



The Historian

Preserving & Promoting Neighborhood History

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Society president Ken Walchak relaxes at his post as he waits to welcome visitors.



Residents don't pay admission.

House Walk 2015 Revisits “Birchwood Beach” Neighborhood of Rogers Park

By Kay McSpadden

In keeping with the Historical Society's policy of alternating the annual house walk between Rogers Park and West Ridge, 2015 was Rogers Park's turn. For this 29th Annual House Tour, the Society went back to the northeast Rogers Park “Birchwood Beach” neighborhood which was the site of a house walk in 2000. Holding it in this neighborhood of some of the grandest and oldest homes in Rogers Park provided the opportunity to revisit a home designed by noted Prairie School architect Walter Burley Griffin, to include the recently named Marion Mahony Griffin Beach Park as a “walk-by,” and, best of all, to start the tour from the Society's new home in the beautifully restored 1920s building on the southeast corner of N. Greenview and W. Jarvis Avenues.

The homes open on the tour were built between 1891 and about 1914. They included the Griffin-designed J. Benjamin Moulton house, still owned by architect

Betsy Downs who had welcomed visitors in 2000; the home of Bob Vernille and David Thompson which once housed a small synagogue; Pat Shaw-Kahn's home located on a lot which was part of Catherine Touhy's inheritance from her father Phillip Rogers; the residence of long-time owner Bindy Bitterman, displaying some of her collection of antique and “kitsch” objects; and the Prairie/Tudor-style home of the Scholl-Roche family which retained many original details.

Many tourgoers commented that each of these homes was “a gem,” and the number of homes was “just right” for the length of the tour.

The neighborhood history in the house walk booklet made reference to the elegant past of the northeast Rogers Park neighborhood. Many of the homes in that neighborhood date from the earliest growth of Rogers Park, and many multiple dwellings east

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Long-time volunteers and Society members, Rob Case and Sue Sosin, arriving on the tour.

of Sheridan Road were built during the population boom of the 1920s when the neighborhood reached its peak of 90,000 residents and was promoted for its resort atmosphere.

The House Walk Team included: Stephanie Barto, current office assistant; Kim Brown, previous office assistant; Summer Damra, Northside Prep senior; Gwen Gregory, long-time public relations volunteer; Dave Kalensky, new Board member who as Peterson Woods resident helped organize the 2014 house

walk there; Kay McSpadden who identified docent volunteers and helped edit the house walk booklet; Colleen Sen who assisted the homeowners with write-ups about the history of the homes; Hope Shannon who supervised publication of the booklet; Jeff Smith, home history researcher; Ken Walchak who assisted with logistics; and Dona Vitale who identified homes to be included and coordinated the entire house walk organization.

Greeters at the homes included: Dave Kalensky, Ken Walchak, June Finfer, Gerardo Gallegos, Matt and Gaby Amyx, Bill Morton, Mary Oellrich, Amelia Serafine, and Anne Crowe.

Organization of the 2016 house walk, scheduled for West Ridge on Sunday September 11, is beginning; the specific neighborhood has yet to be identified. Dona Vitale, again the coordinator this year, would like to hear both from homeowners who would like to participate and from volunteers interested in serving on the committee. □

Volunteer Profile: Dona Vitale

By Kay McSpadden

In our Volunteer Profiles, we've tried to show the variety of volunteers we have. This time we decided to focus on one of the leaders of the organization. Dona Vitale is a retired professional who has been a Board of Directors member since March of 2014. In addition to taking on major roles, she has brought her personal and professional expertise to bear on decision-making.

One of her roles is Chair of the Outreach Committee, one of the five committees that form the basic structure of the Historical Society. (The others are Governance, Education, Media, and Fundraising.) She organized the 2015 House Walk and is making plans for the 2016 event. Just recently, she took on the position of Treasurer, replacing Margaret Ferguson who resigned.

Here are her responses to questions about her contributions to the Society.



This issue's Volunteer Profile is about Dona Vitale.

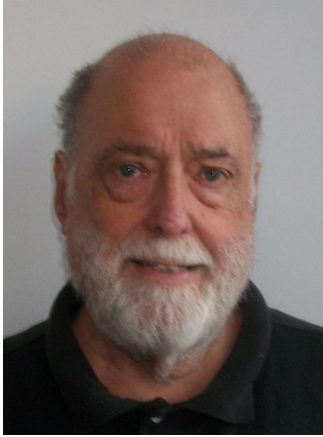
Dona, what does Outreach consist of?

Outreach deals with all the ways the Historical Society interacts with the community, including our volunteers and members as well as other local organizations and the general public. The teams comprising the Outreach Committee focus on Membership, Volunteers, Community Relations and Marketing.

What has been the focus of the Outreach Committee, and what has been accomplished?

Continued on page 4

From the Editor



Editor, Hank Morris

In this issue, we'll take an in-depth look at WW-I and WW-II military pilot Norman D. Ross, Sr. Norman was also the owner of a record store on Davis Street in Evanston and a Olympic 3-gold medalist in swimming. Many of those of us who have lived here for quite a while remember his eldest son, Norman A. Ross, Jr. from TV and Radio. But, his dad preceded him on WGN, and other radio stations, too.

Norman, Sr. is best remembered in Rogers Park for his legendary swimming to work at WGN-AM in the Tribune Tower most days from his home at 7639 N. Eastlake Terrace (9-1/8 miles, one way).

Our 29th Annual House Tour came off without a hitch. Nice weather and interesting locations to visit made for a well-received event. Five houses were open to visitors on the tour and we had walk-bys, too. The check-in was conducted from our new location 7363 N. Greenview Ave. This way, everyone on the tour had a chance to see our new home.

As has become a year-end tradition, we held our annual members' party. This year, as was done two years ago, we celebrated at Gullivers Pizza and Pub, 2727 W. Howard St. Almost endless Pizza and salad, ensured stuffed and happy members.

Upcoming 2016 Events (definite dates):

Wednesday, February 17, Jim Akerman, Curator of Maps at the Newberry Library, 60 W. Walton St., will talk on "Mapping the Early Roads of Chicago's North Side, at the Budlong Woods Library, 5630 N. Lincoln Ave., 6:30 p.m.

Saturday, March 19, Annual Meeting, 12 noon, Northtown Library, 6435 N. California Ave. The speaker will be long-time member and volunteer John Fitzgerald, who will relate the successfully completion of his and his wife Judy's almost 50-year adventure to visit all 3,143 counties in the U.S. (Completed in Luce County, MI, on Thursday, October 1, 2015 at 6:47 am EST).

Additional 2016 Events, Definite but dates and locations are not yet finalized:

April ?? Grace DuMelle, presentation on "How to Research the History of Your House."

June ?? Part 2 of "Clark St. Then and Now Walking Tour"

October?? Prof. Ted Karamanski, from the Loyola U. History Dept., will speak about "American Indians in the Early History of the Chicago Area."

Progress at our New Home

The Society's name is now emblazoned on our front window.

We participated actively in Jarvis Square holiday activities.

We were very well decorated for Christmas with one 6-foot tree, a tabletop tree with vintage decorations, colored icicle lights across the window. And, we participated in "Shop Jarvis Square" on

Saturday, December 12 by having 2 craft vendors in our storefront and volunteer Rob Case on hand to represent the Society and give away posters, past house walk booklets, and other things.

Finally, this is a great time to renew your membership. Why not come by our new digs and say "Hi."

Hank Morris,
Editor

Volunteer Profile: Dona Vitale *(continued from pg. 2)*

One of the first things the Community Relations Team did was to reach out to local organizations to let them know we're here and willing to work with them on projects. One result, among others, was an oral history project with several founders of Lifeline Theater.

We also realized early on that we needed a better way to track all of our outreach efforts, so for over a year now, some technology-savvy volunteers have been developing an improved comprehensive database that provides contact information for members, volunteers, people who come to events and people who just ask to be on our mailing list. It's been a massive job, but it has helped us develop better means of communicating with our various constituencies while at the same time making it easier for the committee to manage a more intensive outreach program.

Using automatic features of the new system, the Marketing and Membership Teams have instituted a membership renewal program that can process a larger number of new and renewing memberships than before. We can also more easily send out emails to targeted groups--just members or just volunteers, for example--making all our outreach operations more efficient.

There's still a lot of work to be done, however, in all areas of outreach, so anyone interested in helping out should contact the Society, and someone from the Outreach Committee will respond—probably me!

What background do you bring to the job of Treasurer?

I have an MBA degree, which required me to take two terms of basic accounting and a couple of finance classes, but my background is in marketing, not accounting or finance. I ran my own small marketing consulting business for 27 years, so I put my limited financial knowledge to use during that time. Most importantly, I think I was the only one who knew how to use our QuickBooks software, and the only one crazy enough to take on the job.

You have been spending quite a bit of your time volunteering for the Society. What has been the reward for you?

I've lived in Rogers Park and Edgewater for much of my adult life, and I've always liked being involved in the community. The Historical Society is a way to continue meeting and interacting with neighbors, making new friends and renewing contact with people I may have met working on other causes and issues and who are still around and still active. I love running into people I've met through my volunteer activities when I'm at the grocery store or other places in the neighborhood. Chicago's a

big place, and it can be very impersonal, but volunteering in the community makes me feel like I live in a very friendly small town.

How did you come to volunteer for the RPWRHS in the first place?

I'd known about the Historical Society for a long time, and always meant to get involved, because I really enjoy history and I think it's important to know and understand the history of where we live. But, like a lot of other busy people, I never took the final step of volunteering. Finally, when I was starting to think about retiring, I happened to be working with a client who was then a member of the RPWRHS Board of Directors. In my professional life, I conducted marketing research studies, including a lot of focus groups and in-depth interviews, so I thought it might be fun to apply those interviewing skills to doing Oral Histories. Once I started doing that, I saw other ways my background and experience could be helpful, so, little by little, I've taken on more responsibility.

What do you like to do in your free time—assuming you have some!

Well, since I retired, I do have time. I live right on the lake, so when the weather is nice, I try to take a walk along the water almost every day. I also go to a lot of movies, and theater, and my favorite thing is to go to brunch with friends, so I do that a lot as well.

Do you have a favorite restaurant in Rogers Park or West Ridge? Any other community organizations or businesses you like to support?

When I first moved to Rogers Park in 1979, there were not a lot of restaurants to choose from, but brunch at the Heartland Café, especially in the summer, was always a great time and still is. In more recent years, I've try to keep up as new restaurants open and, unfortunately, some of my favorites close, but I don't have a single hang-out. As far as businesses in the community, the one I've probably spent the most time in over the years is Clark-Devon Hardware. It was always my go-to place when I owned my 100 year-old two-flat, because I always needed something to keep the place up. In 2014, I moved into a condo and now I don't need Clark-Devon as much, but when I came on the RPWRHS board, I was delighted that Ken Walchak, one of the owners, is our Board President. So now, I feel even more connected to the community because I have my own personal hardware man at the best hardware store in the neighborhood! □

Rogers Park's Norman Ross, Sr., Olympian Swimmer, Military Pilot, and Broadcaster

By Hank Morris

Norman DeMille Ross, Sr. (Thursday, May 2, 1895, Portland, Oregon – Friday, June 19, 1953, Evanston) was the son of furniture packer Charles E. Ross (1860-?) and Della L. Ross (1862-1932) (70) (marriage circa 1883). The 1940 census lists Charles as Widowed. The 1930 Census has him as still married to Della, so she must have passed away during 1930-1940. A death index record for a Della Ross and Charles is listed as a spouse and the date of death appears to be July 18, 1932. Both, Charles and Della were born in Wisconsin. According to the 1900 Census, Della had given birth to two children, however only one was still alive. So Norman wasn't an only child. Sadly, there's no other info about the dead child, no sex, no name, no birth/death dates.

As a young man, Norman attended Portland Academy, a preparatory school in Portland, where he was a star athlete.

Norman Ross—the Runner

Norman Ross the Runner? Saturday, April 21, 1917, was when the Olympic Club of San Francisco, 524 Post Street, San Francisco CA, held the first annual indoor relay carnival at Corvallis, Oregon, under the auspices of the Oregon Agricultural College (Corvallis, Oregon). Norman Ross, later the holder of several world's swimming records and formerly a star athlete at the Portland Academy arrived home back in Portland and immediately decided to enter the track and field meet.

Norman registered for both the hurdles and the shot-put. He came in third in the shot-put and in the 2nd heat, Ross, was first in the 75-yard low hurdle.

Accomplished Swimmer

Alameda, California: Norman Ross, formerly of Portland and swimming for the Olympic Club of San Francisco on Wednesday, May 30, 1917, broke the world's record for 75 yards back-stroke with the time of 41-4/5 seconds. The previous record had been 56-4/5 seconds and was held by Tod Burns, of the Los Angeles Athletic Club.

Norman Ross, Sr. competed in the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp, Belgium, (Opening ceremony, Saturday, August 14, 1920 to Closing ceremony: Sunday, September 12, 1920). He won three



There's no doubt that USAAF pilot Norman Ross was a preeminent swimmer.



World War I passport photo of USAAF pilot Norman Ross in uniform.

Olympic Gold Medals. The 400 m freestyle, the 1,500 m freestyle, and 4×200 m freestyle relay. He set thirteen world records and won eighteen U.S. national championships during his career.

In an article in the *Chicago Tribune* (“Norman Ross Sr., father and friend, by Norman Ross, Jr.”, Friday, June 16, 1974, page H22) the author reported: that [several] years before 1974, there was a story about his father, Norman Ross, Sr., that had appeared in the Reader’s Digest.

In the story Jr. referenced (above), supposedly Rogers Parker Norman Ross, Sr. swam southbound in Lake Michigan to approximately the Oak Street Beach, then came ashore, amid the lifeguards blowing

their whistles and gesturing frantically to “Sr.” to head towards the beach. When Sr. came ashore, he asked, “What town is this?”

“Chicago,” someone ventured.

“Chicago? Hell! I thought it was Milwaukee.”

The story continued: “Before the astonished lifeguards could grab him, he plunged back into the water, headed straight out, and in time was seen to turn north—toward Milwaukee.”

What the onlookers didn’t know was that Norman Ross, Sr. was in training for the 15-mile Wrigley Swim that was held annually in Toronto’s Canadian National Exhibition. He had just swum to the Oak Street Beach from his 7639 N. Eastlake Terrace apartment in Rogers Park. This was his way to train to win one-more race before retiring from swimming.

The Wrigley marathon was first held on Wednesday, September 5, 1928. Nobody won ‘sbecause, due to bad weather conditions, the judges could not figure out who won. The race was repeated on Sunday, September 9, 1928, and this time Norman Ross clearly beat Scottish-born Canadian swimmer George Young (1910 - 1972).

Norman worked at Tribune Tower (where WGN’s studios were located at that time) and frequently swam from his apartment at 7639 N. Eastlake Terrace to Navy Pier and back when going to work.

Norman Ross was inducted into the International Swimming Hall of Fame, (Fort Lauderdale, Florida), in 1967. He held 13 FINA (*Fédération Internationale de Natation*) world records, 18 U.S. National championships, and held a total of 72 world, national, and central U.S. records. He was the first non “trudgen” (a swimming stroke) middle distance freestyler, using a scissor kick, 2 minors and a major as he turned to breathe and dominated the 1919 Allied War Games with 5 firsts.

He also competed in the winnerless, Saturday, January 15, 1927, 22-mile, Wrigley Ocean Marathon which was from Catalina Island to the California mainland against Scottish-born Canadian swimmer George Young.

Early Tarzan

Norman, Sr. was 6 ft. 2 in. and 210 lbs. Because of his physique, he was asked to play the original “Tarzan of the Apes” in the silent movies. He never appeared on screen but he did go to Hollywood. Among the young actresses he courted at the time was Gloria Swanson (Gloria May Josephine Swanson) (Monday, March 27, 1899 – Monday, April 4, 1983). Years later, Norman, Jr. rummaged thru a foot locker of his father’s and came across a photo of Miss Swanson. She presumably was asleep on a sofa, a book open at her feet. Across it she had written, “Dreaming of you, Norman.”

Enter Beatrice

Norman’s wife, Beatrice P. Dowsett, first met Norman when he went to Honolulu to swim against an Olympic teammate, Duke Paoa Kahanamoku (Sunday, August 24, 1890 – Monday, January 22, 1968).

When Norman arrived, a group of girls met him at the dock. The first to put a lei around his neck and wish him “Aloha nui loa” (*very much love, lots of love*) was Beatrice. Norman remarked: “I never had a chance. She lassoeed me the moment I stepped off the gangplank.”

Beatrice was almost the only one that rooted for Norman as he competed in his race against Hawaiian native hero Duke Paoa Kahanamoku. Duke was not a royal title but Kahanamoku's first name.

The Honolulu Star-Bulletin, Friday, September 7, 1917, 3:30 Edition, Page 8, reported "Duke Paoa Kahanamoku, Norman Ross, and Claire Galligan carried off the honors in the last night's events of the big swimming race on the harbor. There was plenty of opportunity for honors for all. The local idol (Kahanamoku) won the 100-yard national championship; Ross set a new American record in the 880-yard event, and Miss Galligan smashed the open water record for the 440-yard event to smithereens. ..."

Marriage

But, while Duke Paoa Kahanamoku wasn't Hawaiian Royalty, not so Norman's wife, Beatrice Paalkalani Dowsett.

The Daughters of the late Alike Dowsett and their children as well as the other descendants of this branch of the Dowsett family are also ranking heirs of the Princess Keakealani II. *This includes Beatrice Puaikalani Dowsett Ross and her three children, Norman, Donal, and Jean Beatrice.* Norman married Hawaiian-born Beatrice Paalkalani Dowsett; the daughter of Alexander C. Dowsett and Martha K. Dowsett, nee: Holmes. (Beatrice would have been a princess had the Royal House survived.) "Paalkalani" meant "flower of heaven" in the Hawaiian language.

They were married in Palo Alto, California on Wednesday, May 2, 1921. They had three children, sons: Norman A. Ross, Jr. (1922-2008), and Donal K. Ross (1925-1947), and daughter: Beatrice Jean Ross (B.J.) (1932-1981).

The couple was married on Wednesday, May 2, 1921, in Palo Alto, California. They honeymooned in Portland, Oregon, and set up housekeeping in Chicago where Norman had a job waiting as a reporter on the staff of the *Chicago Journal* newspaper (published from August 31, 1844 to August 21, 1929).

Beatrice, Norman, and family moved from their apartment at 7639 N. Eastlake Terrace in Rogers Park to 2523 Central Park Avenue in Evanston in 1936.

First Birth

Beatrice was a small woman. When she became pregnant, her doctor suggested that since this was her first winter in a harsh climate, she should bear her first child in warm weather, because he felt it would be easier on her because she was a native

Hawaiian and unaccustomed to cold weather. Because Norman was only making \$50/week, returning to Hawaii was simply out of the question. Literally "suddenly," Norman was offered a chance to officiate at the opening of the Roney Plaza Hotel's swimming complex in Miami Beach, Florida, all expenses paid. He quickly accepted.

At each water show, a young Seminole (Florida-native Indian) wrestled an alligator. Thursday, February 2, 1922, one of the cronies with whom Norman created comic diving routines pushed him in the pool just as the Seminole reached the climax of his act. The alligator's snapping jaws and flailing tail were too much for Beatrice. She fainted and she quickly lapsed into premature labor. As a result, Norman Alexander Keavilani Ross, Jr. was born two weeks prematurely and three days before the 9th month anniversary of Norman and Beatrice's marriage.

ON THE AIR!

Norman Ross, Sr. began his broadcasting career on WIBO (WIBO signed on in 1927. It was on a variety of frequencies in the 1920's including 560 am. WIBO broadcast from a site on Ballard Road in Des Plaines; later evolved into WIND circa 1930). He started as a sports announcer because of his career as an athlete, sports reporter, and promoter, but he wasn't an immediate sensation.

When WIBO phoned to ask if Norman was a baseball fan, he told them he never missed a game, (although he hadn't attended a game in five years). And when they asked if he wanted to share the baseball mike with Bob Hawk (Cubs sportscaster 1929 –



"Uncle Normie" on WGN-AM.

1933), he said “yes,” and rushed right out to buy a baseball fact book. He stayed up half the night while the family drilled him on RBIs and batting averages. His first broadcast the next afternoon was disappointing; he decided not to go back. “If you don’t,” Beatrice said, “I’ll put you over my knee.” Norman crammed again that that night and the next broadcast was better.

Norman’s early broadcasting career included dance band pickups which were quite popular during the ‘30s. Oddly, because back then there was an unwritten agreement between newspapers and radio stations that stories would not appear on air before being published in a newspaper, when 31-year old John Dillinger was gunned down by the FBI in front of the Biograph Theater, 2433 N. Lincoln Avenue, late night Saturday, July 22, 1934, Norman flipped the switch in the studio and flashed the news across the country. The papers were furious, but he felt the story was too big to hold.

Norman had a wry sense of humor. One April 1, he played an hour of the wildest jazz he could find, instead of his normal fare of classical music. Another year, he had his son, Norman, Jr. opening “This is Norman Ross speaking.” The WMAQ switchboard lit up with callers wanting to know where “Uncle Normie” (his on air nickname) was. At the end of the show, Jr. said “This has been Norman Ross—Jr. speaking. And this is the first of April. Have a nice day.”

The Military Pilot

Norman Ross, Sr. was an air cadet in World War I and a Lieutenant Colonel in World War II. He had once held the record for loop-the-loops (23). Norman was decorated by General John Joseph “Black Jack” Pershing (Thursday,



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Norman started his record store as a business for his sons, Norman, Jr. and Donal.

September 13, 1860 – Thursday, July 15, 1948) in World War I and served as aide to General James Harold “Jimmy” Doolittle (Monday, December 14, 1896 – Monday, September 27, 1993) in World War II.

It was announced on Sunday, November 11, 1917 that Norman Ross had enlisted three months earlier in the Signal Officers Reserve. He was a candidate for a commission in the Flying Corps, but had to train down from 214 to 190 pounds before he could gain admittance. While he was reducing weight he was drafted by the National Army, and was offered a position as swimming advisor at Camp Travis, Illinois. He refused the offer, however, and was sent to American Lake to join the draft army, from which he would be transferred to the Government aviation school in the Signal Officers Reserve Corps. at the University of California, Berkley.

Evanston Record Store Owner

At the time when Thomas Edmund Dewey (Monday, March 24, 1902 – Tuesday, March 16, 1971) lost the 1948 presidential election to Harry S. Truman (Thursday, May 8, 1884 – Tuesday, December 26, 1972), which was Tuesday, November 2, 1948, Norman Ross, Sr. was already operating a record store in Evanston known as “Norman Ross & Co.” It was located at 617 Davis Street. Because at that time a majority of Evanstonians were devout Republicans, Norman’s sense of humor kicked in and he had a large funeral-type wreath put on the store’s front door. It read: “Closed today out of respect to us Republicans.” Norman Jr. seems to have inherited his dad’s sense of humor. In 1952, when Dwight David “Ike” Eisenhower (Tuesday, October 14, 1890 – Friday, March 28, 1969) was running against Robert Alphonso Taft (Sunday, September 8, 1889 – Friday, July 31, 1953), Norman Jr. trained the family’s pet parakeet to say “I LIKE IKE” over and over. Norman Sr. laughed about that for years. While he loved to fool others, he enjoyed it even more if somebody could fool *him*.

Norman, Sr. Dies

On Friday, June 19, 1953, after coming home from a noon broadcast at NBC, Norman Ross, 57, complained of feeling ill while working in the yard of his home on a hot day. He died that day at Evanston Hospital, 2650 Ridge Avenue, of an apparent coronary occlusion. He and Beatrice had just selected some land in La Jolla, California in anticipation of his retirement.

Services were held at 2:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 23, 1953, in the Northminster Presbyterian Church, 2515 Central Park Avenue, Evanston.

Wife, Beatrice's future

In January, 1964, Mrs. Norman Ross (nee: Beatrice Paalkalani Dowsett) married Robert Curtis Preble (1897-1983). Preble was the former President of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. When they announced their marriage plans, they told their friends that they would winter in Honolulu after the ceremony. Beatrice was purported to have been raised as a Hawaiian princess, and was once considered as a possible successor to the Hawaiian throne. Eldest Son, Norman A. Ross, Jr.

Eldest Son, Norman A. Ross, Jr.

Norman Alexander Keavilani Ross, Jr. (Keavilani is Hawaiian for "foundation of heavenly joy") (Thursday, May 2, 1922, Miami Beach, Florida – Friday October 3, 2008, Chicago) for many years a fixture on Chicago TV and radio, was ubiquitous in the city's civic and cultural circles, serving as a member or officer with more than 100 organizations.

Mr. Ross, 86, died, as did his father, of congestive heart failure Friday, October 3, 2008, in his Gold Coast home on State Parkway.

At one time Mr. Ross could be heard or seen on radio and TV seven shows a week. He hosted shows including "Tunes from Talman" and "Extension 720" on WGN-AM, and did a soothing half-hour of early evening news and commentary for many years on classical WFMT-FM. He was often referred to as a "Classical D.J."

He held various on-air duties at WLS-Ch. 7, including picking up an interview program started by his father called "Off the Cuff." He also wrote commentary for the Chicago Daily News three days a week from 1955 to 1968.

His broadcast work won him three local Emmy Awards: 1) 1959, In Front Of the Camera, Norman Ross, M.C. 2) 1960,



Norman's son took over his father's broadcast duties, as soon as he could get home from London, U.K.

Best Performer (Male), Plaques On Camera, shared between Ross and Irv Kupcinet, 3) 1961, Best Performer Emmy-On Camera, Norman Ross, and a Peabody Award, (1964, Off-The Cuff-WBKB-TV).

In the late 1960s, he took a job as director of public affairs for the old First National Bank of Chicago, now Chase. In a 1986 interview with the *Tribune*, he said he was motivated to take a more active role in corporate life because of the riots that rocked Chicago after the (Thursday, April 4, 1968) assassination of Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr.

He helped start Chicago United, a group that promotes economic diversity by providing networking opportunities for minority business leaders. It was one of over 100 organizations with which he was active, groups whose missions spanned the arts, neighborhood and economic development, health care and education.

Among the board memberships he was most proud of, said longtime friend and business partner Jim Rouse, were

were C.A.R.E., the Lyric Opera of Chicago, Children's Memorial Hospital, and the North Carolina School of the Arts, (Winston-Salem, North Carolina).

Norman retired from the First National Bank in 1986, and with Jim Rouse started a bed and breakfast in Pilot Mountain, N.C. But, he maintained a home in -- and a strong connection to -- Chicago.

In the late 1980s, Norman Ross, Jr. chaired the jury for the competition that led to the Harold Washington Library, 400 S. State Street.

Mr. Ross grew up in Rogers Park, moving to Evanston as a teenager because his father was wary of Chicago's public schools. Despite problems related to a detached retina, he served in the Army and was stationed in Calcutta, India, during World War II, Rouse said.

Throughout his life, Mr. Ross ran in rarefied circles, meeting Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru while stationed in India, and dating Clare Boothe Luce's daughter, Ann Clare Brokaw. On Tuesday, January 11, 1944, the day he asked Ann to marry him, she was killed in an automobile crash in Palo Alto, California.

At Stanford University, Palo Alto, California, Norman Ross, Jr. studied Sino-Soviet relations and received a bachelor's degree. He continued to be fascinated by China throughout his life, regularly breaking into the language at Chinese restaurants, Rouse said.

Norman Ross, Jr. was studying for his doctorate at Trinity College at Oxford University, London, when his father died of a heart attack at 57 in 1953. Norman Ross, Jr. returned immediately to Chicago and took over his father's immediate on-air duties.

While he split his time between North Carolina and Chicago (he and Rouse sold the bed and breakfast in 2000), Norman Ross, Jr. was very much a man of the city, more at home in a tuxedo than the relaxed garb of a rural innkeeper.

Mr. Ross, who was divorced, was survived by daughter, Isabel Lincoln; two grandsons; and a great-grandson.

Second son, Donal K. Ross

Norman Ross, Sr.'s youngest son, Donal (1925-1947) died at 22. He was killed the night of Saturday, November 22, 1947, when he was thrown from his car, after hitting a light pole, being hurled against a tree, and decapitated. Donal was a sophomore at Northwestern U. having served in World War II as an army

Lockheed P-38 "Lightning" fighter pilot. Credited with 100 battle missions, he held 14 citations for bravery and the Purple Heart. He was coming home from the North Shore Hotel, 1611 Chicago Avenue, after a family party at which his father, Norman Ross, Sr. was hosting employees from his record shop when the accident happened.

Daughter, B.J. Ross

While her given name was Beatrice Jean, she had never been called anything but "B.J." since her baby days. After a long standing romance, she was announced to be married to well-known Lincoln Scholar, Ralph G. Newman (Friday, November 3, 1911 – Thursday, July 23, 1998), in her brother Norman's State Parkway apartment. Because Mr. Newman had been previously married, the couple had to get special dispensation from Rome to be married in the Catholic Church. This marriage was rescheduled to be held in New Orleans, Louisiana on Saturday, May 2, 1964. However, Herb Lyon's Tower Ticker column in the *Tribune* on Monday, May 4, 1964, p. 22 said the festivities were on hold for a while. There's no follow-up article that the marriage was ever held. Neither of the obits of Newman nor B.J. mention any such marriage.

B.J. graduated from Emma Willard School, (Troy, N.Y.), attended Mills College, (Oakland, California), and Northwestern University. She also worked for her degrees at Loyola University.

Ms. Ross had been in the real estate business for several years, and specialized in the rehabilitation of North Side homes. Previously, she was an interviewer and researcher for her father and helped him win 13 Emmys and the Peabody Award. During the 1960s, she produced both the Lee Phillip (Loreley "Lee" June Phillip Bell, born Sunday, June 10, 1928) and Mahalia Jackson (Thursday, October 26, 1911 – Thursday, January 27, 1972) shows for WBBM-TV.

B.J. died Monday, June 29, 1981 (49) in Augustana Hospital, 2035 N. Lincoln Avenue, apparently from Cancer. She was buried in Memorial Park Cemetery, 9900 W. Gross Point Road in Skokie. □

Fun, Games, and Good Cheer at the Annual Holiday Party for Members and Volunteers



Society members enjoying our party at Gullivers.

Society members and volunteers enjoyed pizza, a silent auction, a trivia contest, and, most important, each other's company at the Society's annual Holiday Party Sunday, December 4, at local landmark Gulliver's Pizza. Guests faced off in a trivia game created by Glenna Eaves that featured questions about neighborhood history. (See the accompanying quiz.). First prize went to Matt and Gaby Amyx, who won two tickets to the Lifeline Theater. Second and third prizes were won by Sue Sosin and Karen Tipp who received tickets to the 400 Theater.

Meanwhile, a 'blind' silent auction organized by Colleen Sen and Glenna Eaves was going on, featuring de-accessioned items

from the Society's collections. Ten items were placed in sealed bags with a label hinting at the bag's contents. For example, "Guess who's coming?" was an antique guest book; "Stop!" a collection of glass stoppers; "Stick 'em up" an assortment of lapel pins; "Give the Lady hand" two pairs of long kid gloves; and "Cookies for Santa," a tea cup and cookie plate set.

Congratulations to the winners and many thanks to the donors.

For fun, here are the questions and answers. Try to answer the questions before cheating. ☐

Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society

Trivia Contest

1. Who was the Tonight Show announcer who lived in Rogers Park in the early 1950's?

Hugh Downs lived at 1644 W. Farwell from 1944 to 1951. Among other accomplishments, he was the announcer for Caesar's Hour and The Tonight Show.

2. What was the date of the first automobile race in the US that traversed Rogers Park?

Thanksgiving Day, 11/28/1895. Sponsored by the Chicago Times-Herald it ran from Jackson Park into Evanston (where they ran out of good road surface). 83 cars entered, but only 6 arrived; 3 4-wheel cars from Karl Benz, 2 2-wheel cars, and a 4 wheel by Charles Duryea, which won.

3. Where was this structure located and what was its purpose?



The "North Shore Holder" was located at 3045 W. North Shore Avenue. Built in 1926 by People's Gas, Light and Coke Co. at a cost of almost \$1,000,000 in today's money, this 362 foot high structure held 15 million cubic feet of natural gas.

4. How many synagogues were there in Rogers Park in 1946? (Extra points if you can name them)

There were 4 synagogues listed in the 1946 telephone directory (the answer is the same if you include West Ridge).

*Beth Sholom, 1233 Pratt,
B'Nai Zion, 1447 Pratt,
Congregation Sinai, 6905 N. Sheridan,
Temple Mizpah, 1615 Morse*

5. What famous snack, introduced at the Chicago World's Fair, used a Rogers Park resident as a model for their logo and where is he buried? (Extra points if you know his name)

Cracker Jack. The mascot, Sailor Jack, was Robert Rueckheim, who died at 8 yrs old and is buried in St. Henry's Cemetery.

The dog mascot, Bingo, died of old age.

6. Name one of the Civil War Generals to visit Philip and Catherine Rogers at their home, "The Oaks."

General Philip Henry Sheridan or General Willam Tecumseh Sherman

7. What 50th Ward Alderman was the second longest serving in Chicago City Council member?

Bernard L. (Berny) Stone. He served for 38 years, from 1973 to 2011. He was Vice-mayor for the last 13 years of his tenure. The longest tenured alderman is Edward M. Burke, 1969-present.

8. Where was this structure located and what was its purpose?



In 1870s-1880's this tollgate was located at Chicago Avenue (now Clark Street) and the North Indian Boundary Line (now Rogers Ave.) to collect money from the large number of vehicles traveling to Calvary Cemetery.

9. What's the name of the business the founder of Thillens Stadium, Mel Thillens, operated?

A currency exchange, "Thillens Checashers"

10. Where was this structure located and what was its purpose? (Extra points for the name of the owner)



In 1889, Harvey Keeler, under private contract to the Village of Rogers Park, built this waterworks plant at Touhy and the Lake (now Leone Beach, as well as 6 miles of water main and sewers in RP. ☐)

Loyola U. History PhD Students Inducted into Alpha Sigma Nu



Pictured, from left to right, are Hope Shannon, Dr. Patricia Mooney-Melvin, Interim Dean of the Graduate School, Katherine Macica, and Rachel Boyle.

The only honor society permitted to bear the name Jesuit, Alpha Sigma Nu is the international honor society of Jesuit institutions of higher education. The society was founded in 1915 to honor a select number of students each year on the basis of scholarship, loyalty, and service. Alpha Sigma Nu is unique among honor societies in that it seeks to identify the most promising students in Jesuit schools. Inductees demonstrate an intelligent appreciation of and commitment to the ideals - intellectual, social, moral, and religious - of Jesuit higher education. Selection to Alpha Sigma Nu is one of the highest honors that can be given on a Jesuit campus.

Inducted this year from Loyola U. History Department's graduate program were Rachel Boyle, a U.S. and Public History PhD Candidate; Katherine Macica, a U.S. and Public History PhD Candidate; and Hope Shannon, a U.S. and Public History PhD student.

Katherine Macica and Hope Shannon are also members of the Board of Directors at RPWRHS. ☐

Nothing is More Constant than Change

By Hank Morris

We learned in school that Alexander Graham Bell (Wednesday, March 3, 1847 to Wednesday, August 2, 1922) was an eminent Scottish-born scientist, inventor, engineer, and innovator who is credited with inventing the first practical telephone.

By the 1940s, the Bell System set out to unify the various numbering plans in existence and developed the North American Numbering Plan as a unified, systematic approach to efficient long-distance service that eventually did not require the involvement of switchboard operators.

The phone numbers were restricted to 10 digits. The first three were left for the area code. The next three were for the central office identifier and the last four were assigned to the individual subscriber.

So it was that in April 1943, when my family moved into West Ridge, the phone number assigned to us was Briargate 8853. Briargate was the central-office name.

The central-office code was chosen such that it could be represented by the first two letters of the central office (exchange) name according to a digit-to-letter mapping that was printed on the face of a rotary dial. The letter translations were designed by W.G. Blauvelt in 1917, and had been used in the Bell System in large metropolitan areas since the late 1910s. Our seven-digit subscriber number consists of three digits for the exchange or central office and four digits for the station or line number. In the early days, there were few enough subscribers that only the two letter exchange identifier was needed. Typical switching systems were designed to serve up to 10,000 telephones, hence requiring four digits.

As the nationwide Bell System expanded, and because the original design for a nationwide plan allowed for a three-digit exchange identification our phone number expanded to, Briargate 4, 8853.

When the Bell System went to all digit prefixes, our phone number became 274-8853. No more exchange names, just numbers. This allowed for many more combinations to be used to accommodate more new subscribers.

The new network design, completed in 1947, provided for 152 area codes, each with a capacity to serve 540 central offices. Area codes were at first used only by long-distance operators to establish long-distance calls between toll offices.

Direct distance dialing (DDD) was slowly introduced across

the country, first to big cities, and by the early 1960s most areas of the Bell System had been converted and it was in common usage in cities and most of the larger towns.

The area code for Chicago, 312, started being used in 1947. Our present area code, 773, went into effect on October 12, 1996.

On November 7, 2009, because of the proliferation of cell phones, fax machines, computers, etc., it became mandatory for us to dial 1 before the area code for every local call due to the introduction of overlay area code 872, to expand the number of phone numbers available to subscribers.

Now, you have to dial 1-773-274-8853; from 6 digits to 11 digits. Progress?

Disclaimer: Of course, this phone number hasn't been registered to any member of the Morris family since 1980 when my Dad died, and, it certainly isn't my phone number, nor does it belong to any member of my family today. □



The Candlestick was popular in the 1930s and 1940s.



The old dial phone was popular in the 1960s.



Not many of these push-button phones were used in Chicago.



The wood tones helped phones like this blend into the home décor.

The Rogers Park / West Ridge Historical Society Store

Your purchases help to support the Society's mission. We have a wide selection of books and other merchandise available for sale at the museum. Below are four of our items.

You may order by phone, mail, in our store, or from our website. **Please note, for orders in Illinois, we must charge 9.75% sales tax.** For orders to be shipped, please include \$6 shipping and handling per delivery address.



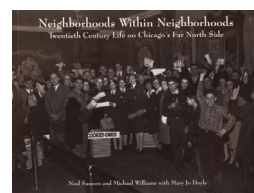
Ceramic "Birches" Mug
Nonmembers: \$4
Members: \$3.25



Canvas Tote Bag
Nonmembers: \$12
Members: \$9.45



Chicago's Far North Side
Nonmembers: \$25
Members: \$20



**Neighborhoods within
Neighborhoods**
Nonmembers: \$25
Members: \$20

Ship to

NAME _____ PHONE _____ EMAIL _____
ADDRESS _____ CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

CREDIT CARD TYPE ☐ MC ☐ VISA ☐ DISCOVER ☐ AmEx

CREDIT CARD NUMBER _____ BACK _____ EXPIRATION _____

QTY	ITEM	PRICE	S&H (\$6)	TAX	TOTAL
TOTAL ORDER:					

Been in the "hood" a while? Know somebody who has?

The Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society is conducting an ongoing oral history project. We are collecting the memories of those individuals who remember what life was like in Rogers Park and West Ridge "way back when."

Oral histories are a wonderful way to learn more about our neighborhoods before all the complexities of "modern life" settled in.

Memories are precious, whether they're yours, a friend's or a relative's. Help preserve our community's past through oral history today.

You can reach the **Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society** to arrange an interview at **773-764-4078** or e-mail us at **info@rpwrhs.org**.

Do you have photos of Rogers Park or West Ridge?

Our Photo Archives and Cataloging Project is charged with the preservation of our photo collection. In it, we have literally thousands of photographs that have been donated to the Society to be preserved for future generations and today's researchers.

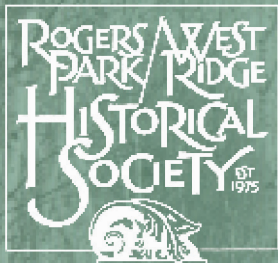
It's one of our most valuable resources. Why not add your old photos to our collection? We will scan them and put them in the Photo Archives. Future generations and today's researchers will thank you for your efforts.

We can scan slides, negatives, prints, whatever. While we would prefer to preserve the originals, we're not greedy. If you want them back, we will honor your request.

It would be most helpful if you could provide notes as to what is being shown in the photographs. We've never met Aunt Martha. Please tell us who is who. Neighborhoods change. Please tell us where the photo was taken and when. **Your photos can be from any time period, that means even the 2000s.**

For more information, contact the Society's offices.

Rogers Park/West Ridge Historical Society
7363 N. Greenview Avenue, Chicago IL 60626-3481
Call 773-764-4078 or e-mail us at **info@rpwrhs.org**



☐ *New Membership*
☐ *Renewal*

New and Renewing Members

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| <input type="checkbox"/> ANNUAL STUDENT MEMBER \$40 | <input type="checkbox"/> ANNUAL SUSTAINING MEMBER \$100 | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> ANNUAL SENIOR MEMBER \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> ANNUAL BENEFACTOR \$250 | |

PLEASE MAIL YOUR CHECK TO:

ROGERS PARK/WEST RIDGE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, 7363 N. GREENVIEW AVE., CHICAGO, IL, 60626

TO PAY BY CREDIT CARD, PLEASE CALL US AT 773.764.4078 OR USE OUR WEBSITE: WWW.RPWRHS.ORG

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____ STATE _____ ZIP CODE _____

EMAIL _____

PHONE _____

☐

I would like to volunteer at the Society