

## LSIA's good friend and founder-Harold Burrows

By Dolores Ullstrom

Shortly after moving into his lovely new home on Fern Drive in 1980, Harold Burrows was relaxing with a beer at Shady Beach Resort. As he sat, he visited with Harry Poole and a few other locals. Each individual had a strong property rights point of view. What was said is unknown but the conversation peaked Harold's interest. He wanted to learn more about other neighbors and their way of thinking. How to do it? LSIA was conceived.

Harold grew up in south Minneapolis. In his youth he had been to Lake Sarah several times. He loved the water. He remembers spending all day catching painted turtles while in a boat tied to shore. At day's end he released the turtles back into the lake.

His father died of lung cancer at age 41. Harold became the "man of the house." He went to college and graduated from Iowa State with degrees in math and physics. From the U of M he earned his Master's Degrees in physics and business. His first job was with Honeywell where he worked on missile laser guidance systems. Finding this a little tame, he wandered into the field of finance and became a stock broker. It was there that he stayed until retirement.

In 1965 Harold married Renee. She also grew up in south Minneapolis. When Harold wanted a date for a U of M homecoming dance, his mother suggested that he ask Renee. He did and, as we say, the rest is history. They have been married 51 years.



Harold was not the first person to believe in the benefits of organizing lakeshore owners. The first attempt at organizing took place in the early 1970s. Roger Pitts, currently at home with his wife Betty, at 4330 Woodhill Dr. incorporated the first lake association. He told me he did it just because a lake needs an advocacy group. The newly organized group contacted the DNR and buoys were placed in the narrows and near North Shore Dr. The latter buoys are no longer placed on resident request but Hennepin County continues to provide buoys for the narrows.

During Roger's presidency a small company in Loretto was dumping its waste into Lake Sarah. The Lake Association contacted the MN Pollution Control Agency about their concerns. The

MPCA toured the company and demanded they stop. The company changed its behavior. The company's President later attended an Association meeting and speaking to members assured them that the company was no longer dumping waste in the Lake, and it would never happen again. His graciousness impressed Roger who believes the situation was handled well by the MPCA. It was a major success for the Lake Association and no enemies were made.

After 4 or 5 years Roger stepped down as president. Due to lack of quality leadership the Association fell apart. That was the status until Harold came onto the scene. Under Harold's leadership, LSIA was soon a reality with Harold as President. It was some time later that he learned how much of a time commitment he had taken on. The desire to meet his neighbors took second place as the desire to work to improve the lake became his primary goal.

Harold and Renee's home is now up for sale. Here is a quick history of the land their house sits on. A relatively large piece of property that included the present Fern Dr. was deeded by the United States to Joseph Meyor in 1857. It was soon divided up and sold to several individuals for amounts varying from \$250 to \$803. In 1882 135 acres was sold to Hilarius and Magdalena Schumacher for \$3200. From 1889 to 1941 the land was deeded to John and Clara Schumacher. In 1941 they lost the land to foreclosure. In 1946 the land was owned by Alfred and Eulalie Klaers. The Klaers leased out part of the land and sold other parts. In 1965 Jean and James Oeffling bought a piece. Walter and Louise Klaers bought 5 acres ("more or less"). This land would soon be known as Wally's Resort. In 1972 Gust Kempf, Jr and his wife Fern bought 5 parcels. In 1973 the Village of Independence adopted subdivision regulations "for the orderly, economic and safe development of land." The Kempf's got approval for the development of what would become known as Fernwood Hills. It can be assumed that Fern Drive was named for Fern Kempf.

The plans for the home that Renee and Harold would eventually build in Fernwood Hills were taken from a home they had seen and admired in North Oaks.

Harold ably served LSIA as President for many years. There were no term-limiting by-law until years later. Most of the documents he had saved over the years regarding his tenure that would have historical interest have been destroyed. In preparation for moving many things had to go. When I spoke with him, Harold apologized for not remembering dates and specific details.

The most pressing issues during his tenure were lake level, no wake zone during high water, and cattle in the water and their impact on water quality.

In order to have a more effective voice in the management of Hennepin County lakes including Lake Sarah, Harold ran for and won a seat on the Hennepin County Conservation District Board

of Directors. The role of this Board was to employ and manage a group of water experts who advised local groups such as water shed districts throughout the County.

An example of how the Conservation District operated is shown by the fencing project that took place to keep cattle out of Lake Sarah. After being made aware of the situation, advisers determined that the cattle were having a negative impact on water quality. It was advised that a fence be put in place to keep them out. Property owner permission was obtained, funding was provided and LSIA volunteers were found to put the fence up. While this may seem like a straight forward endeavor, it took education, patience and a good many people handling skills. Cows had always used Lake Sarah to cool off, and the general consensus among farmers was that the Lake was doing okay. Changing ways of thinking and old habits is not easy.

Harold's people management skills are particularly good, and no one worked harder than he did. I think an important reason he has been able to accomplish so much is that he displays a genuine, selfless interest in Lake Sarah and its welfare. While he has been known to describe himself as a benign dictator, he is able to entertain different points of view without rancor. He, for example, does not like to see chemicals poured into the Lake for weed control. He prefers mechanical weed removal. Time will tell. Through it all he remains a gentleman.

When asked how LSIA could help landowners be more responsible lake owners, Harold says education is the key. It often takes years for new landowners to learn what they need to know about water quality and what humans do both positively and negatively to impact the Lake. He thinks a Welcome Wagon type program may be helpful. The cities can also be helpful by informing land owners up front about lakeshore regulations. A strong, active LSIA is also very important.



Harold has attended all of LSIA's picnics. He still wants to know his neighbors. He leaves Lake Sarah with very mixed emotions. He loves it here. He has been a good citizen and his service has been over and above the call to duty. While he leaves the Lake and LSIA in good hands, he will miss being part of the action and being around to make sure the energy and effort needed to protect the Lake never falters.

When asked about legacy, Harold wants to be remembered as a person who from the very beginning has been focused on improving water quality for future generations.

Thank you Harold and Renee. I hope we see you at future picnics. We will miss you.

*Interview date July 22, 2016 at the home of Dolores Ullstrom*