it and sent it my way. And he was right, it was quite a find.

The envelope contained three sheets of signatures on "Rapids Ripples" newsletter letterhead of the Wisconsin Rapids Rotary Club. It's definitely a Who's Who of Wisconsin Rapids' finest businessmen of days gone by.

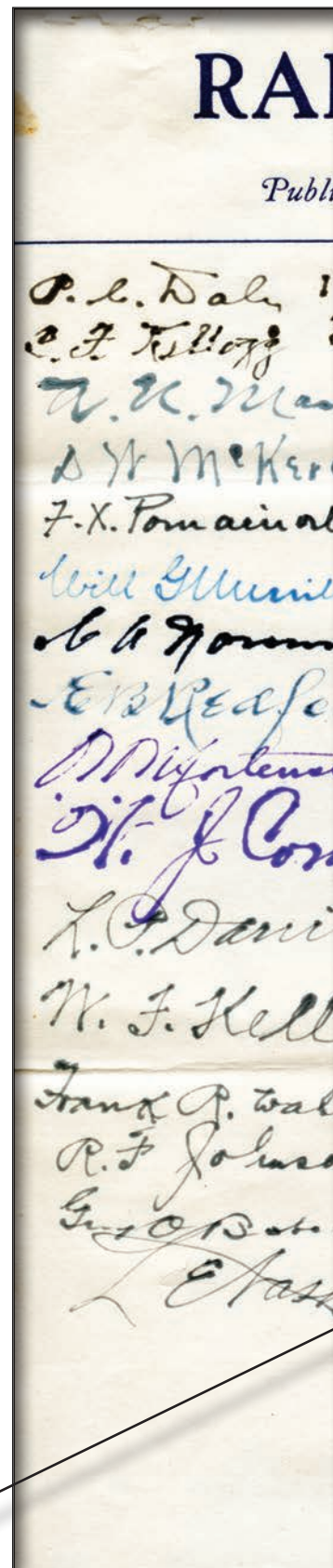
Rotary International was started in Chicago in February 1905; the local chapter was started in 1919. Soon after, the group started their weekly publication, "Rapids Ripples."

The documents that Bill found on EBay are not the actual newsletter, but a list of names and addresses on the *Rapids Ripples* letterhead. Reviewing the names gave us a time frame of where to start an investigation into the nature of the item. A note attached to the sheets offered more clues. The discussion within the note was regarding the elimination of the County Nurse, an action the signers were against. The signatures were forwarded to the State Legislature.

As my investigation continued, I found an article from the *Wisconsin Rapids Tribune* dated Nov. 30, 1932, outlining the argument surrounding the topic. Two Rotarian's wives spoke up on behalf of the County Nurse and Mrs. Isaac P. Witter was quoted as saying, "Just as the value of education cannot be measured in dollars and cents neither can the value of health." The County Nurse position was not eliminated.



*Profit by service: Rotary members who signed the petition at right include physicians, judges, lawyers, morticians, lumbermen, a coal dealer, a laundry owner, mill executives for NEPCO and Consolidated, the Tribune owner, an architect, store owners, a bus company owner, a city official, a cranberry grower, Isaac Witter himself, banker.*



## RAPIDS



## RIPPLES

*Published Weekly by the Wisconsin Rapids Rotary Club*

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Paul Link

Guy Nash

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Wm Jackson

J. R. Pagan

C. F. Younger

Edw. Horgan

C. E. Bode

J. J. Wood

Wm B. Nath.

George W. Mierd

E. B. Smart

## RAPIDS



*Published Weekly by the Wisconsin*

D. P. Johnson - 589 -

C. S. Jackson - Walter

A. H. Eger 3rd and

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Samuel W. Darsel 1019 Q

O. P. Roemer Co. B

Thos. W. Darsel W. H.

J. W. P. Wether 3rd

Phos 1st St

T. M. Melb 3236

C. S. Searls 5th

Meyer Fridstein Grand

James W. Jackson 4th

# RIVER CITY MEMORIES



By Bill (LHS-63) and Shirley Black (LHS-64) Hartley

As we read Kent Vasby's Lincoln High Class of '65 newsletter and recent issues of *Artifacts*, Shirley and I realize how much we remember the good times growing up in Wisconsin Rapids.

We remember riding our bikes around town, going to movies at the Palace, Rapids, and Wisconsin theaters and coming out and finding our bikes still there waiting for us. We never gave it a second thought that someday we'd have to lock them up. We could go anywhere in town without our parents worrying about someone "getting" us.

Swimming was a special summer activity. Kids had a choice of the old swimming pool on the East Side (complete with river water), Lake Wazeecha, or the then-new Port Edwards pool with clean, clear water. We could ride our bikes to the Rapids pool, hitch-hike to the Lake, or take the Milwaukee Road train to Port. Decisions, decisions. Of course if we chose the Lake, we always went to the "white" sand beach.

Little League baseball at Robinson Park was a huge deal. It was the sign that a guy made it, as it was in the Color Guard for Shirley. The competition made for sweaty palms for days in advance.

Shopping at the corner grocery store was always fun. East Grand Grocery, Parson's, Peters', Peterson's, and the Farmer Store, to name a few. Nickels went a long way, especially if you were into penny candy.

As we got older, we started going to drive-in movies and dances at the Palace and the Corpsman Hall. All of the activity at the drive-in and the dancing worked up a great appetite.

We remember eating at the Golden Eagle (best barbecue in town), Sowatzke's Root Beer Stand, Robbie's (the original fast food),

Wilpolt's, Art's, The Sugar Bowl (remember the home-made candy?), the Friendly Fountain (nickel pinball machines), the Moon Pizzeria (remember the near-beer?), Wilbern's (on prom night), and who can forget Herschleb's ice cream and the Dairy Queen on East Grand?

And Portesi's Pizza – we've eaten a lot of pizza over the years, and haven't found any we like better. We still stop there when we're in town. Mr. Portesi doesn't come out and "check the thermostat" when we're being rowdy any more, though.

And after all that good food, we loved to wash it down with nickel beers at Meehan Station on Tuesday nights or with our favorite "shorty" at the Pour Inn or Buzz's. Weekends often found us traveling to Waupaca to Indian Crossing Casino. I'm gaining weight just thinking about it!

We remember cruising Grand Avenue with the lake plugs or headers partially open, turning around at the island by the depot, and going back across the bridge again.

Once in a while we'd venture out to East Washington Street with a buddy to see whose car was

faster. Those were the days when our Untouchables Car Club plaque, hanging below the back bumper in super cool fashion, dragged when we drove into Sowatzke's Drive-In.

Where did we get the money to eat and drink and cruise all the time? Why, from working at Spiegel's, the First National Bank, Sampson Canning Company, Preway, Montgomery Ward, Northern Auto Supply, Clark Chevrolet, George Nimtz Buick, and C&R Motors, that's where.

Only a few of those places physically remain, but they still live on in our memories. How about in yours? Remember any of them?



**Bill Hartley**

# JOBS

By Bill Hartley

I started working at age 11 when I told John Lutz I was 12 and got a paper route with the *Milwaukee Journal*. The *Journal* office was behind the Rapids Surplus Store so we had to ride our bikes way over to the West Side to get our papers. We were able to go to the Farmers Store on West Grand to get an ice cream sandwich or some Sugar Babies while we were waiting for the truck to bring the papers up from the Dells.

I would load a basket on the front and saddle bags on both sides of the rear carrier of my old Schwinn Black Phantom.

My route went from Eighth to Twentieth Streets and Chestnut south to Dewey Street.

On Thursday nights, our papers were over 100 pages. I collected every Saturday morning. When my customers paid, I tore off a little ticket and gave it to them as a receipt. Some of them weren't home, and would leave their money in their milk boxes.

I won some prizes selling subscriptions to the *Milwaukee Journal* such as a soldering gun that I still use today and a trip to State Fair Park in Milwaukee. They put us up in a hotel downtown and we dropped water balloons on cars in the alley below from our window. That's probably why hotel windows don't open these days.

I also remember riding the Wild Mouse at State Fair Park. I'll never forget the fear that thing instilled in me and I don't ride roller coasters to this day because of it.

I stopped delivering papers for a while to go to work at the Gift and Luggage Shop across from Montgomery Ward for Maurice Matthews, one of my paper route customers. We were the factory authorized repair center for Norelco and Remington shavers, and I was THE repair guy. What an awesome responsibility! Maurie was also working on a 45-rpm record player to play wild game calls in the woods for hunters. I wonder if

that ever took off.

I returned to the *Milwaukee Journal* as a station captain for a while. I stuffed ad flyers into the Sunday funnies all week and dispensed papers to the carriers. On the weekend, I worked all night Saturday getting the ads and news sections put together and delivered to the carriers. Later Sunday morning, the carriers would bring their money in and pay their bill. The *Journal* office had moved to the East Side by then in a garage near the Jackson Street Bridge.

Working all night was fun. We got to go to Jackson's Restaurant to pass the idle time.

One early morning, a local police officer drove his 1961 Pontiac squad car (light green) right into the office to pick up his complimentary copy of the Sunday paper. In those days you could give them a paper without anyone getting in trouble. When he got out of the car and stepped up on the front bumper to tie his shoe, I thought I'd blow the horn

and scare him but when I hit the horn ring in the steering wheel, the siren went off! I think we all jumped under the benches.

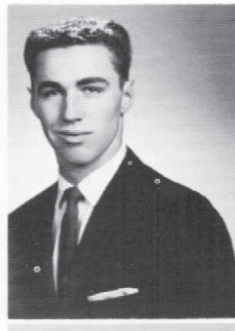
I also delivered a Sunday paper route for a while: Third and Fourth Streets where the big tippers lived. I also worked for Montgomery Ward for a couple of years.

As I grew older, I confirmed that I was a car guy when I gravitated to the automobile business and worked for a

few different local businesses.

I never officially worked there, but a number of us hung out at Liska's Sinclair service station at Fourth Street and East Grand. Charlie was a good guy and let us learn from him whenever we could. In exchange, we'd pump gas for his customers, check their oil and fan belt, and wash their windows and headlights. It was also a great place from which to watch parades, and just to watch for the girls to cruise by.

Speaking of service stations, I worked at Tom Fogarty's DX, Eighth Street & East Grand where the car wash is now. We called Tom "Big Drag," but I don't remember why. It was a great place to show off your car when you were working, right



Ahdawagam 1963

there under the DX sign on the corner (across from Polansky's Service). Everybody went through that intersection. We also spent a lot of time next door at Everett Fox's Standard station at Seventh Street and East Grand.

While working at the DX station, I met the guy who drove the Baraboo Foods truck and delivered food to restaurants in the area. Occasionally I would go with him and help him out. Also, Mick used to leave a Hamm's Beer behind the station between trips to St. Paul to get beer and to Kenosha to drop it off. I got to ride with him occasionally, an all-night adventure.

When Tom moved to the Enco station on Eighth Street South, I moved with him. We sold a lot of gas out there. We were the only Enco station on the way to Milwaukee and the opening weekend of deer season brought a steady stream of cars and trucks stopping in for gas all night long. We also serviced local folks. I remember Bill Cammack's dad coming in every Friday for an oil change on his '64 Chevy. He was a traveling salesman, and put a lot of miles on a car.

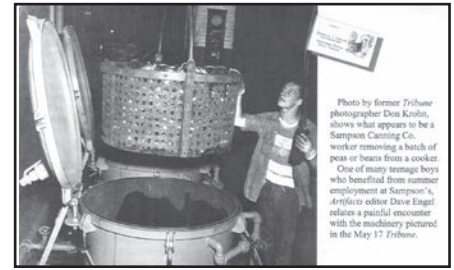
I worked for Northern Auto Supply when they were on Fourth Avenue. I drove the truck delivering parts that the salesmen sold a day or two before. I went to Adams, Rudolph, Nekoosa, Port Edwards and Arkdale. We delivered to some of the local stock car racers, too.

I drove a 1960 Ford Econoline pickup. It was a sort of cab-over-engine design that was revolutionary in those days. Not much metal between your feet and the outside world, though. Glad I never hit anything with it.

I worked for George Nimtz Buick when he was in the building on Eighth Street South now occupied by the Chevrolet dealer and for Clark Chevrolet in the Fourth Avenue building that the paper mill uses now. We became the first Toyota dealership in Wisconsin Rapids. And I worked for C&R Motors on West Grand, where Ironside GMC is now. We sold International trucks, GMC trucks, and Oldsmobiles. When Marilyn Brahmsteadt was Miss Wisconsin, we delivered her convertibles for Oldsmobile.

I held some "short term" summer jobs also. Remember Sampson Canning Company on First Street? I don't think I was ever so hot as I was

Sampson's  
Canning Co.  
from *Artifacts*  
Volume II #1,  
May 2004



working inside that place until I moved to Texas. The humidity in that place would make Florida proud. I even worked a few days in the pea fields. We used a machine but it was still hard outdoor work and I was introduced to many different kinds of snakes and rodents out there.

I worked for Jim Burns Potato Company, Almond, in the potato packaging area of the warehouse. We sorted potatoes by size and grade, and bagged them into 100-pound bags. I wasn't a real strong kid, but I bulked up a lot that summer dragging those bags off the bagger and loading them into the semis. The best part of working there was stopping at Meehan Station for a beer on the way home. That worked well until I had a little accident downtown and got my name and age (17) in the paper. Lucille from Meehan read the paper and was waiting at the door when I got there that day. I was "invited" to come back when I was 18, which fortunately was in just a couple of weeks.

I worked at Preway for about two weeks after high school operating a punch press making some metal gizmos out of a piece of flat steel, and then putting brands on stove doors for Sears, Wards, and other brands. I quit when they wanted me to join the union, because I didn't want to pay the dues.

I seldom worked one job at a time. I was a car guy, and as such, had a habit to feed.

Kit Marceil and I had a business called H&M Enterprises. We offered custom-made consoles for any car. They were popular with many guys who converted their column shift to floor shift and needed something to cover the hole in the floor.

We would build the console out of plywood and cover it with Consoweld scraps picked up behind the plant and Naugahyde-over-carpet padding. We did a lot of this work in the basement of Kit's dad's [Episcopal] church. We also did custom door panel upholstery to match the consoles. In addition, we operated a mail order speed shop and sold Hurst floor shift linkages, Sun tachometers, and Stewart Warner gauges.

Bill Hartley

## Montgomery Ward

The other day as I was driving through downtown Wisconsin Rapids, I noticed the “scenic” parking lot on West Grand that replaced the Wards building and started to reminisce uncontrollably.

When in high school, I worked for Montgomery Ward and spent a lot of time cleaning the rest rooms on the second floor. The ladies room was always the messier of the two.

I sold shoes during the peak hours, usually Friday nights. I worked for Lyman Johnson, father of Tom Johnson, LHS '63. He taught me how to measure the customer's foot and come up with the best-fit possible. He always said that they would come back and buy more if the shoe felt good. I also learned that some people's feet don't smell too good.

On Saturdays, I worked at the warehouse behind the Red Ball Café in the Obermeier Building on Fourth Avenue. All that was visible from the street was the loading dock on the side street.

There, I loaded a lot of big things into customer's cars. Nobody had an SUV then. It's amazing what you can fit into the trunk of a 1960 Chevy Impala.

We had a three-wheel Cushman motor scooter/truck that we drove between the warehouse and the store to haul smaller things. It was a blast to drive. It had the conventional motor scooter back end with a wooden box and two wheels on the front, and it had a steering wheel like a car.

Occasionally, I drove that scooter between the store and warehouse in Friday night traffic. In those days, downtown Rapids was very busy on Friday nights. You had to contend with the local shoppers, the rural folks who seldom came to town and the kids cruising Grand Avenue. Pretty frightening on a motor scooter that was one-fourth the size of the average 1960 Impala.

I remember the night a little girl did her “business” in one of the toilets that were on display in the back of the store near the mail order desk. Of course, being the clean-up engineer, I was

immediately called over to handle the “solid waste” situation before the smell became unbearable. She was sure proud of herself.

It was always exciting when the paint department guy dropped a gallon of freshly mixed paint. For some reason, he never dropped it until after it was mixed for the customer and the lid always came off when it hit the floor.

The sporting goods department was in the front of the store. They used to sell boats, motors, trailers, guns, bicycles and fishing equipment. Wards had their own brand names in those days. Remember the Airline, Hawthorne, Riverside and Sea King?

How about the “mail order” department? You could get anything you could imagine out of that two-inch thick catalog and it would be delivered right to the store for you to pick it up at your convenience. And you didn't have to pay for it until you got it. They had a special Christmas catalog full of great stuff like toys, bikes, and bathrobes. I got a BB gun from there once, but that's another story. I think it's still in the WRPD's property room along with John Zwicke's.

At one time, they sold furniture on the second floor. We had to move it up there on the old freight elevator located in the back of the store. I never did figure out why they put the heavy furniture up there when it would have been so much easier on us if we didn't have to move every piece upstairs and down at least twice.

The ladies fashion department was on the Second Avenue end of the store. I think a lady named Mary Ann ran it. We moved lots of huge boxes of clothing into the department from the trucks that arrived in the back alley almost daily. They must have sold a lot of dresses, coats, and pillbox hats, because we were always unloading boxes. I remember one time obtaining a mannequin arm and hanging it out of the trunk of the car while cruising through town. I doubt if anyone thought it was a real arm, but it generated some interesting comments anyway.



# More Light!



By Uncle Dave

Visiting with interview subjects in their homes, sometimes at night, the quest was always for more “available” light in order to avoid using a wash-out producing flash. The 35-mm film camera was opened to its widest aperture with the corresponding shutter at the lowest effective speed, often 1/30 second. A tripod was advised but not practical in real life situations so holding the camera steady was imperative.

The process of an interview was already cumbersome with no assistant available, the journalist meeting someone he’d not met before and likely would not see again, attempting to be both writer and photographer, trying to converse while taking notes, operating tape recorder, fooling with camera, film, lens, filters, sometimes managing a daughter or two, while perusing memorabilia, documents, photographs, snapshots, awards, albums, abstracts, articles and whatever else the subject brought to the kitchen table.

In view of the customary content of the resulting historical features, the most important subjects were old, even ancient, residents who usually extended a generous, gracious and trusting welcome to their world. In many cases, that universe meant the late 1800s or the early 1900s. At first, the reporter could only imagine a way into their memories but after a while was able to recognize familiar names and places, establishing rapport with those who had largely outlived their contemporaries.

Haste to reach those of the most advanced age proved fortunate. Almost every person pictured in this issue is deceased and died within ten years of their photo being shot. Not unexpected as some were old enough that their parents lived during the Civil War. They remembered when our town was called Grand Rapids

and a few were even born in Centralia. These were the parents of the greatest generation.

Photographs are historical documents preserving a spectrum of information about a moment in time. They are also artistic images, just as dedicated to the moment. Like any nimrod, the photographer awaits the climactic instant. When the best expression flits across a face and the light strikes both eyes, he trips the shutter and “Got’m!” The resulting photo captures the spirit of the subject.

Most of the portraits on the following pages were composed in the 1980s to accompany *River City Memoirs* stories in the *Daily Tribune*.

The Eighties were the golden age of the community of “River City” and of the genre of *River City Memoirs*. Full pages were devoted to historical features in the *Daily Tribune*, an inherently frugal institute that nevertheless

provided film, paper, darkroom and subsistence-level wages. For books, there was support from Consolidated Papers Foundation Inc., the South Wood County Historical Corp. and a populace unlikely to rise again to that level of interest and enlightenment.

*Thanks to C. Hank “Henry” Bruse, Museum volunteer and negative-scanning specialist.*

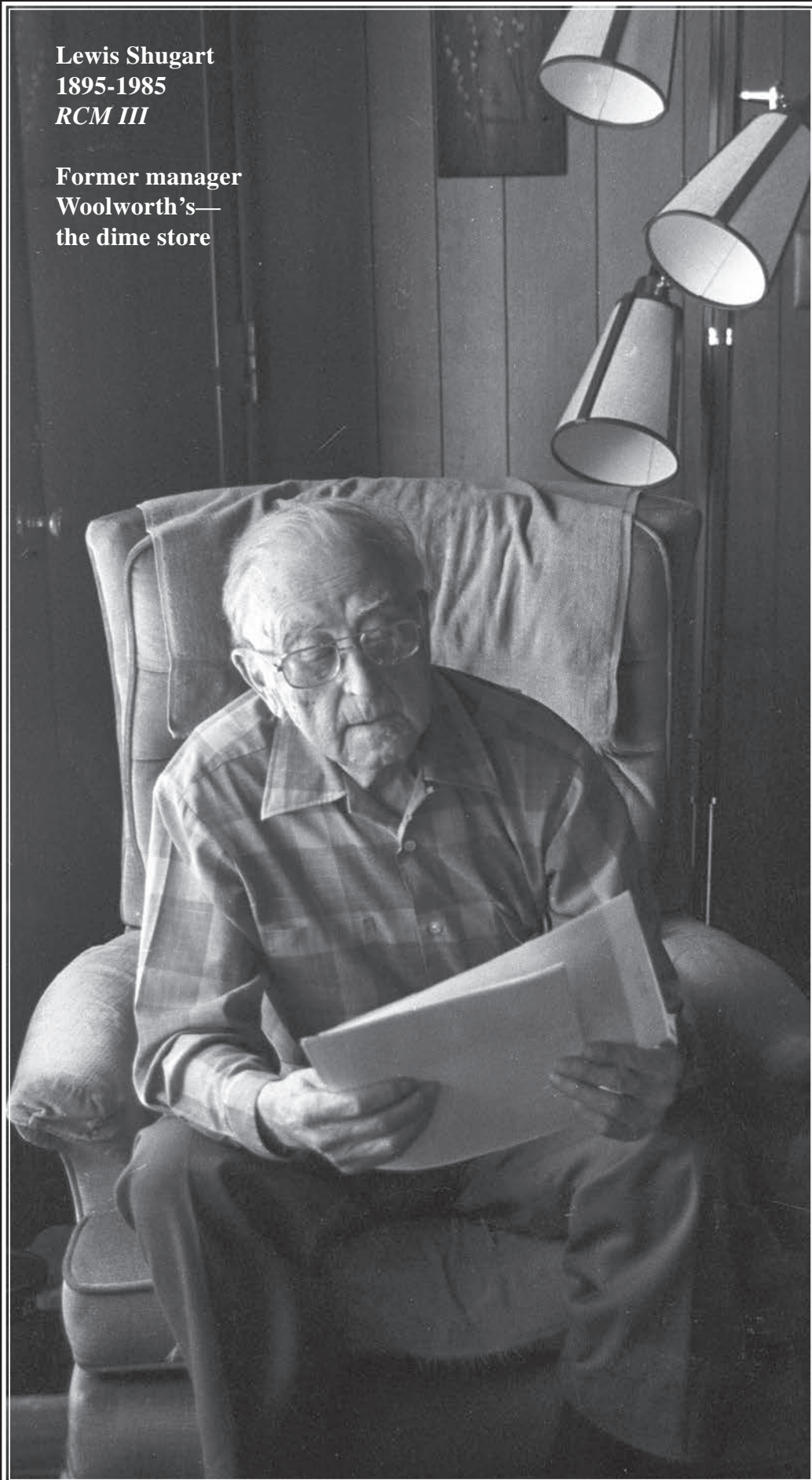
*Some of the birth and death dates provided for photographs were retrieved from online sources and may not be accurate. Corrections and additions are welcome.*



The Artistic Photographer

Lewis Shugart  
1895-1985  
*RCM III*

Former manager  
Woolworth's—  
the dime store





**Mary O'Day Miller 1905-2000**

Spoke lovingly of the Rapids Irish in *The Fat Memoirs*, 1988.



**Emma Moody Layton Harroun 1890-1991**

In Waukesha county, she smelled smoke from the 1894 Vesper fire. At Vesper and Arpin, her father ran saw mills. The Moodys lived in Plainfield, Wis., during the Dust Bowl era. Husband Bert Layton blew out stumps to clear the the Nepco Lake bed. *Fat Memoirs*

**Mabel Johnson, 1895-1993**

Sitting by the wood stove, her grandfather Johnson told the same old country Denmark stories over and over, so many times, that, after Grandpa died and was hauled on a lumber wagon to Pioneer Cemetery, she climbed up on top of the calf house and jumped up and down. She yelled at the top of her voice. She didn't have to be quiet any more! *RCMIII*



## Stanton Mead 1900-1988

## Three Meads

**Stanton Mead:** self-defined caretaker of Consolidated Papers, Inc., kept the company local. Broad generosity belied notorious frugality. Sometimes shy and somewhat eccentric, the reluctant subject claimed to the interviewer, "You know more than I do." His warm and realistic memories appear in *Fat Memoirs*.

**Emily Mead Bell:** Stanton's sister enjoyed recounting stories and provided some of the best material about the Mead family and the early days along Third Street. She was married in the Museum building when "Uncle Isaac" and "Aunt Charlotte" lived there and became a major supporter of the SWCHC.

**D. Richard Mead:** a cousin, represented the Rockford, Ill., family interests in Consolidated and related some of the long and colorful history of the Meads in Illinois.



D. Richard Mead 1899-1993

Emily Baldwin Bell 1905-1990



At "the Mead" hotel then owned by "the" Consolidated

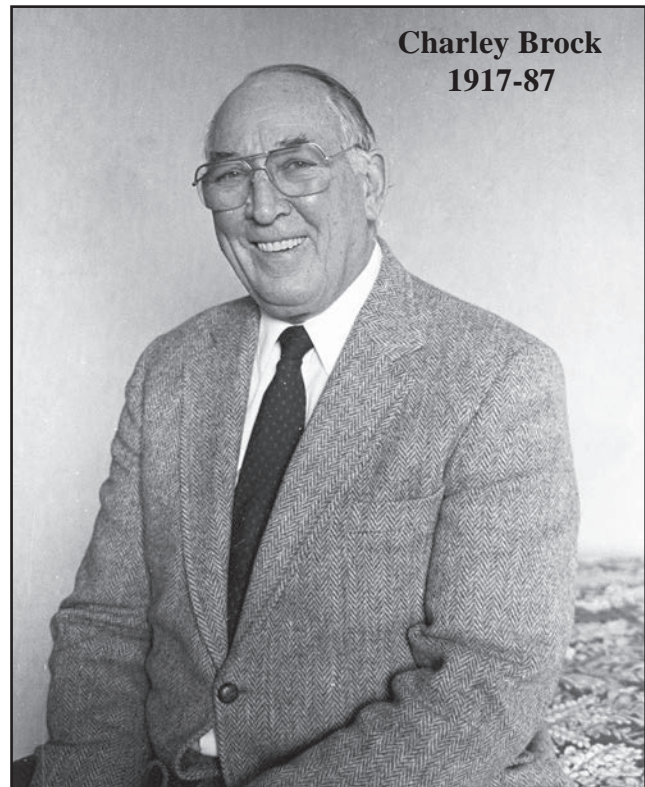


At home on the Island

## Semi-Famous



**Robert Gard**  
1910-92



**Charley Brock**  
1917-87

Above: Former Packer player atop a hotel bed in Green Bay. *RCM VI*

Left: The cultural maven shown in his Shorewood Hills home, Madison, Wis., provided the introduction to *River City Memoirs II* (1984) by saying, "Write it the way you want."

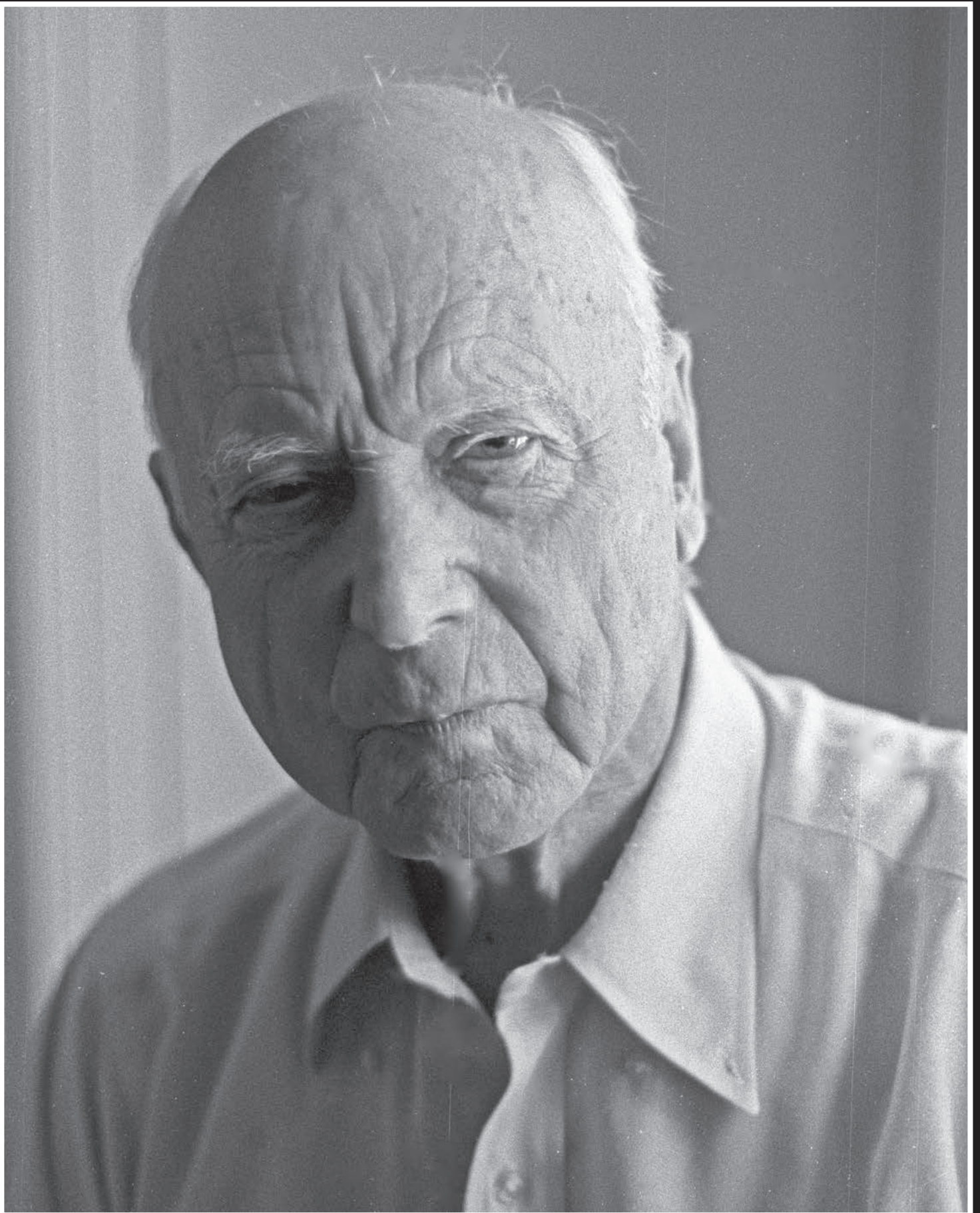
An account of her Rapids years with brother James, actor-to-be: in *Fat Memoirs*.

*"Mel" stayed at the Mead, sometimes with her niece and daughter of James: actress Tyne Daly*




**USAF Lt. Col. Mary Ellen Daly, 1917-2008**

Edmund Arpin 1894-1988



Took the photographer's daughters for a walk in a Neenah park along the Fox River. *Fat Memoirs*

## Clarence Brovald, 1886-1986



*"I think all night  
sometimes  
about all the  
good times,  
the things  
that came in,  
the people,  
all gone now,  
my first wife,  
the neighbors,  
the old folks,  
children and all,  
all gone,  
all these people  
I would like to see,  
all gone now."*

Was 97 and blind when interviewed for RCMII.

Judge Herbert A. Bunde, 1901-1998



Co-authored *Shanagolden: An Industrial Romance* with Dave Engel.

Joseph Hagen, 1896-1984



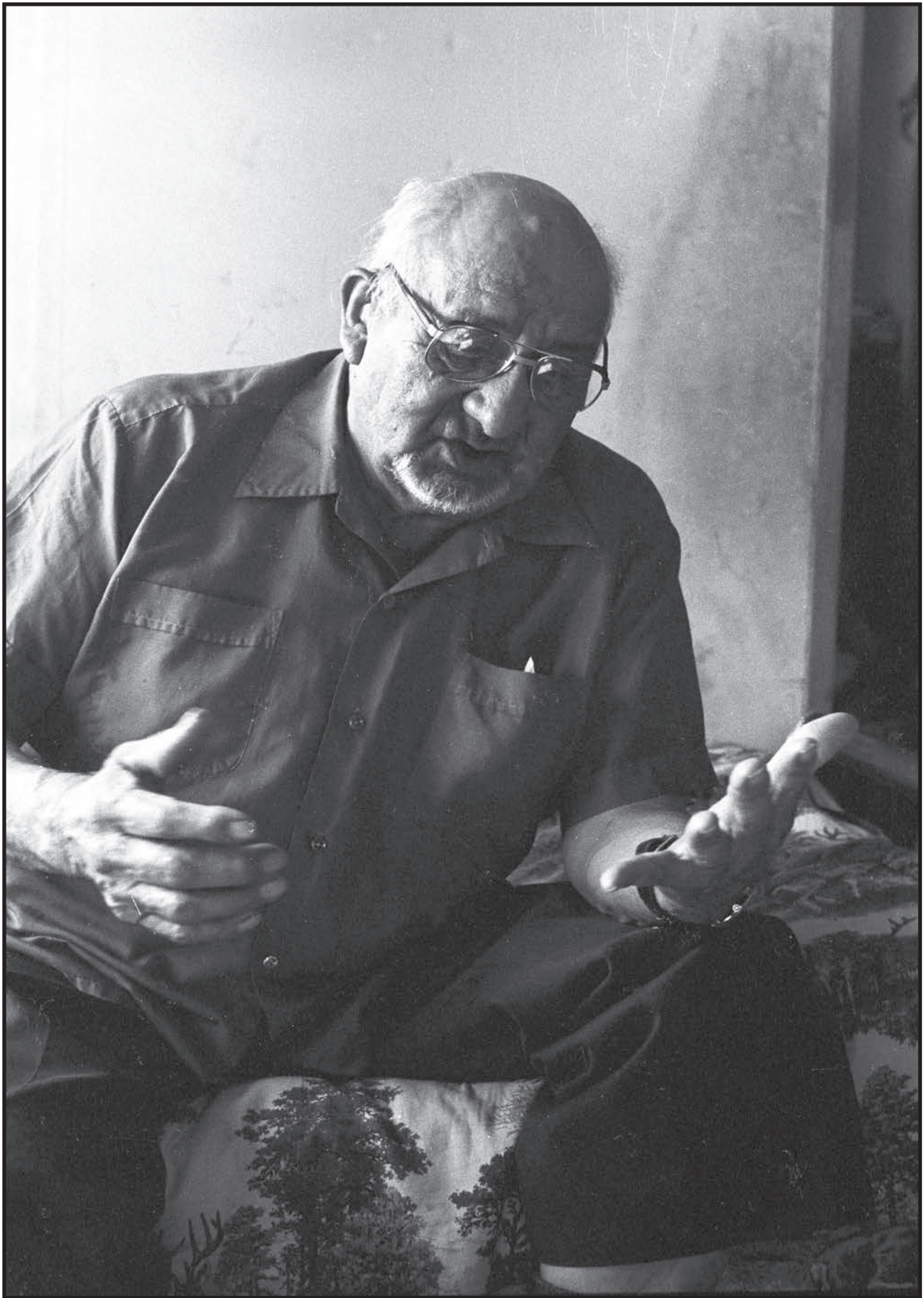
**William Hanifin 1923-2007**

Right: Produced intricate models of local buildings, both extant and extinct. At least one of his projects was donated to the SWCHC Museum. Wanted a definitive collection of his work housed in its own home.

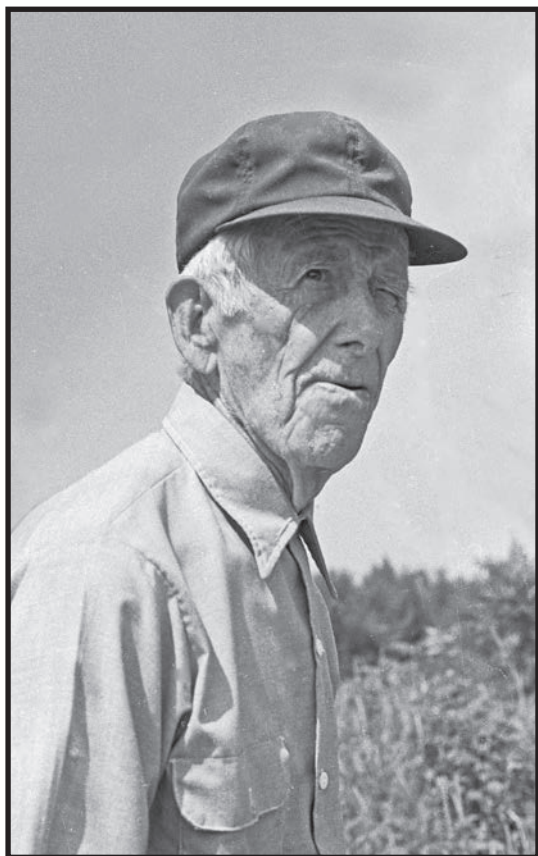
Below: Founder Father Wagner's right hand man at the Rudolph Grotto.

**Edmund Rybicki 1916-1991**

Edmund Lincoln 1905-1998



Native American, worked on cranberry marshes. *RCMI*



**Emmett Bean, Linwood, 1887-1990**  
**RCMI**

*"They came in here with the WPA and everybody got 50 cents an hour to pull gooseberries and I don't believe they pulled two bushes all day. There were guys sitting on stumps and lying all around."*

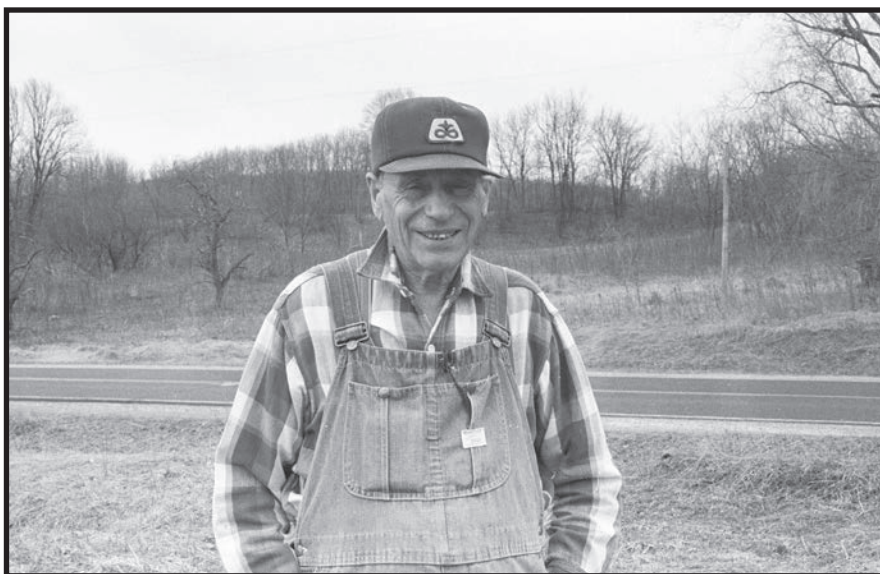
**Casper Huser 1891-1984** →

**George Huser 1888-1989**

At the Ruesch farm, the Switzers got together to dance in the bowery, a roofed platform among the trees. "We'd go there and give 'er hell. Saturday night, they'd all come out to Vesper. Andrew Bissig would play the accordion. We wouldn't have danced much if there hadn't been beer."

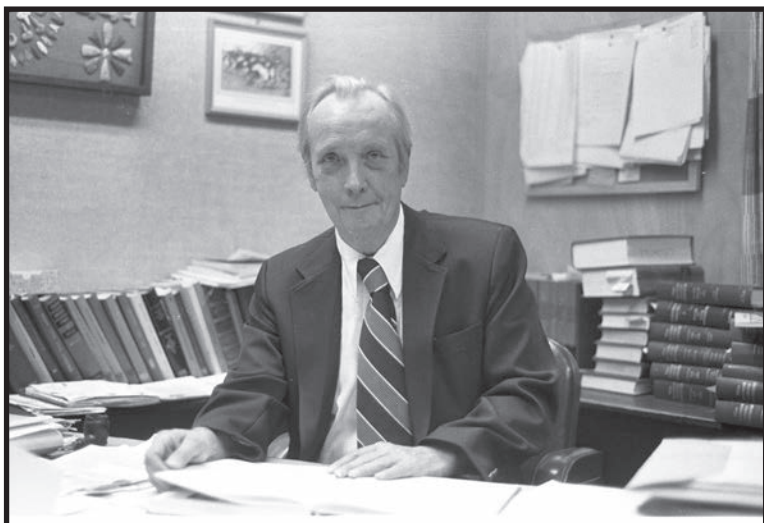
**RCMII**

St Joseph's Catholic church, Altdorf, Wis., background

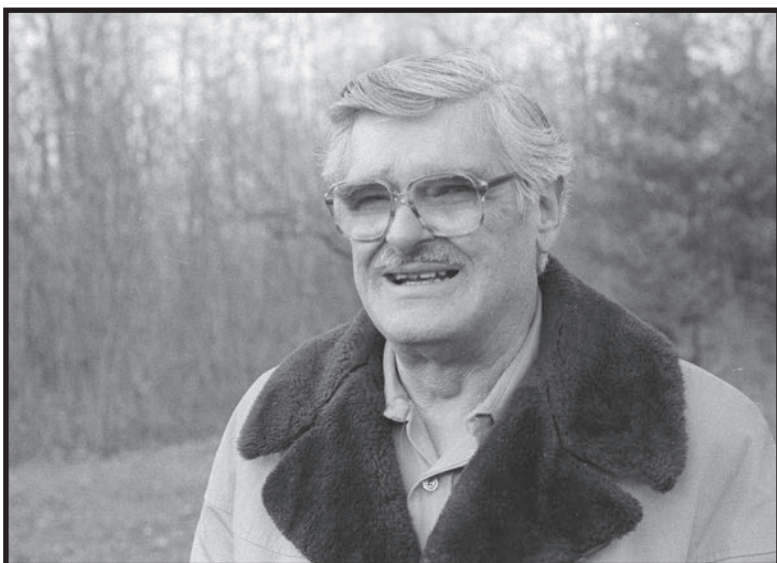


**Louis Grimm, 1902-1993, recalled Skunk Hill, RCM III**





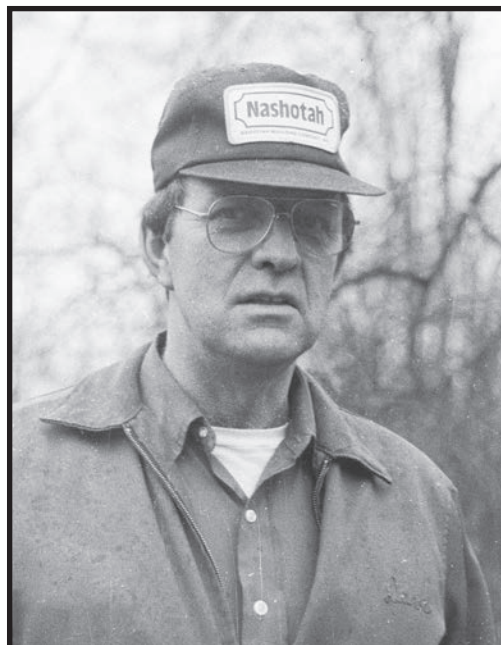
**Byron Crowns 1924-2004**



**Wally Ives 1922-2000**



**John Getzin 1941-1985**



**David Teske 1937-2007**

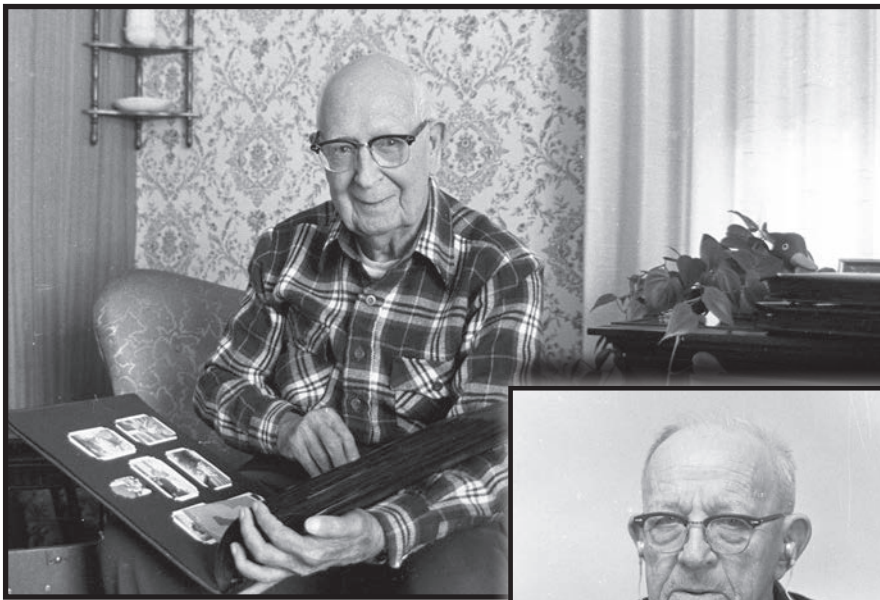
## Wakely Pioneers

Wally Ives, popular trumpet player, then president of SWCHC; David Teske, house builder and lumber yard owner; and Uncle Dave, founded Wakely Inn Preservation, Inc., in 1985. It is now Historic Point Basse.

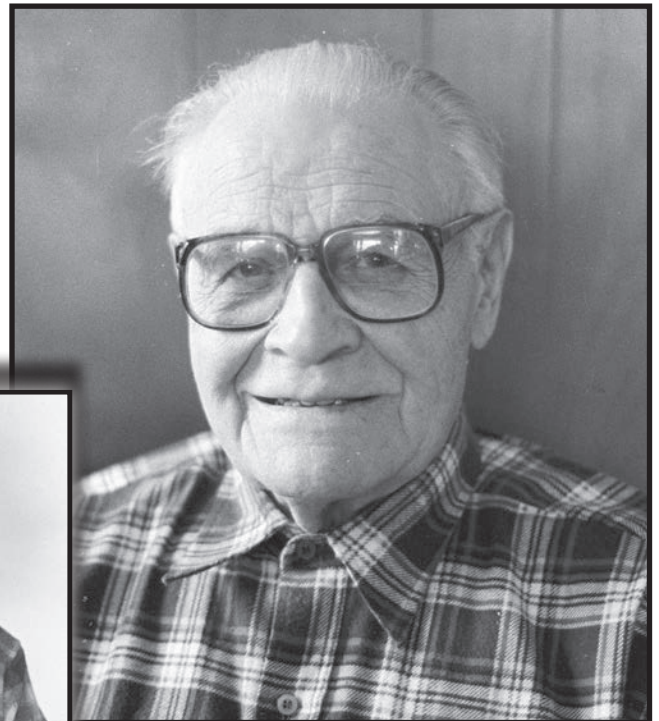
Byron Crowns, an attorney, contributed his services by drawing up the incorporation papers. Crowns is the author of the geology book, *Wisconsin Through 5 Billion Years of Change*.

Accountant John Getzin was just getting started with Wakely at the time of his sudden death.

## Plaid Flannel &amp; Horn Rims



**Arthur Gazely 1898-1987**



**Henry Becker 1900-1987**

**Peter Bymers 1896-1990** →



**Andrew Pluke 1890-1986**



**Fred Braun 1894-1989**

## Luella Teeters Copeland 1892-1993



*Babcock, Wis.: Raspberries and blackberries thrived but cranberries brought the best cash. Luella put a pan in front of her and crawled along on her knees, raking the berries off with her fingers. The men for the most part raked in water wearing hip boots. Many were Indians who were considered very skilled. In a day, you could pick a bushel that brought a 75-cent card to be turned in for cash.*

*RCMIII, 1985*

**Mabel Casper**  
1897-1992



## Visiting King

Veterans and their wives were interviewed in 1983 at Wisconsin Veterans Home, King, for the *Tribune* and *RCMII*.

**Louise Hansen LaBlond**  
1882-1983



↑ “I loved it in the Rapids. And I love the Polish people. We never missed a fish fry.”

**Walter Moscicki 1893-1985**

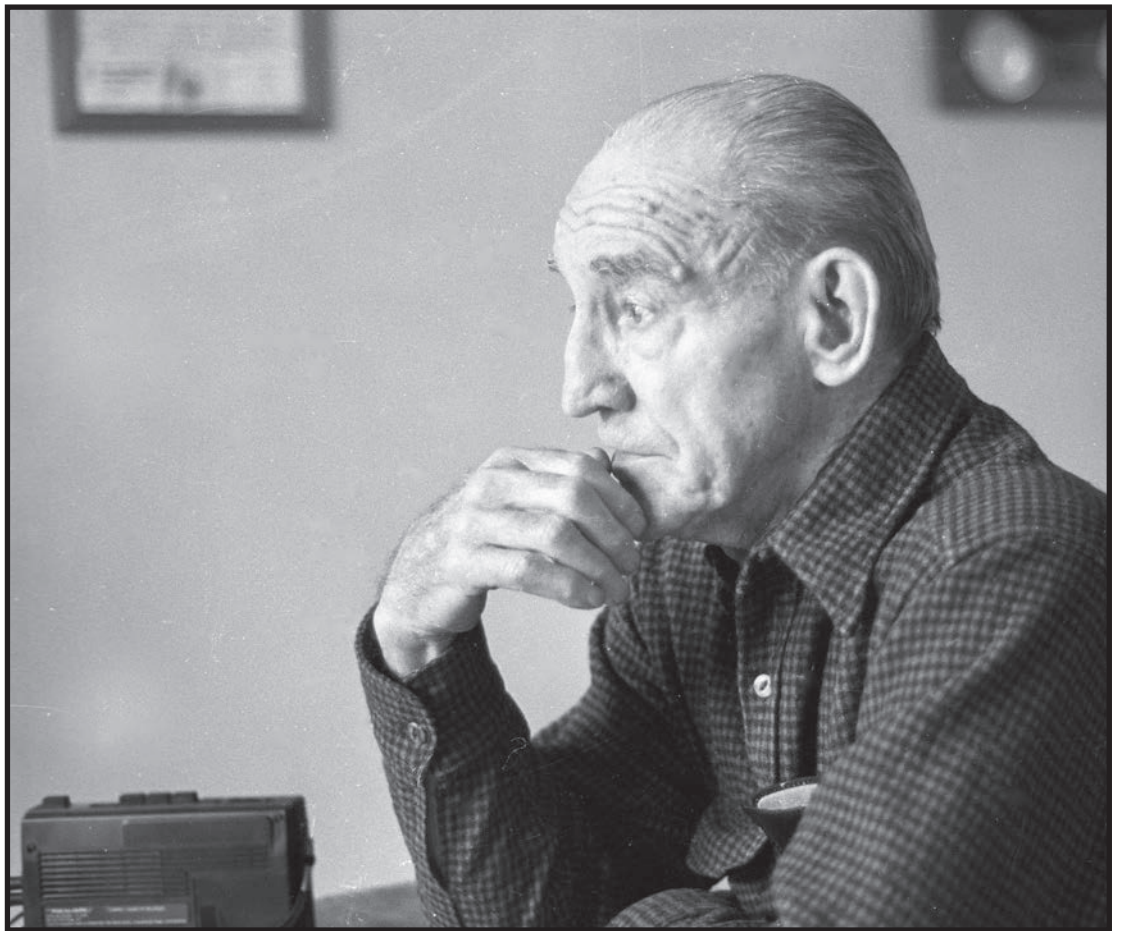
“Farming, struggling, hard work but so what?”

↑ “It was a nice town. When you go there now, you can hardly find your way. They surely had a lot of fun tearing that town up.”

After the armistice of Nov. 11, 1918, "The French had one of those old pianos pulled out onto the cobblestones. They were dancing and having a great time." Later, Gee landed on what was left of Omaha Beach after D-Day. To him fell the task of gathering the belongings of the dead and writing condolences back home...

*Fat Memoirs*

Note the interviewer's tape recorder →



**Grant Gee 1899-1989**



**Beatrice Klebesadel 1897-1989**

Bea was born in Centralia, Wis. Her parents, Nicholas and Adele White had come from New Brunswick, Canada, and associated here with residents named Marcoux, Rochelieu, Peltier and Lambert. "About once a month, a bunch of Frenchmen would gather at someone's house and all chew the rag in French," she said.

*Fat Memoirs*

## Broadcasting Memoirs

By Dave Engel, 2014  
For the *Daily Tribune*

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*.

Stake (LHS 1965), a former farm kid from west of town, retired in 2009, the year Strope died.

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.

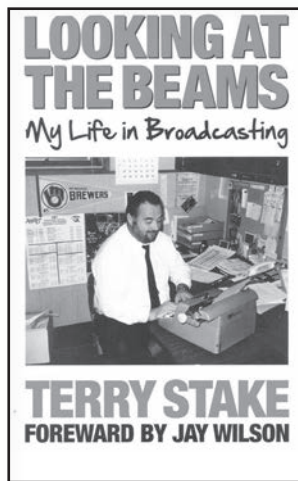
I met Stake in 1980 by the 10-cent Mountain Dew machine in the lunch room of the Tribune-WFHR building. He was already a media veteran, having wielded the mic since 1968.

"Arnie Strope gave me my first radio job," Stake related recently, even though the 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—one of the near-heroic commitments the profession demanded.

"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."

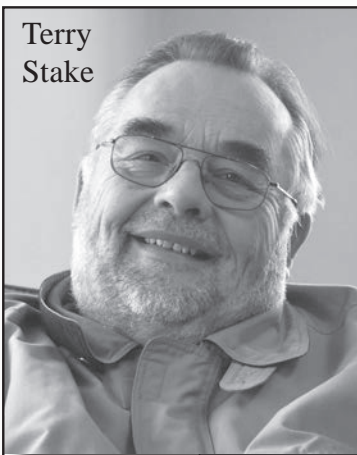
The most difficult situation came after his two premature daughters were born. Stake was about to go on the air when the phone rang—the hospital telling him a daughter had passed away.

"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 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.'"

*Order from lookingatthebeams.com for \$30.*



Terry  
Stake



Arnie Strope, 1922-2009, in Tribune/WFHR office

## Ellen Sabetta 1925-2013

At Cravings coffee house in Wisconsin Rapids, former curator Ellen Sabetta reviewed a 2008 issue of *Artifacts*.



←  
Attending the City Historian ceremony coinciding with the city's "birthday" party in 1983 were Kathryn Engel, Dave's sister; Sally Engel., his mother; and Ellen Sabetta, Museum Curator, right.

City Historian: Then columnist, photographer and author Dave Engel with Wisconsin Rapids mayor James Kubiak who proclaims the first and so far only "honorary" city historian.





**Gerald "Gene" Johnson**  
1928-2012

## POWS at the Airport

In 2002, Betty Cowley of Algoma, Wis., published a book, *Stalag Wisconsin*, that included a section about German prisoners of war (POWs) temporarily housed in Wisconsin during World War II. Of interest to my wife Irene and me were interviews by two of our 1946 classmates: Josie Staub Haasl [former contributor to *Artifacts*] and Char Sweeney Martinson.

Information about the use of POWs for laborers within the United States was censored during the war and records of the program were destroyed in 1950. It seems our nation was ashamed that we used POW labor, although both Germany and Japan used our POWs.

POWs had been quietly slipped into the camp at the Tri-City Airport in May 1945, to be used as "workers" since most local working age young men had been drafted into military service. As high school students, we were aware of this manpower shortage, when, in the summer of 1945, teenage high school boys were hired as railroad laborers. Irene's brother, Bob Bautz, was one of the youngsters who worked one summer on the railroad.

While the Cowley book calls the airport POW camp, "Wisconsin Rapids," the city limit ended just south of Riverview Hospital, and was defined by the Chicago and Northwestern railroad tracks that crossed the Wisconsin river and Third Street at what is now the Riverview Expressway and bridge. The field was about a mile and a third south, in the Village of Port Edwards and the Town of Grand Rapids, past what was then known as "Sand Hill."

In 1945, Sand Hill was aptly named, with a beautiful sandy slope down to the railroad tracks, extending all the way east from Third to Lincoln

Street. This slope was a favorite sled and ski slide for the kids in winter. At Lincoln Street, the huge auto salvage yard of Morris Wolcott held forth, walled off right down to the railroad tracks.

In 1945, living just up the hill from the hospital at 1850 Third Street, now the site of an apartment house, was Lincoln High School sophomore Vic Saeger, who a few years later was to become a fellow Biron CPI mill worker and lifetime friend.

Vic had two interesting interactions with the German prisoners of war.

During the canning season, manpower was needed at the Sampson Canning Co., a seasonal workplace located just north of the Consolidated Water Power and Paper Co. dam on First Street North across from S.S. Peter and Paul church. Although now radically altered, the base of this large brick and block building still stands today.

Getting the German prisoners to the canning company was accomplished by marching, or by Army truck. When the prisoners were marched, Vic remembers, about twenty POWs formed a double line and with guards hiked from the airport up Third Street through Wisconsin Rapids to the canning plant. This measures out to about two and three quarters miles. They marched back before dark.

In another remembrance, during the summer, Vic and his friends Johnny Bury, Everett, Dave and Harlan Henke, Joe and Harry Marceau and Harry Kedrowski, liked to swim in NEPCO Lake at the area called "The Pines."

The Pines, on the West shoreline, is a third of a mile north of the little NEPCO power house on the sheltered bay bordering County Trunk Z. Here the pretty little bay narrows to about two hundred feet from a land point that is now the Casey Cottage property. It was a nice place for the kids from Sand Hill to hang out and swim. [Written before recent lakeshore development.]

Now and then in the evening, guards marched some of the POWs a half mile down a single lane roadway at the back of the airport to the swimming site, kicked the kids out, and the German POWs swam there until dark.

Vic and his pals had to move up toward the head of the bay, a weedier and less desirable swimming hole. Strong swimmers among the POWs easily

crossed to the Casey Cottage point, a long way from the guards. This loose guarding situation was common to all facets of the airport “Stalag.”

The POW camp was the least of my concerns in 1945. We had just begun the school year in September, and this was my senior year in high school.

To West Side kids back in 1945 the “Tri-City Airport” was considered “way out” beyond the south east edge of town. Gasoline was rationed for civilian use and no new automobiles had been built for five years, so for a high school kid an automobile trip to the “way out” airport was a pretty big deal.

In the neighborhood in which we lived, there was only one set of wheels available to our gang of teenagers, the 1936 Plymouth owned by William Shegonee Sr., father of Ellsworth Shegonee, a member of our high school class and neighborhood gang of kids.

“Elsie” Shegonee was sometimes allowed the use of his dad’s car to run errands for their large family, and on rare occasions, when the limited gas ration would allow it, for Elsie’s personal recreation.

As I recall the incident, it was a weekend when we drove out to “see” the POW camp. Elsie was at the wheel of the Plymouth as we pulled up at the camp, only to find it blocked off, fenced and shielded so there was little to see.

The venerable Plymouth was parked. Bernie

Musch, Louis Roach, Elsie and I walked over to the guard shack to find a single military man, a sergeant in full summer suntan uniform, complete with helmet liner, web belt, holster and Army 45-caliber sidearm.

We asked numerous questions of our host, first concerning his army service, since he had a number of overseas ribbons, then quizzing him on the airport post, German prisoners, and the operation of the camp. He told us all the guards were veterans of the Pacific theater of the war, and no, we would not be allowed to go into the camp.

I asked “What would happen if we just ignored the gate and drove into the hangar area?” With a straight face, the sergeant replied, “I’d call in on the phone that a 1936 Plymouth just drove past with nine 45-caliber bullet holes in it.” We got the message!

In an interesting local aftermath to the German POW story, following the end of hostilities, one of the German prisoners of war came back. His last name was Schmidt and he was employed at Consolidated. He lived near Vic’s family and because Vic’s father Fred Saeger was fluent in the German language, Schmidt often visited the Saeger home.

Schmidt’s life in Wisconsin Rapids was kept at a very low key since he was learning English as a second language and the horrors of war were only a few years past.

A work shift of German prisoners at a prisoner of war camp marching to trucks to be conveyed to work at a Madison-area cannery. *Arthur Vinje, Wisconsin State Journal (WHS)*



William Parker

## National Guard in Wisconsin Rapids 1861-1919

*This is the start of a history of the National Guard in Wisconsin Rapids. Next up will follow the 120th Field Artillery through the inter-war period and World War II. I would like to thank Brig. Gen. Mark Anderson, Wisconsin National Guard; Maj. Gary Hildebrandt, 120th Field Artillery, Wisconsin Rapids National Guard Armory; and Capt. Paul Cussick, Wisconsin National Guard Engineers for providing information pertaining to the Wisconsin National Guard in Wisconsin Rapids and the National Guard Armory here.*

...WP

The Wisconsin Rapids National Guard can trace its roots back to the American Civil War with the formation of Company D, 5th Wisconsin Infantry; Company G, 7th Wisconsin Infantry; Company G, 12th Wisconsin Infantry; and Company G, 18th Wisconsin Infantry.

But the unit that would come to form the true backbone of the National Guard in Wisconsin Rapids in the ensuing years was the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry—although they were not originally formed in Wisconsin Rapids but out of the Ripon and Kenosha areas of Wisconsin. The 1st Wisconsin Cavalry was famous for the capture of Confederate President Jefferson Davis at the end of the Civil War.

After the Civil War and the many different reorganizations of the National Guard in Wisconsin, Troop G of the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry came to be stationed in Wisconsin Rapids. This time period in our history was relatively quiet, filled with many periods of drill and visitations of many state GAR encampments.

With the start of the Spanish-American War in April 1898, the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry offered its service to President McKinley but was declined for the reason that it was thought the regular Army Cavalry would be sufficient. In June 1898, the National Guard units in Wisconsin not yet called up for service in the Spanish-American War were ordered to Oshkosh to suppress riots that had broken out due to the woodwork-

ers strike. The troop was on duty for eight days, guarding lumber mills and the city of Oshkosh.

Periods of drill would go on at home till 1916 when the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry was called up for duty in Texas because of trouble with Mexico and Pancho Villa.

Still in Texas when World War I broke out, the National Guard units of Wisconsin and Michigan were brought together to become the 32nd Division and, with the federalization of the 1st Wisconsin Cavalry, came a new designation: 120th Field Artillery Regiment.

The 120th Field Artillery continued to train at Camp MacArthur, Texas, till February 1918 when it shipped out for Europe and the war.

Once in France, the 120th Field Artillery were equipped with French 75-mm field guns and trained with them at Camp De Coetquidan, Brittany, an old French artillery school.

In World War I, the 32nd Division would distinguish itself in the second Battle of the Marne, the Aisne offensive and finally the Meuse-Argonne offensive.

At Meuse-Argonne would be the 32nd Division's crowning achievement. Leading the way as part of the 3rd US Army, it was the first division to break through the Hindenburg line of defense and the first American unit to step foot on German soil while the 120th field artillery provided the Artillery support to the division.



It was during this time that, to build division morale and to identify which soldiers belonged to which unit, a distinctive division insignia was created, a simple red arrow piercing a line, signifying that it broke through every defensive line put in front of it.

Also during this time, the 32nd division was given the nickname “Les Terribles” by the French for the way it cleared out German defensive positions and for the number of dead and

wounded, having suffered 13,261 casualties, 2,250 killed in action and over 800 officers and enlisted men decorated for bravery in battle.

In 1919, the 32nd division was returned home and deactivated at Camp Grant near Rockford, Ill.

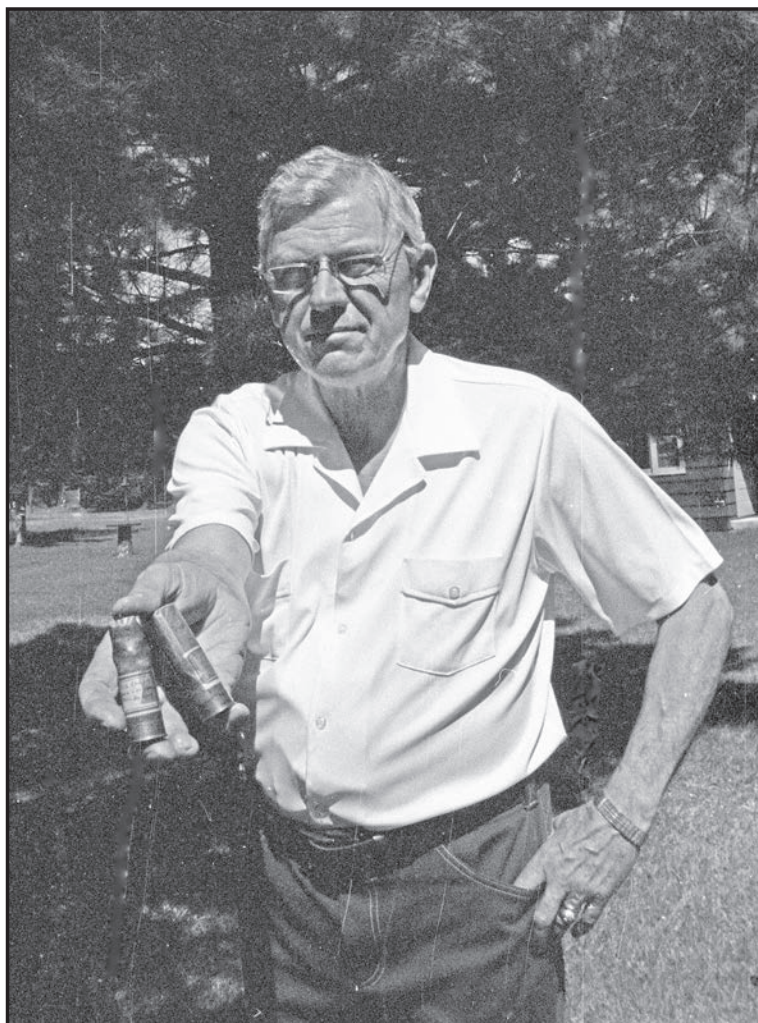
Although it was “Troop G, 1st Wisconsin Cavalry” that left in 1916, they returned that summer of 1919 as “Battery E, 120th Field Artillery Regiment.” From then on, the 120th would call Wisconsin Rapids home.

## Coincidence

When our youthful military historian, William Parker said, “You took a picture of my grandpa,” I was able to reply with some astonishment: “I just saw that negative.”

Indeed, I had wondered who the fair-haired gent was, immortalized among the *Daily Tribune* negatives scanned by volunteer SWCHC media specialist Henry Bruse. He was holding two used shotgun shells that I recalled he had said were evidence from the 1879 trial of W.H. Cochran for the main street murder of his wife’s lover, Judge Henry Hayden.

Grandpa Voight, said Parker, owned and operated Bee Line alignment. He was also a muzzle loader aficionado which could account for his interest in historical munitions.



**William Voight Sr. 1923-2001**

...UD

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### **Chester Reimer 1905-1994**



Long time tender, #1 paper machine, Biron, 1983 photo by Dave Engel, part of 10 year *Artifacts* commemoration. Story in *River City Memoirs II*.