

RAMSEY COUNTY
History
A Publication of the Ramsey County Historical Society

Colorful, Contentious —
St. Paul's 100-Year-Old
Neighborhood Press

Page 13

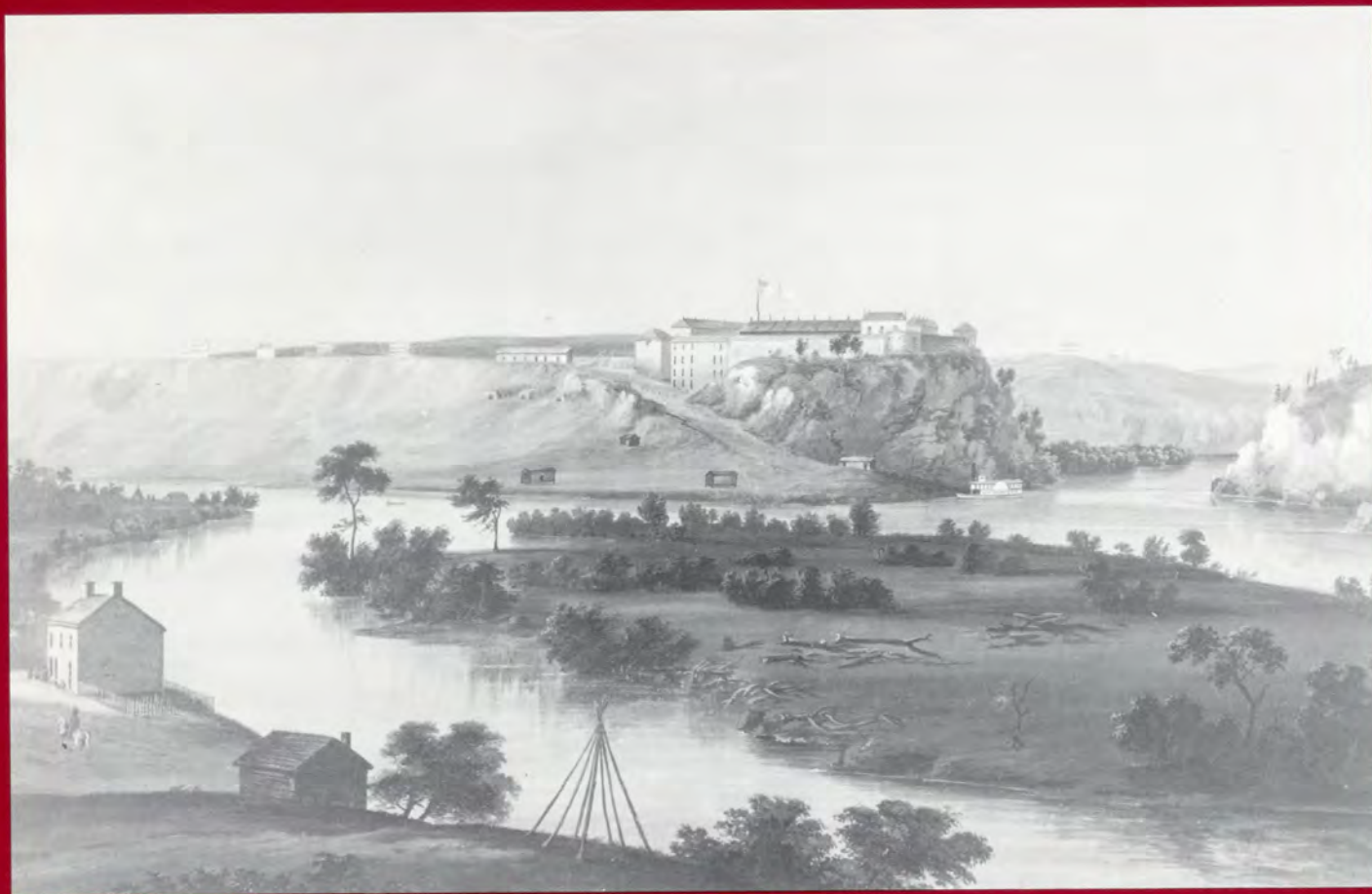
Summer, 1993

Volume 28, Number 2

Birth, Death, Reincarnation

The Story of Fort Snelling and Its State Park

Page 4



Old Fort Snelling in 1844. This water color and gouache painting by John Casper Wild shows the fort a few years before Minnesota became a territory. The many pitfalls in the effort to save, restore and rebuild the fort and create Fort Snelling State Park are described by an active participant, in the article beginning on page 4. Minnesota Historical Society photograph of the original painting, which is in its collection.

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RAMSEY COUNTY History

Volume 28, Number 2

Summer, 1993

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A Message from the Editorial Board

In the past several months the Editorial Board has received requests to reprint articles published in back issues of *Ramsey County History*. This recognition of the editorial strength of our magazine is very gratifying to all members of the Ramsey County Historical Society.

The Editorial Board wants our readers to know that we respond promptly to these requests. We can sometimes provide additional copies of a particular issue when there is enough lead time involved in the request. The cost of reprinting or purchasing additional copies depends on the nature of the request.

While the Editorial Board wants to encourage a wide dissemination of our editorial material, we also are obliged to remind our readers that the magazine is copyrighted by the Society and under current copyright law cannot be photocopied and distributed without our permission.

—John M. Lindley, chairman, Editorial Board

Colorful, Sometimes Contentious — St. Paul's 100-Year-Old Neighborhood Press

Jane McClure

They land on your step—or in your bushes—like clockwork, with all of the news of your neighborhood on their pages. Be it an update on a St. Paul City Council decision, an announcement of an award winner or a reminder to put out your recycling, the information in St. Paul's fourteen neighborhood newspapers is must reading for many city residents. It is believed that the Twin Cities are home to the largest group of urban neighborhood newspapers in the country. Almost forty neighborhood newspapers are published in St. Paul and Minneapolis.

The Neighborhood and Community Press Association (formerly the Neighborhood Press Association) is thought to be the oldest and largest urban "small newspaper" organization of its kind in the United States. The group got its start at a 1974 meeting of Minneapolis and St. Paul community activists, when volunteers from several neighborhood newspapers got together to share concerns.

One of those activists was a young man named Jim Scheibel, who was then active on St. Paul's West Side. Scheibel is given much of the credit for helping start the Twin Cities Community Press Association, which was launched in August of 1975. (The name Neighborhood Press Association was adopted in 1978, and the name changed to Neighborhood and Community Press Association in 1992.)

The impetus to form the Neighborhood Press Association arose from a grant obtained by the Minneapolis Communication Center. Grant funds had been earmarked to help neighborhood newspapers with a variety of services and to get the newspapers in St. Paul and Minneapolis to work together. Representatives of five newspapers met on November 16, 1978, to sign the bylaws and create the NPA. The lone St. Paul newspaper represented at the signing was the *Frogtown Forum*.

Almost a year later, the NPA held its first membership conference. The *West Side/West St. Paul Voice* volunteers and staff used a grant from the West Side Citizens Organization (District 3 Planning Council) to hold the conference. Spring and fall conferences are still sponsored by the NCPA, with the spring event held in Minneapolis and the fall event held in St. Paul. The organization, which is run by a volunteer board of directors, has published a membership directory and conducts a variety of projects for its membership.

Most of the St. Paul neighborhood newspapers that land on doorsteps or in mailboxes throughout the city are relative youngsters, predating the NCPA by just a few years. The oldest newspaper currently published, the *Highland Villager*, got its start in 1952. The "newest" newspaper is the *Frogtown Forum*, which resumed publication in 1989 after a four-year hiatus.

Many of the current group of St. Paul neighborhood newspapers got their start more than twenty years ago, through urban revitalization programs such as the Model Cities effort. Others began as outreach programs by community groups, organizations and social services agencies. The *West Side Voice* had its roots in a Neighborhood House community newsletter, and drew early assistance from Ramsey Action Program and city youth employment programs. The *Voice* board of director's first convenor was Scheibel, who also helped start the *Sunrise* newspaper on the city's East Side in 1977.

Other newspapers have ties to district planning councils, and the neighborhood improvement groups that predate the current council system. The *Community Reporter*, the newspaper covering the neighborhoods around West Seventh Street, got its start through the West Seventh Fort Road Federation. The

Community Reporter is now an independent neighborhood organization, with a volunteer board and contributors. *District One News* began as a news organ for the District One Planning Council, and continues to fill that role today.

The Eastsider, which ceased publication in the spring of 1991 after more than twenty years, began as a volunteer project of the Phalen Area Council, a group that also sponsored a food shelf, home-delivered meals for shut-ins and other programs. *The Eastsider*, which boasted a veritable Who's Who on the East Side in its articles and advertisements, was one of the city's most loved neighborhood newspapers. Although there were many protests in the neighborhood when *The Eastsider* volunteers decided to step down, the group was showered with accolades and best wishes when the final issue was published. Long-time editor Marlyn Trevino and her assistant, Polly Hecht, whimsically filled their front page with quotes about "the end" and why "parting is such sweet sorrow" when preparing the last issue.

The Eastsider was largely a volunteer effort, as are about one-third of the city's current neighborhood newspapers. Some papers have minimally paid staff, while others rely on a combination of full-time staff and freelance contributors. In fact, a look at today's NCPA membership shows privately owned, for-profit newspapers; community-based non-profits that are independent of other organizations, and community based non-profit newspapers that are affiliated with a specific neighborhood group. What virtually all of the newspapers share is home delivery, either by mail or carrier, and a strong commitment to the news of a particular neighborhood or neighborhoods.

But neighborhood newspapers are nothing new in St. Paul. In fact, newspapers with a St. Paul "neighborhood" fo-

cus actually date back more than 100 years. As the young city expanded beyond its downtown area, and distinct communities took shape inside and outside of its boundaries, small, neighborhood-based newspapers sprang up. Then, as they do now, neighborhood newspapers filled a news niche that the daily newspapers had neglected. In the 1880s and 1890s, some of the Minneapolis and St. Paul daily newspapers did run news columns about the goings-on in outlying neighborhoods. Correspondents faithfully filed reports on which Hamline residents had motored to Red Wing, and where the young ladies of Hazel Park would be teaching country school in the fall. But as the ranks of daily newspapers dwindled, and the focus of their news pages changed, neighborhood news became less of a priority.

That's when small, neighborhood-based newspapers stepped in. Some of the earliest neighborhood newspapers popped up in the 1880s, in the East Side, West Side and Midway neighborhoods. By the end of that decade, more than a dozen neighborhood newspapers had hit the streets. These newspapers joined a growing group of world language newspapers, which date back as far as 1855 with the publication of *Die Minnesota Deutsche Zeitung*, a German language weekly. Most of St. Paul's enduring foreign language publications were in German, and the Scandinavian languages. These newspapers tended to merge frequently. *Svenska Amerikanska Posten*, a Swedish newspaper, got its start in 1891. It absorbed the *Svenska Folkets Tidning*, before its own takeover by *Svenska Amerikaneran Tribunen*.

St. Paul has also been home to newspapers published in French, Swedish, Norwegian, Polish and other languages over the years, with a German newspaper, *Der Wanderer*, and various Southeast Asian language-English newspapers published today.

St. Paul has had an African-American press, with at least two newspapers published in the 1870s and 1880s before the *Western Appeal* came on the scene in 1885. Historian Earl Spangler, in his book, *The Negro in Minnesota*, cites a mention of the *St. Paul Review* in an 1880 Minneapolis newspaper, and an earlier version of the *Western Appeal* in an 1876 St. Paul news-

paper.

Although St. Paul is thought of as a predominantly Irish community, it's worth noting that only a few newspapers serving that population were ever published here. The *Northwestern Celt* and the *Irish Times* began publishing in 1872, with both disappearing from the scene after a few years. Many of these early neighborhood and world newspapers were published for only a few years. While the early foreign language newspapers, with their sometimes outmoded words and phrases, can be confusing to readers today, some neighborhood newspapers can also be puzzling. Would younger residents know that the *St. Anthony Hill Graphic* (1888-91) covered the areas known today as Cathedral Hill and Ramsey Hill?

One of the worst cases of newspaper name confusion occurs on St. Paul's West Side. During the 1880s, the West Side boasted a Sunday newspaper, the *West Side Reading Room*, and various weekly newspapers. One weekly, founded in 1887, was the *West St. Paul Times*. All references in the newspaper's pages to "West St. Paul" are actually references to people, places and happenings on St. Paul's West Side.

While it is true that the West Side is located on what once was the site of the original City of West St. Paul, that city ceased to function in 1862—long before the newspaper came onto the scene. The area was annexed to the City of St. Paul in 1874, thirteen years before the *West St. Paul Times* began publishing. The *Times*, which was published until the late 1930s, always referred to the current City of West St. Paul as "West St. Paul Township"—even though the township had been legally incorporated as a city since 1889.

Some St. Paul neighborhoods received their earliest news coverage from newspapers outside of the city. Early newspapers in the Washington County communities of Newport and St. Paul Park often included news columns from St. Paul's Highwood neighborhood.

To some extent, the growth and development of a St. Paul neighborhood can be measured by the first signs of a neighborhood newspaper there. During the boom days of the 1880s, when the Midway neighborhood was proudly touted as the

hub of the entire Twin Cities, and even discussed as the center for a merged Minneapolis-St. Paul, that part of the city became home to the colorful *Midway News*.

Most of St. Paul's neighborhood newspaper editors, from yesterday and today, cannot be accused of bashful behavior. One of the most prolific and provocative editors was E.A. "Ed" Paradis, publisher and editor of the *Midway News*. That paper, which got its start in 1888, was published in the young community of Merriam Park. (Those who consider Merriam Park and the Midway areas distinct neighborhoods today might be surprised to learn that early city promotional maps for the western part of St. Paul lumped everything from Summit Avenue to the northern city limits into "Midway.")

Paradis made a splash in March of 1881 with *The Word*, "a biweekly journal of social, political and moral freedom." Just weeks after *The Word* began publishing, Paradis launched the *Midway News*. The little newspaper was a veritable mouse that roared, tweaking the downtown interests, the City Council, state politicians and others in authority on a wide range of issues. Paradis' avid interest in St. Paul affairs carried through to the pages of his newspaper.

For example: "There is, perhaps, no question of local interest more frequently discussed, and with less results, than that relating to the street railway improvements."

—*Midway News*, June 8, 1890

Of all of his causes and battles, none stands out more today than an ongoing dispute over expansion of the streetcar system. Paradis was deeply suspicious of those who sought to replace horse-drawn transportation with new-fangled streetcars. In his August 11, 1888, issue, Paradis announced "Rapid Transit Dead." The Enos Electric Elevated Railway Company, which had sought rights to build and operate an elevated railway between St. Paul and Minneapolis, had been rejected by officials in both cities. (It seems one cannot accuse the Enos company of not trying—Paradis reported that one of the St. Paul City Council members had been offered \$100 for his favorable vote on the matter.)

"From all appearances, the Enos Company will never be allowed to lumber up the streets of this city with its machinery . . ." the *Midway News* stated. While admitting that rapid transit may be needed for the Midway, Paradis added that the city should wait "until a thoroughly respectable company takes hold of the enterprise." But was that company the Twin City Rapid Transit Company? While some neighborhood residents and influential members of the community (including Archbishop John Ireland) welcomed the prospect of light rail connecting downtown St. Paul with its western neighborhoods, Paradis was skeptical. Work on streetcar line extensions along Randolph, Grand and Selby avenues proceeded slowly. Negotiations for rights to property were often tangled. An aborted streetcar construction workers' strike compounded the problems, as the men's efforts to receive a daily wage of \$1.75 and free transportation to and from work sites were rebuffed by company ownership. Noting the failure of the strike, Paradis stated that it "again (*sic*) demonstrates the necessity of organization among all classes of working people."

In the *Midway News*' area, plans to extend the Selby Avenue streetcar line into Merriam Park prompted considerable hostility among neighbors. Assessments of a few dollars, which sound modest today, had the citizenry up in arms. One sticking point in the debate was the high price tag of \$90,000 estimated to bridge the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad's Short Line tracks for a Selby Avenue streetcar crossing. Paradis used his news columns to argue that poorer homeowners in the neighborhood didn't want the streetcar line, and wouldn't benefit from it. He also pointed out that construction of the Grand Avenue streetcar line had resulted in "a great increase in values" along that street.

"Let those who have ordered this bridge constructed get out of their own bad scrape the best way that they can; they cannot force the taxpayers to build bridges for the railroad corporation and hold their job," Paradis wrote in the June 5, 1890, *Midway News*. He called for moving the streetcar line to Rondo Avenue or even as far north as Minnehaha Avenue. And in subsequent editions, he sarcastically referred to the



EASTSIDER

a publication of the Phalen Area Community Council

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The *Eastsider's* last issue. Below, former editor Bill Godwin, editor Marlyn Trevino and her assistant, Polly Hecht, inspect their final edition. Photograph and newspaper excerpt from the *Eastside Review*.



bridge as a "present" to streetcar company president Thomas Lowry.

Paradis also rapped those who circulated a petition asking that the assessments be reduced. "We don't know who drafted the petition," his July 12, 1890, article stated, "but it shows a rare spirit of submission to the assessment-levying powers of the city authorities." The newspaper derided a second petition, calling for an at-grade crossing instead. "It has been said that men would sign their own death warrants if presented in the form of a petition and it seems true," Paradis wrote.

The lively fight continued, with citizen protests at public meetings and even a short-lived neighborhood attempt at legal action. Paradis continued to thunder against the project, claiming it was "ordered for the sole benefit of the city street railway company." But the fight eventually was lost, and the streetcar line expansion moved forward. The bridge was built. Paradis criticized the bridge as an "immense" structure, adding that "Sensible people who go out on the premises and look at the situation pronounce it absurd

that such a structure should be imposed even upon the city, let alone a few individual property owners." And when the streetcar line began operation, the pages of the *Midway News* included a comment about the "strange people" it brought to Merriam Park.

The *Midway News* under Paradis lasted less than a decade. The streetcar system it fought hung on into the 1950s. And the bridge? Built in 1890, it was placed on the National Register of Historic Places almost 100 years later. It was closed to motorized traffic in 1989, and eventually torn down to make way for a new structure.

Paradis was part of a group of newspaper editors and publishers, mostly male, whose names seemed to appear in several newspapers in a region or state. These were the days of itinerant printers, who moved from community to community in search of employment, starting up newspapers when times were good and closing the doors when money was tight. In those days, most newspaper editors and publishers had barely finished high school, let alone college. Many began their newspaper careers as printer's devils and copy boys. (Few women were employed in the field.)

Many of the early newspapers were published out of small printing businesses, which also did up business cards, handbills, fliers, stationery and other paper goods. Some sold school supplies, books or other goods to help pay the bills. Typical of those newspaper workers was M.G. "Mike" Mueller, who edited and published newspapers in St. Paul and Washington County. Born in Waseca in 1884, Mueller and his family moved to Montevideo during his childhood. He worked at a Montevideo newspaper until the family moved to Austin. There he worked for the *Austin Transcript* while still in high school.



Mike and Bertha Mueller in their Franklin car. Newport Historical Society photograph.

When the Mueller family moved to rural Grey Cloud Island Township in 1902, their newspapering son began publishing the *Grey Cloud Progress*. Mueller published that newspaper for four years, before moving to St. Paul and a job at H.L. Collins Printers. In 1911, Mueller went back to the newsroom, working at the *North Central Progress* newspaper on Rice Street. That plant also served as home to the *East Side Journal*, one of more than a dozen newspapers that has covered that part of St. Paul. He and his friend Harry Bangert put out the two newspapers, covering the events of the day and the all-important social items that readers hungered for.

In the 1920s, Mueller disposed of his St. Paul newspaper interests, and moved to Newport. Mueller's partner in the *North Central Progress* and *East Side Journal*, Harry Bangert, went on to become automotive editor for the *Seattle Daily Star*. While in Newport, Mueller published a small twice-monthly newspaper, *Community Life*. *Community Life* and Mueller's side businesses, the Franklin Press and U.S. Stationery Company, shared a building with the Newport Sweet Shop, a confectionary owned by Mueller's wife.

When Mueller died of complications of influenza in 1931, newspaper colleagues

from around the state mourned. Old friend and St. Paul mayor Larry C. Hodgson, "Larry Ho" to his newspaper readers, called Mueller's passing "a public calamity." Mueller's wife and other women of Newport kept the paper alive for several months, but *Community Life* then folded. It would not be the only small paper to meet its end in this era.

In the 1930s and 1940s, the ranks of St. Paul's neighborhood newspapers dwindled. Changes in printing technology, increased competition from daily newspapers as well as radio and tight economic times took a toll. The *East Side News*, the *East Side Tribune*, the *East Side Daily*, the *North Central Progress*, the *West St. Paul Times*, the *Hamline Tribune* and the latest incarnation of the *Midway News* are just a few of the newspapers that reached their zenith and ceased publication.

Like their neighborhood newspaper counterparts, community newspapers also suffered a decline in the early and mid-twentieth century. The drive to "Americanize" immigrants and discourage the use of languages other than English was a key factor in the demise of many. World War I and World War II also made an impact, especially on St. Paul's once-thriving German press. *Der Wanderer* began moving to a mix of German and English language sto-

ries in the 1950s. But at a time when other neighborhood newspapers were fading away, a few visionaries were anticipating a time when neighborhood newspapers would be a necessity. Thus was born the *Highland Villager*, the oldest of today's publications.

The young publishers of a fledging neighborhood newspaper had a can't-miss idea for a sales promotion. It was December, 1952, and Christmas was coming. Why not invite area residents to get into the holiday spirit, and hold a contest for the house with the nicest display of Christmas lights and decorations? It would be a great opportunity for some goodwill and good publicity, with the merchants giving away cash prizes.

After hearing this idea, the merchants of Highland Village were silent. Harold Shapira, Harp Cardozo and the others were trying to decide how to politely respond.

Finally, one man spoke. "No, we don't celebrate Christmas," he said.

The publishers looked at each other. They'd forgotten about Hanukah.

And then there was the time that the newspaper's ads for Stone's Village Delicatessen—"we have everything from soup to worms"—prompted a visit from the Minnesota State Board of Health. It seems that the French fried angle worms sold there were actually a species of caterpillar, and could not be advertised as worms.

Stories of the *Highland Villager's* early days provide some humorous memories for Arnold Hed and Barry Prichard. Back in 1952, the two friends and University of Minnesota students founded what is now the Twin Cities' oldest and largest neighborhood newspaper. For a few short months, the twenty-year-olds published the *Villager*, and dreamed of a Twin Cities urban and suburban newspaper empire. They even had a name—*Beltline News*, with plans to go into Richfield and St. Louis Park, and work with the Edina *Morningside Courier*. Had the Korean War not intervened, who knows what they could have accomplished?

The two had already been through their share of deadlines and monkeyshines together, alternating for a few years as *Minnesota Daily* editor and business manager, when they started the *Villager*. They once

published 150,000 copies of a newspaper for high school graduates, explaining the options of college and military service. Another project was an international newspaper, students informing their peers in other lands about what freedom meant, and the need to be free.

The *Highland Villager* began out of need—need for the Highland Village area merchants to have an advertising vehicle, and need for Prichard to do a class project. At that time, the two recall, the St. Paul and Minneapolis daily newspapers had an understanding that Minneapolis businesses would not advertise in the St. Paul newspapers, and St. Paul businesses would not advertise in Minneapolis.

That may have worked fine for the dailies, but for the Highland Village business community, it presented problems. There wasn't enough money to advertise in both cities' dailies, Hed said, but there were potential customers on both sides of the Mississippi River. At that time, more than half of Highland Park State Bank's customers crossed the Ford Bridge from Minneapolis to do banking here.

What to do? Prichard did his class research on the area's plight. The two students discussed the need for the community to have a newspaper of its own. They then met with Shapira, the beloved "mayor of Highland Village," and owner of Highland Drug Center. With the support of area business owners, the *Highland Villager* made its debut on December 4, 1952. The page one banner proudly declared that the newspaper was the "official publication of the Highland Village merchants."

No copies of the first *Villager* can be found, but Hed has saved the second issue, from December 11, 1952. Front page stories include news of the pending completion of Highland Park Elementary School, a campout planned by the Boy Scout Troop from St. Leo's Church and the prospect of returning the tradition of lighted candles to the windows of the Highland Park water tower. The tradition had passed with the death of longtime tower attendant Carl Flack; a picture showing the candlelit tower had been borrowed from the *Pioneer Press* to accompany the *Villager* story.

And there was a Christmas home lighting and decoration contest announcement, with the *Villager* itself giving a \$10 prize.

"This is just one of many attempts the *Villager* will make to get to know the community," the article stated. "We again invite the publicity chairmen of the many organizations to mail their news stories to the *Villager*, 1998 Pinehurst Ave., St. Paul or telephone GE 4444, Minneapolis . . . The responsibility for getting the news you like to read in the paper is partly yours . . ."

The office address was Prichard's home; the phone number was that of Commercial Press, the Minneapolis firm that printed the *Minnesota Daily*, a host of other community and suburban newspapers and shoppers, and now, the *Villager*.

Those first *Villagers* were weekly, distributed to 15,000 homes in St. Paul between Hamline Avenue and the Mississippi river, and north to St. Clair Avenue. The Minneapolis coverage area was south of Forty-third Street, to the city limits, and west to Cedar Avenue. Deadline for church news was Saturday; letters to the editor, social news and display advertising were due at 5 p.m. Monday. The papers arrived on area doorsteps every Thursday.

The two publishers missed their Thursday classes during their months of *Villager* ownership. Hed recalls going to an employment agency on West Seventh Street every Thursday to recruit *Villager* delivery help. Many of those who helped deliver the first issues were down on their luck, and happy to earn \$1 an hour. At least one deliverer got a new pair of gloves from his employers, who worried that his hands would get cold on the walk through the area.

"We looked for guys with long legs to deliver on Mississippi River Boulevard, and places where the houses were far apart," Hed said. One frightening Thursday in 1953, a delivery man was missing, out in a blizzard that cut visibility to near zero. The publishers drove through the area, but couldn't find the lost helper. The man had walked from Highland to the Commercial Press offices at 418 S. Third Street in Minneapolis, so that he could get paid.

After a few issues, the partners brought in *Daily* comrades to help with writing and other chores. "I always said that the newspaper business was an eight to five business," Hed recalled. "You work from eight

in the morning until five the next morning." "It was a real hassle sometimes," Prichard said. Both young men were full-time University students, and working at the *Daily* during the months they were also running the *Villager*.

But the work also had its high points. "It was fun," Prichard said. We didn't have any capital or any staff, but we had a lot of fun." "We'd always hoped it would be a moneymaker, but we never got that far."

"The people in Highland were just the nicest, best people you could deal with," Hed said. After the two sold the paper, they received several kind letters thanking them for their efforts. Hed later heard from the *American Jewish World*, when that newspaper was seeking an editor. He assumes friends recommended him for the job.

The two *Villager* founders grew up in very different circumstances. Hed's parents were immigrants from Sweden. His father came over under a bondage agreement, working for a time to pay off the debts for his passage. Before coming to America, Hed's mother worked as a nurse for Norway's royal family. Hed's early years were spent on a farm near Portal, North Dakota. After his father lost the farm, the family lived in Minneapolis, where his mother ran a Swedish boarding house. Later, the family moved to another farm, near Litchfield, where Hed attended high school.

Prichard's family has lived on Highland Park's Pinehurst Avenue since 1937. He recalls that as a youngster, one favorite fall activity was to hunt pheasants with BB guns where Cleveland and St. Paul avenues meet today. His family was active in politics; his grandfather, Michael Dowling, ran for governor. Prichard's father died before his son began school; his mother still lives in the family home. Prichard attended Horace Mann Elementary, where one of his classmates was Twin Cities entrepreneur Harvey McKay. Even then, Prichard recalled, McKay was a real leader. Prichard then attended University High School in Minneapolis, catching the school bus at Kenneth and Ford Parkway every morning. Enough students from Highland Park went to University High to warrant a special bus.

Both *Villager* founders became in-

terested in journalism as children. Prichard credits an uncle with providing his inspiration. His uncle, a veteran of World War I, had lost two fingers, but was taught how to use a linotype machine after the war, and managed the daily newspaper in Watertown, South Dakota. When Prichard was a child, his uncle set the boy's name in type—and let him keep the slug after the hot type cooled.

"And boy, was I inspired to go into newspaper work after that," said Prichard.

Hed gives a lot of credit to three men whose pictures were displayed on the classroom walls of his Minneapolis grade school—Churchill, Roosevelt and Stalin. As a fourth grader, "I decided Stalin was my hero," he said. Hed then wrote a little book, about his imaginary trip from Lenin-grad to Vladivostov.

Back on the farm near Litchfield, he worked in the barns and out in the fields. That gave him time to think. "You're a farm kid out working, so you dream, and the dream is what keeps you going." One of those early dreams was realized at age fifteen, when Hed asked for a chance to write for the *Meeker County News* in Litchfield. He'd cover school happenings and city news, hunting and pecking at the typewriter. He'd worked for some time before getting a job for \$20 a week—more than folks working full-time in some local businesses got, more than the 44 cents an hour minimum wage work paid at the time. Best of all, the pay was retroactive—quite a reward for a young man whose family was unable to spare much cash.

Hed still found time for school, school activities and a farm recordkeeping project. He'd heard about the recordkeeping contest, sponsored by the Extension Service, at age fourteen. Those who kept good records were eligible for cash prizes—another incentive. It was that experience, and some national award-winning efforts, that Hed would parlay into a job as business manager at the *Daily*.

The *Villager* would be the two friends' last project together, although not by choice. The newspaper had published for just a few months, when its founders were forced to sell. Prichard had been drafted into the Navy; Hed would soon be an Army man. Gone were the dreams of owning a newspaper chain. "Uncle Sam had other

plans for us," Hed said.

The pair's options were to sell to Elizabeth Haas and Bessie Jones, or close the paper and start anew after the war. Haas and Jones had gotten to know the two young men through their trips to Commercial Press. Haas was the Commercial Press office manager; Jones was a former employee who still held a spot on the Com-



Maury Mischke. Photo from *Village Communications*.

mercial Press board of directors. Elmer Huset was hired to help put the newspaper out. Hed and Prichard decided to sell. They recall getting about \$500 to \$600 for the *Villager*.

When they did come back from Korea, Hed and Prichard found that entrepreneurs from the East Coast had come into the Twin Cities, purchased some of the early suburban newspapers and started others. That gave birth to what is now Minnesota Sun Publications.

As for the *Highland Villager*, it moved forward as a publication of Haas-Jones Enterprises, as of March 12, 1953. The new owners immediately did away with one of the Hed-Prichard practices. Rather than supervising delivery people, they put the *Villager* into readers' hands through the mail. A few years after the women bought the newspaper, Commercial Press was closed. Haas ran the *Villager* from her apartment for a time. Huset passed away in 1957.

A look back through old newspapers shows that various people helped Haas put out the paper. Changes were made during

the Haas-Jones years. The newspaper went to twice-monthly publication. A mini-tabloid format, with pages about the size of 8½ by 11 inches, was used for several years. One longtime feature was a large page one photo, often tied to an upcoming event or a recent community effort.

In September of 1969, Ron Bacigalupo became the newspaper's publisher. Haas became the business manager. In May of 1970, Haas was listed as publisher again, although Bacigalupo continued to contribute to the newspaper.

When the late Maury Mischke was preparing to assume ownership of the newspaper in 1970, he had some news for his family. At a meeting with his children that summer, he explained his plan to be his own boss, running the newspaper and his advertising business. That meant things would be tight for a while, and that any of the Mischkes wishing to continue to attend private high school would be paying their own tuition.

Like the *Villager's* founders, Maury Mischke had spent much of his life working in the print media. He paid his own way through St. John's University by worked as a representative for the *Minneapolis Star-Journal*. He was an advertising representative for the *Visiter* newspaper in St. Cloud, and also worked at the Stockinger ad agency there. But better opportunities beckoned in the Twin Cities. Maury, wife Jeannette and their growing family moved to the Highland Park area when the *Villager* itself was just a few years old. Maury went to work at the Arnold Neimeyer advertising agency, and then went on to Imagination, a publishing and promotions company where he served as office manager.

But when the *Villager* became available in 1970, it was hard to resist. "I think what motivated him to buy the newspaper was that he always had loved the newspaper business," said Mike Mischke, Maury's son and successor as *Villager* publisher. "He liked the idea of being a big duck in a small pond . . . he liked being involved and making a difference."

Mike Mischke had already been working to pay his tuition as a student at Cretin. His job at Lee's Kitchen at one end of the Highland Shopping Center meant he was

working several storefronts away from the *Villager* offices. At that time, the *Villager* was located above Highland Drug Center. Now it was Maury's turn to put in the long nights newspapering required. When night would turn to morning, Jeannette would sometimes send one of the children down to the newspaper office, so see what Dad was doing.

One memorable night, Maury accidentally locked himself out of the office. Leaving the office for a few moments, he returned, felt in his pocket for the keys—and realized that the keys were locked inside. The stairway door was also locked. After weighing his options, Maury decided to curl up and sleep on the floor, until the psychologist who had an office down the hall came in the next morning. While Maury napped, his family worried. After all, he was fifty-eight years old. And at one point, after a stroke on Easter Sunday, 1978, he was unable to even climb the steps to the office for a time.

In his years as publisher, Maury built the *Villager's* circulation up to its current 45,000 level. *Villager Graphics* was founded, and he and Mike bought the *Grand Gazette*. He was active in the Highland Business Association and the Grand Avenue Business Association, and even put out a coupon book for a time as a promotion for area merchants.

Changes were made. Mailing was dropped because of rising costs. Freelance writers were added. Coverage expanded into the surrounding neighborhoods. Sports stories were added. The *Villager* remains the only neighborhood newspaper in the Twin Cities to offer such coverage on a regular basis.

Maury Mischke was also part of the growing neighborhood press movement of the 1970s and 1980s. He was an early member of the Neighborhood Press Association, and volunteered considerable time and talent to other member newspapers. He offered advice to those starting neighborhood newspapers in Minneapolis and St. Paul, and led workshops at a few NPA conferences. He always had a kind word for other newspapers, and could always listen sympathetically to the trials and tribulations of neighborhood publishing.

In the late 1970s, he wrote editorials

about the fate of neighborhood newspapers, some of which have been preserved in the now-Neighborhood and Community Press Association's files. Research by the NCPA indicates that the *Villager* is the longest continuously published urban neighborhood newspaper in the Twin Cities, and is one of the oldest in the country.

Maury Mischke used to say that his biggest mistake was in not writing a column sooner. Misch-Masch was one of his great pleasures. "He saw the value of having the personality of the publisher in the newspaper," Mike Mischke said. The column drew a loyal following, and has been missed since Maury's death in August, 1991.

Most of the Mischkes have worked at the *Villager* at various times in its history. Mike helped at the newspaper after graduating from Cretin, but it wasn't until his sophomore interim session at St. John's University that he took on his first newspaper project. That was when the *Villager* put together a prototype newspaper, *Midway Matters*, for the midway neighborhood. But lacking support of that area's business community, the newspaper never made it past the planning stages.

When an editor left in August of 1973, Mike Mischke took over and filled in until August of 1974. Although he hadn't planned to be journalist, Mike found that he enjoyed being an editor. "I guess I got ink in my blood," he said. After graduating from St. John's in May of 1976, Mike became *Villager* editor again. He and his father worked as a team. Then their current advertising manager Dennis Stern joined the newspaper. In those years, it was Maury, Mike, Jeannette and the faithful Liz Haas putting out the newspaper twice a month.

The *Villagers* of the 1970s are small newspapers, with twenty-four pages considered a "big" issue. Mike believes that what drove the newspaper was the growing quality of the publication. He notes that while the opening of Appelbaum's Supermarket (now Lund's) in Highland Village provided a major boost for the newspaper, the newspaper's growth doesn't parallel business growth. Still, advertisers are crucial to the newspaper's success. Names and faces may have changed, but it is small, lo-

cal businesses that have and continue to keep the *Villager* strong. "Papers can do as good a job as their advertising support allows them to," said Mike.

The paper also has its readers to thank for its forty years of growth. Readers of the *Villager*, especially longtime area residents, have a fierce loyalty to the publication. "People in the community have long felt it was 'their' newspaper," he said. "Some people say that the *Villager* is the 'Bible' of this community."

As the *Villager* enters its next decade of growth, two folks who will be watching are Arnold Hed and Barry Prichard. Hed, whose career in marketing and promotions has spanned forty years in the Twin Cities, lives in Chaska. Prichard, after stints as a newspaper publisher, advertising executive and teacher at Bemidj State, now lives on Lake of the Woods in Manitoba, Canada.

The two old friends have stayed in touch. Both are full of ideas for the future—books, promotions, and the like. Hed helped found the International Council of Shopping Centers; Prichard wrote a book about Itasca State Park. They can chuckle about their past endeavors—early Twins fans might remember Hed's *Milady's Guide* to baseball, given out by TCF Banks in the 1960s. And they can look at today's *Villagers* and smile. "The Mischkes have done a fantastic job," said Hed. "It is a wonderful community newspaper."

"I look at that paper now, and think, 'Gee, I was dumb to give that thing up,'" Prichard said, "but it's been fun to come back to the area from time to time, and watch the paper change and grow."

Jane McClure, a contributing writer to several St. Paul neighborhood newspapers, is president of the Neighborhood and Community Press Association. She was the last editor of the West Side/West St. Paul Voice. If you would like more information on NCPA, you may call 647-9293. Information for this article was taken from NCPA files, They Chose Minnesota, George Hage's Newspapers of the Minnesota Frontier, the Highland Villager, the Midway-Como Monitor and the author's research. Many of the neighborhood newspapers mentioned in this article are on file at the Minnesota Historical Society.

THE HIGHLAND VILLAGER

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Church news must reach us not later than Saturday; letters to
the editor, social news and classified ads by 5 o'clock Monday.

New Owners

As new owners of "The Highland Villager," we wish to take this opportunity to thank the advertisers for their patience and the cooperation accorded us during the transition of ownership. It is our sincere desire, with your cooperation, to make "The Highland Villager" outstanding among papers of its kind.

We welcome news items of interest to Highland Village residents. Mail your news items to the Highland Villager, 418 South Third Street, Minneapolis 15, Minnesota.

The masthead from the second issue of the Highland Villager, dated March 12, 1953. For the history of St. Paul's colorful neighborhood newspapers, see the article beginning on page 13.

R.C.H.S.
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