

My Lake View memories

BY DAYLE MURPHY

In the summer of 1950, my family moved to 1232 W. Belmont Ave.

We had previously lived at 71st and Woodlawn and my Dad commuted to 1228 W. Belmont Ave., where he worked at Max A. R. Matthews Hardware.

Mr. Matthews owned the building at 1232 W. Belmont where an apartment had become available on the 3rd floor. To say it was old and very old-fashioned is an understatement. There were six rooms: 3 bedrooms, living room, dining room, kitchen and bath. Pocket doors between the living room and dining room were kept closed, as well as one bedroom, because it was so cold in winter. There was a beautiful built-in floor-to-ceiling buffet with drawers on the bottom and glass doors at the top.

The bathroom was right out of the 1920's with a tank on the wall near the ceiling and you had to pull a chain to flush. The bathtub was huge with claw feet and the sink looked like it came right out of a movie. The kitchen sink had legs with an attached porcelain drain board on the side.

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MEMORIES see p. 2

Dan O'Donnell Way christened at Armitage and Bissell streets

BY PATRICK BUTLER

Some 300 people (who was counting?) including at least two aldermen, other public officials, community leaders, contractors, neighbors, and the Irish Consul General gathered at Armitage and Bissell streets Saturday, July 10, to officially designate that intersection Dan O'Donnell Way.

Social distancing? Not a chance, hugs - long ones - were much en vogue on that sunny day.

It was a party Dan O'Donnell would have appreciated. He knew it was coming up, and had already partaken in a City Hall ceremony in 2020. Sadly, he died suddenly in February while on vacation in Florida.

But the show did go on, and it was standing room only. When the bagpipes played before and after the ceremony, many guests reached for tissues, explaining (faking) that some dust had gotten in an eye. It was a sweet re-



The O'Donnell Family helped make the intersection what it is today, and now there's proof.

Photo courtesy Jane Canepa

membrance for a gem of a man.

O'DONNELL SEE P. 6

Chicago Fire at 150

On Oct. 8, 1871, the city of Chicago caught fire.

The rest is history.

Now, 150 years later, that history is in a new exhibit coming to the Chicago History Museum [CHM], 1601 N. Clark St.

City on Fire: Chicago 1871 opened on the 150th anniversary of that fatal day and guides visitors through the crucial events and conditions before, during, and after the fire.

This family-friendly exhibition features over 100 artifacts from the CHM's collection, interactive and multimedia elements, and personal stories from survivors of the fire.

On that day in 1871, Chicago's busy streets were taken over by flames for three days, overwhelming a city built of wood and causing severe destruction, that ran north, west, south and north, burning out on the North Side just south of



The devastation of the Great Chicago Fire sparked change and regrowth in Chicago.

Webster St. in Lincoln Park.

After the fire died, recovery efforts exposed deep social and economic inequalities when more than 100,000 people became homeless, and society placed blame upon the Irish immigrant O'Leary family. It destroyed approximately 1,700

FIRE SEE P. 4

Pierogis and hot dogs: My Lakeview memories

BY RICHARD SAYAD

Chicago is made up of over 200 distinct neighborhoods. I want to reminisce about the neighborhood of my birth and youth: Lakeview.

A melting pot of many different ethnic groups, Lakeview included Italians, Irish, Poles, Germans, Swedes, Chinese, Jewish and even one Armenian family that I knew very well. Mine! The Sayad family.

When I was growing up things were quite different here. There was a true sense of community, safety and peace in the neighborhood. You could sleep at night with your doors unlocked and the windows open because the neighbors looked out for each other. The Town Hall police district assigned beat car 117 to our neighborhood. The German and Irish beat cops in car 117 knew the neighborhood, the businesses, the kids and their parents.

They didn't take any guff and kept the neighborhood safe and peaceful.

Children of all ethnic groups played together and of course, were fed by their moms. This is when I was exposed to a wonderful new world of different ethnic delicacies. I learned the difference between gravy and sauce. Cabbage and sauerkraut. Chinese food and all its regional specialties.

And a new taste delight: Homemade pierogi.

The Lakeview neighborhood I grew up in was like a small self-supporting city unto itself. It had a myriad of locally owned food and shopping options. No chains or franchises. No "big box" stores. It



How can you grow up in Lakeview and not remember Wrigley Field?

seemed like there was a tasty hot dog cart on every corner. Ma and Pa's at Halsted and Newport serving its delicious and greasy hamburger that I can still taste today.

Small ethnic restaurants. The local grocer and pharmacy where everyone had a

in Lakeview and not remember Wrigley Field? A sunny day in the friendly confines enjoying a hot dog and a cold drink. Don't forget the peanuts and Cracker Jack. Cheering on the great players of yesteryear like Hank Saur, Walt Moyn, Phil Cavaratta and the

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"tab" and if times were tough, you were told, "Pay us when you can." The Gold Standard liquor store was a mainstay business that would go on to become the now famous Binn's chain.

And how can you grow up

immortal Ernie Banks. Back then the Cubs didn't always win but the ballpark was a great place to be a kid (and eat!). That's also where I fell in into what would become a lifelong love affair with the St. Louis Cardinals (and hot



Homemade pierogis and hot dogs at Cubs games are the foods of childhood memories.

dogs)... but that's another story.

Lakeview was truly a wonderful neighborhood to grow up in. The neighbors all looked out for and cared for each other, but most of all we did something that seems sadly missing today. Despite all of our ethnic and cultural differences, we respected each other. It wasn't a perfect time, but these days, just maybe we can "re-learn" to start our conversations with respect for one another..... and share a hot dog or two.

MEMORIES FROM P. 1

up to the 3rd floor where she would lower them on to the porch. While it was a lot of fun living that way, it was also dangerous, I have a scar on the back of my hand from burning it on the coal stove.

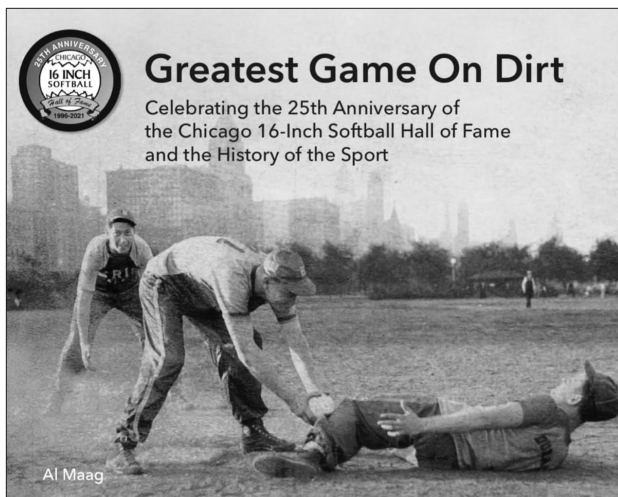
We had a wooden swing on the porch and in the sum-

mer you could hear the announcer from Wrigley Field calling Cubs games.

Between the apartment and the hardware store was a cinder lot which served as parking for the store. Needless to say, cars and trucks pulling in raised quite a bit of dust therefore, it was a constant battle to keep the apart-

ment clean.

When the family on the 2nd floor moved, Mr. Matthews had the apartment remodeled and we moved downstairs. The coal stoves were gone, we had gas space heaters and were plenty warm in winter. I lived there with my parents until I was married in 1964.



(L) Book cover of "Greatest Game On Dirt." (R) The Chicago Daily News softball team at Billy Goat Tavern.

'Greatest Game on Dirt' celebrates the history of softball

BY DON DeBAT

Ask any South Sider what makes Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood famous and, he or she will tell you it's Irish mayors and 16" softball players. But don't be surprised if the ball players are mentioned ahead of the politicians.

So, it is with great enthusiasm that this writer—a proud 1999 HOF inductee—was happy to review the recently published book, the "Greatest Game On Dirt," a 132-page text and picture book celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Chicago 16" Hall of Fame and the nearly 134-year history of the sport.

Softball historian, author and HOF founder Al Maag truly covers every aspect of the Windy City's game from the infield to the outfield from 1887 to the present.

Chicago softball's birth occurred on Thanksgiving Day in 1887 when the first game was played indoors on the wooded floor of a gymnasium at the Farragut Boat Club at

31st St. and Lake Park Ave. on the South Side while fans awaited the progress of the Harvard-Yale football game via ticker tape.

George W. Hancock drew a baseball diamond on the gym floor, tied up the laces around a boxing glove to form a sphere and the players swatted it with a broomstick. Hancock, a Chicago reporter, outlined a rough set of rules, and for the remainder of the evening the members played "Indoor Baseball." The game caught on and by the end of the winter the Farragut team was playing indoor baseball with dozens of other clubs.

"Indoor Baseball was played in dance halls, armories and gymnasia with a ball that measured 16" or 18" in circumference with a thin bat, and—important—without gloves," wrote Chicago Sun-Times sports columnist and historian Bill Gleason in 1981. "Because the playing areas were tiny, the ball had to be soft and squishy so it would not carry. Indoor was a scientific game, a pitcher-

catcher-bunter-slash hitter game."

"From watching a ticker tape for the results of a college football game on Thanksgiving Day in 1887 to streaming live coverage of games in the 21st Century, 16" softball established itself as Chicago's iconic game and fabric of our culture," Maag wrote.

Chicago softball's birth occurred on Thanksgiving Day in 1887 when the first game was played indoors on the wooded floor of a gymnasium at the Farragut Boat Club at 31st St. and Lake Park Ave. on the South Side.

By the 1920s, slow-pitch softball moved outdoors and developed into a popular urban sport—the perfect game for the blue-collar ethnic inner-city neighborhoods of the city. To play the game, all a kid needed was a bat and a softball, sometimes called the

"mush ball," especially when well-worn. And no glove was needed.

And, that was—and still is—the beauty of Chicago's game, which flourished on makeshift diamonds in the streets and cobble-stone alleys, vacant lots, school yards, parking lots, prairies and under the "el" tracks from Rogers Park to Mount Greenwood long before it ascended to the green grass of city and suburban public parks.

The "Greatest Game On Dirt" focuses on key players, teams, media, and organizers that shaped the game and made it what it is today. Chapters also target non-profits, gloves versus no gloves, Black legends, women in the game, corporate ball and umpires.

Maag's comprehensive research also provides the following essential facts every true Chicagoan should know:

- **Celebrities played softball.** Mayor Richard J. Daley played second base during his school days at De La Salle In-

Steppin' with Satan

When the Devil came to Bridgeport

BY URSULA BIELSKI

One of the most popular and universal folk legends has localized itself and lived for a good part of this century in Chicago's Bridgeport neighborhood.

Here, on street corners and front stoops, in barber shops and beauty parlors, and in the ubiquitous corner taverns, talk abounds, spanning many topics, many opinions, many generations. Listeners will be engaged by the most amazing of memories, including those recalling one unforgettable neighborhood night: the night the Devil came to dance.

Local tradition remembers it on a Saturday night in an old ballroom just west of Loomis St. on Archer Ave.

A young unescorted woman became enchanted by a mysterious and dashing stranger whose acquaintance she had made on the dance floor. As they whirled to the music with the other local couples,



The legend of "The Devil in the Dancehall," according to folklore expert Jan Harold Brunvand, is a popular one in the Mexican and Latin-American traditions.

the girl happened to glance at the exceptionally deft feet of her partner.

Responding to her subsequent scream, the neighborhood men, assuming the stranger had made inappropriate advances immediately pursued her escort, who had quickly fled from the scene. When he was cornered near a second-floor window, the stranger alarmed the crowd by refusing to fight, instead leaping from the ledge to the pavement below. When the onlookers rushed to the window to observe his fate, they were amazed to discover that the man had landed squarely

on his feet.

As he bolted across Archer Ave., the furious crowd rushed from the building, running after the fugitive.

Once outside, however, the onlookers discovered the real reason for the young woman's scream. Imbedded in the concrete, in the spot where the stranger had landed, was a single but unmistakable hoof print.

The legend of "The Devil in the Dancehall," according to folklore expert Jan Harold Brunvand, is a popular one in the Mexican and Latin-American traditions. As with all folk legends, the versions

are many, but the story line is the same. A person at a dance, usually a young girl, dances with a charming stranger who turns out to have horse's hooves or chicken claws, the Hispanic versions of the rather generic American perception of diabolic "hooves." When the stranger's identity is thus discovered, he disappears in a puff of smoke, leaving only the smell of sulfur and an unconscious young woman as mementos.

When he wrote *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*, his classic volume on urban folk legends, Brunvand had found no evidence that this legend had made its way into Anglo-American culture. For over half a century, however, the testaments of Bridgeport residents have proven otherwise.

This story was taken from the book Chicago Haunts: Ghostlore of the Windy City written by Ursula Bielski and used with her permission. Look for her book if you would like more stories.

FIRE from p. 1

structures and buildings, killed an estimated 300 people and caused an estimated \$200 million in damages.

The disaster prompted an outbreak of looting and lawlessness. Companies of soldiers were summoned to Chicago and martial law was declared on Oct. 11, ending three days of chaos. Martial law was lifted several weeks later.

The devastation also sparked change and regrowth in Chicago by introducing new fire safety guidelines and rebuilding as the resilient city known today.

For more information visit www.chicagohistory.org or call 312-64-4600.

Just missed the burn...

Located at 2121 N. Hudson St., this is the home that Chicago policeman Richard Bellinger saved from destruction while virtually all other buildings in the path of the fire area burned down.

It is generally considered the point where the fire ceased it's travels north.

Although the late-1860s structure has been much renovated, it retains the charm of the original Italianate design by W. W. Boyington, who was also the architect of the Court House, the Water Tower, and many other pre-fire buildings.

According to the popular story, Officer Bellinger first used water to wet down the house, and, when that ran out, turned to his store of cider. Assisted by his brother-in-law, Bellinger also cleared the dry leaves that were on the property, tore up the nearby wooden sidewalk and fence, and snuffed what sparks he could as soon as they landed.



Barringer cottage.

Photo courtesy Stefani Foster

Riverview: A fun spot for six decades

Tidbits About Lake View from *The Lake View Saga* 1837-1985

William Schmidt, known as the father of Riverview Park, had owned and operated a popular German bakery on Clybourn Ave. since the early township days, but his avocation was sharp-shooting. He and a group of friends indulged their hobby each weekend at an abandoned brickyard largely isolated in a swamp area devoid of transportation, except through overgrown trails by foot along the Chicago River at Belmont and Western.

As Mr. Schmidt watched these weekend excursions develop into family outings for more and more of his friends, he decided to acquire the 70 acre tract on his own, and turn it into more than a rifle and gun range.

As his plans developed, it took on the appearance of a picnic ground, and in 1903 it became known as Schuetzen Park. To provide amusement for the children who accompanied their parents, small rides and other recreational equipment were installed.

In 1905, the name was again changed, this time to Riverview Sharpshooter's Park.

The following year a group of Swiss-Italian woodcar-



Riverview Park was an amusement park in Chicago, located on 74 acres in an area bound on the south by Belmont Ave., on the east by Western Ave., on the north by Lane Tech College Prep High School.

ers was brought to America by a Philadelphia company.

***Woodcarvers from
abroad built a
merry-go-round,
to be installed
in the park, based on
Berlin's Tiergarten.***

George, the son of William, who had by this time become active in promoting the park as a commercial venture, commissioned these wood-

carvers from abroad to build a merry-go-round, to be installed in the park, such as he remembered seeing in Berlin's Tiergarten on a boyhood trip with his parents.

The carousel was completed and delivered in 1908. The hand-carved prancing steeds in their brilliant colors were installed in the park, where they continued to delight the hearts of a host of children for half a century.

In 1908, the park was in-

corporated as Riverview Park Company. In 1967, it had outlived its usefulness, and the park was closed. George Schmidt's widow and son, William, then sold the property for redevelopment.



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On July 10 family and friends gathered to officially designate the intersection of Armitage and Bissell streets 'Dan O'Donnell Way.'

Photo by Frank Crescenzi

O'DONNELL FROM P. 1

O'Donnell, a community activist and local Kiwanis leader, almost single-handedly organized a program enabling an estimated 16,000 Irish students a summertime visit to the U.S. after seeing a handful of Irish kids sitting on their luggage across the street from his store.

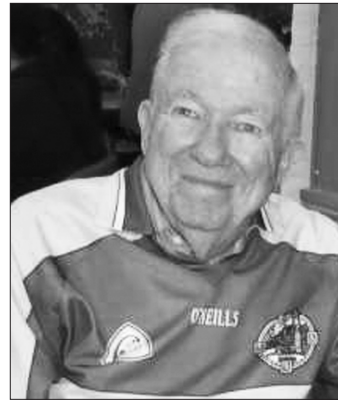
Dan O'Donnell changed the climate around Armitage Ave. enough to help transform the neighborhood from local gangland turf to a thriving, gentrifying area.

While he was at it, he also managed to help (and lead) the local Lake View Kiwanis Club which raised funds for dozens of local organizations ranging from grade schools, food pantries, to reading programs and the Salvation Army.

He also changed the climate around Armitage Ave. enough to help transform the neighborhood from local gangland turf to a thriving, gentrifying area. He knew everybody on the block and tens of thousands of people throughout Chicago. Not every neighborhood had a Dan O'Donnell, but every neighborhood needed a Dan O'Donnell.

Before the neighborhood gentrified "If you had four cars parked on the street in the morning, it was a lot," said his son Brian who was a speaker during the ceremony, adding that "if you had a nice car, chances are it would have been up on milk crates by morning."

O'Donnell's wife, Kathy, recalled that when they first moved into the neighborhood back in 1969, "Everyone was afraid of the gangs." When Dan, who was trying to spruce up the block, asked one of the gang-bangers what they were doing removing the street paving bricks on the block,



Dan O'Donnell.

Photo by Frank Crescenzi

he told Dan he needed to use the bricks as a drop location for drugs, and to conceal the money they were collecting."

Not surprisingly, Dan left the bricks alone thereafter.

Of course, Dan couldn't do everything all alone, said Ron Roenigk, Inside Publications' owner and an active Kiwanian, especially around Peanut Day, a longtime Kiwanis tradition.

"Whenever he called you, you knew he needed some help and you never said no to the Godfather," Roenigk said. "He was the source of many

stories for this newspaper, and not the scandalous ones either. He found many a good cause to take up."

Sometimes it appeared Dan was working too hard. Like when his wife asked two Kiwanis officers to get her husband to slow down. Impossible.

But he also had time for his family, said Brian, recalling how fortunate he was to have been able to work with his dad since he was six or seven-years-old in the hardware store – watching as Lincoln Park was transformed.

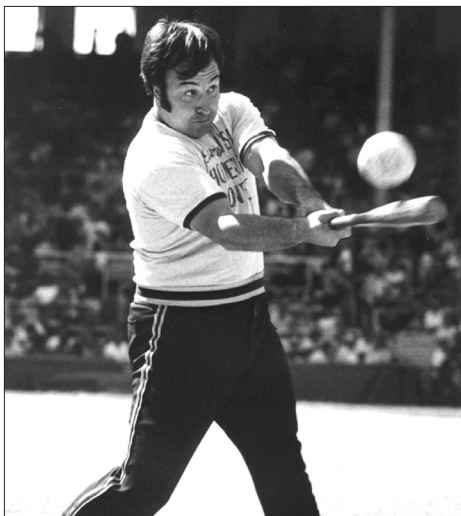
Kevin Byrne, Chicago's Irish Consul, noted that Chicago has always been welcoming people from Ireland for generations, but it's so unusual that for all these Irish kids, their welcome came by one man – and that's Dan O'Donnell."

Over the years, Byrne estimated, Dan O'Donnell has probably made it possible for 16,000 Irish kids to come visit here over the years.

"I hope you realize we are honoring a man who literally transformed this neighborhood. (The neighborhood) would not be here if it weren't for Dan O'Donnell. Dan's spirit can continue living on through his works. Remember his great spirit," said Ald. Michele Smith [43rd].

The O'Donnell family had applied months ago to put up an honorary street sign honoring Dan. "Too bad he wasn't around to see this," said family friends Bob and Maureen Schubert as they left after the ceremonies.

"But he did," said a woman about two rows behind. "He was here in spirit."



Willie Simpson of the Bobcats softball team.



The 1949 Windy City champs with Moose Skowron and Nicky Branman.

SOFTBALL FROM P. 3

stitute. Other celebs include actors Gary Sinese, Bill Murray, Jim Belushi, Dennis Farina and Joe Mantegna.

Professional athletes, including George Halas, Bill "Moose" Skowron, Sweetwater Clifton, Phil Cavaretta, Lou Boudreau, Ernie Banks, Ron Santo, Gary Fencik, Jim McMahon, Bobby Douglas, Gale Sayers, Jim Grabowski, Jeff Hornacek, Michael Jordan and Bobby Hull played the game. Media players included Mike Royko, Tim Weigel, Bob Sirott, Mike Conklin, Dan Cahill and this writer.

- **1930s Golden Age.** A 16" tournament sponsored by the Chicago American newspaper in 1930 drew hundreds of teams over a five-week period with the finals played at Wrigley Field. At the 1933-1934 Century of Progress exposition in Chicago, the Grant Park National Invitational Tournament drew 55 top teams and 350,000 spectators.

- **Windy City League stories.** Moose Skowron, who starred in 1949 for Jimmy DiVito's mob-sponsored Nut House Café team, told Maag that his 1955 New York Yankees team couldn't beat a good Chicago softball team.

- **Bobcats vs. Sobies.** In the late 1960s and 1970s, the greatest rivalry in 16" softball sparked the "renaissance" of Chicago softball, or the second "Golden Age." The Bobcats were led by pitcher-manager Eddie Zolna, and stars Willie (The Whistler) Simpson, home-run hitter Ron Olesiak and dump-hitting specialist Jake Jacobi. Starting in 1969,

the Dr. Carlucci-sponsored Bobcats would win their first of five straight titles. Eventually they would win 12 world softball titles.

The Sobies, a gritty ethnic team from Berwyn, featured stars such as curve-ball pitcher John Bereckis, a Chicago cop, his brother, clutch-hitting shortstop Bill Bereckis, speedy center fielder Eddie (Champ) Surma, lanky first-baseman John Hornacek, and tough as nails short center fielder Tony Reibel. The legendary Sobies were world champions from 1966 through 1968. The entire team is in the HOF.

- **Royko at Trebes.** When it comes to strange softball stories surrounding bad umpire calls, nothing tops the near riot that occurred on summer evening in 1980 at Trebes Park, a tiny one-diamond field at Webster and Racine in the DePaul neighborhood.

The game pitted the arch-rival neighborhood saloon team, The Chessmen, versus Royko's Raiders, a team comprised of Mike Royko, the Chicago Sun-Times columnist, newspaper reporters, and several fine Clarendon Park stars.

The saloon crowd gathered along the fences to cheer the hard-hitting, beer-drinking Chessmen, and generally boo Royko and his Raiders, featuring Windy City star Jerry Jess, home-run sluggers Don (Garbo) Garbarino and Dennis (Muscles) Pettke.

Recoiling from several bad calls by the weak-eyed, but well-meaning veteran umpire, Royko exploded with a shower of verbal abuse after his team lost a close

game. A near riot occurred after Royko called the Chessmen "a bunch of riff raff."

When the famed columnist criticized the umpire's work, he sprinted to his nearby auto trunk and produced a pistol. Royko and his Raiders fled the park. The next day, Royko's column described the game in detail, and the following season, Al DiPisa, the Chessman's manager, renamed the team Riff Raff.

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To purchase Greatest Game On Dirt go to: <http://16inchsoftballhof.com/shop>.

For more softball news, visit www.dondebat.biz. Don DeBat, a 1999 Chicago Softball Hall of Fame inductee, is co-author of "Escaping Condo Jail," the ultimate survival guide for condominium living. Visit www.escapingcondojail.com.



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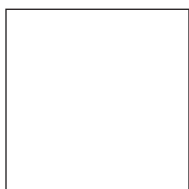
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