

New Bremen News

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New historical marker in Tinley Park honors 'racing royalty' Bettenhausen family



Merle Bettenhausen, a Tinley Park native who resides in Indianapolis, speaks to an audience of about 50 people Saturday during a ceremony in which a historical marker noting his family's racing accomplishments was unveiled in Tinley Park. (Frank Vaisvilas/Daily Southtown) Tinley Park's first family of racing is officially historic.

A non-profit group that has installed dozens of historic markers dedicated to the sport of car racing all around Indiana ventured out of that state for the first time to erect a marker honoring the Bettenhausens.

The Bettenhausen name in racing is synonymous with triumph and tragedy, and a marker with a brief telling of the family's story in the sport was erected underneath the flagpole outside the Tinley Park Recreation Center.

It was unveiled on Saturday during a ceremony complete with a singing of the national anthem and flag-raising by Boy Scout Troop 991. “There are certain names that stand out in the sport of racing,” said Brian Hasler, co-founder of American Racing Memorial Association, which dedicated the marker.

With Tony Bettenhausen and his three sons all finding success and championships at the national level of racing, Hasler said the name Bettenhausen is among "racing royalty."

The recreation center where the marker was placed is the site of the former Bettenhausen farm and a museum exhibit inside the center informs visitors about the family's racing history.

The marker tells the story of Tony Bettenhausen leaving the farm in 1937 to go racing, and how he won national championships in 1951 and 1958 and competed in 14 Indianapolis 500s before dying in a crash while testing a friend's race car.

Merle Bettenhausen, his last surviving son, attended Saturday's event and said he and his two brothers continued their father's legacy in racing. Each wanted to achieve victory in the Indy 500, which their father never did.

"I wish the family was here, so they can enjoy the feeling I have," Merle Bettenhausen said during the ceremony. "This is one of the happiest days of my life."

Merle Bettenhausen reads from the newly unveiled historical marker honoring his family's racing legacy Saturday in Tinley Park. (Frank Vaisvilas/Daily Southtown) Merle, Gary and Tony Jr. never won the Indy 500 either, but not for lack of trying. They still achieved success and national acclaim in racing in their own right.

Gary made 21 Indy 500 starts and was a Sprint Car champion in 1969 and 1971. He died in 2014 at the age of 72. Tony Jr. started 11 times in the Indy 500 and created his own Indy car team before dying in a plane crash in 2000 at the age of 48.

Merle lost his right arm in a crash in his first series race in 1972. Despite that, he later found success in midget car racing and jokes that he raced better with one arm. With all the tragedy enmeshed with the

family's racing legacy, Merle said he and his brothers still loved the sport and wouldn't have wanted to do anything else. "Racing was everywhere we looked," he said. "Without my dad's racing our lives would be empty." Still, Merle said he didn't want his own son to take up racing, but he's proud his five-year-old daughter has shown a huge interest in go-karts.

About 50 people attended the ceremony, including Don MacCartaney of Highland, Ind., who said he had talked with Gary Bettenhausen often about sprint cars. He said he had attended another marker unveiling at Crown Cemetery near Indianapolis where several notable race car drivers are buried. Aron Paxton, of Aurora, said he came to the event because he's a huge fan of racing and its history. "It's a bigger deal than I thought it would be," he said of the unveiling. Paxton said he grew up with racing and not only enjoys the excitement of watching who pulls ahead, but also with its tradition. Hasler said the organization had dedicated 38 historical markers in Indianapolis before venturing out to Tinley Park. Their next historical marker will be unveiled in Fresno, Calif., on June 8 and will honor the Vukovich family. The Bettenhausen family name is still very recognizable in Tinley Park with the recreation center bearing the name and the Bettenhausen auto dealership owned by Merle's cousin, Harlan Bettenhausen.



Tinley Honors Commissioner Reta Brudd Who Died In April

By: Erika Hobbs, May 9, 2019

TINLEY PARK, IL — Reta L. Brudd, a 46-year, award-winning commissioner for the Village of Tinley Park, died April 21.

Brudd was appointed to serve on the human resources commission in 1973. She has served since then, most recently as chairwoman.

She spearheaded countless new programs and projects, village officials said, and contributed more than 20,000 hours of volunteer work. Brudd received many recognitions and awards, and was twice honored with awards from the Village of Tinley Park and the German City of Buedingen, for her international Sister City efforts. In 2002, Brudd received a Life Achievement Award from the Chamber of Commerce.



Reta L. Brudd, a 46-year, award-winning commissioner for the Village of Tinley Park, died April 21.

Reprinted from Tinley Park Patch, May 9, 2019

Reta Brudd, Age: 52

Early life: Born and raised on Chicago's North Side. Attended McPherson Elementary School and Amundsen High School. Attended North Central College for two years, then transferred to the University of Illinois at Chicago, from which she graduated in 1971 with a bachelor's degree in education and sociology.

Vocation: Benefits administrator.

Latest of many awards: In April 2002 Brudd received the Tinley Park Chamber of Commerce's Lifetime Achievement Award.

Secret suspicion about Tinley Park: "I've always said that there must be something they put in the water here that enables this to be such a special place."



~ In Memoriam ~

The Tinley Park Historical Society extends its heartfelt sympathies to the family and friends of Reta Brudd.

Reta was a longtime member of the Society and her friendship will be sorely missed.

Not only good looking, but smart, too!

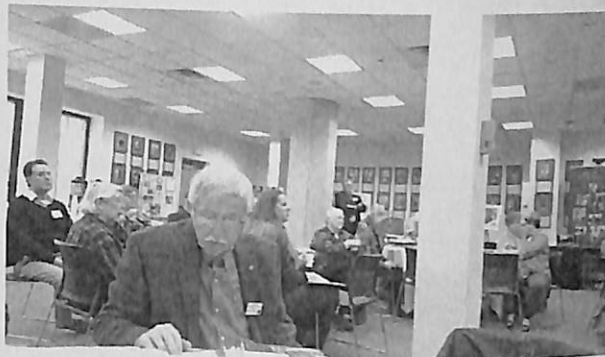
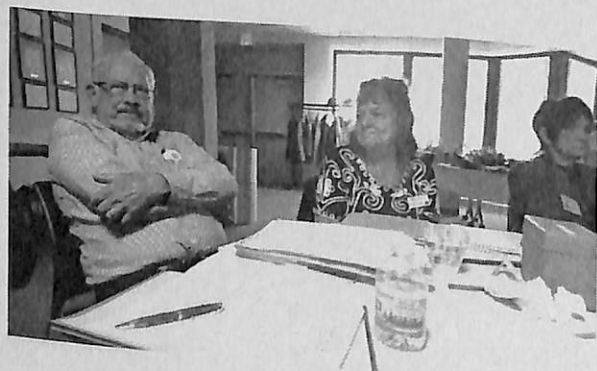
Volunteers from the historical society recently attended an on-site workshop at Governors State University for the purpose of preserving and celebrating local area history. Sponsored by the Steering Committee for Regional Archives, South Suburban Heritage Association, and Friends of the GSU Library, historians and librarians from local area history groups gathered to discuss ideas to establish a regional historical archives, following the model established by the university.

The history of the far south suburban Chicago region is critical to telling the story of the Underground Railroad, the housing boom and growth following World War II, and the story of racial integration in postwar suburban America. The need to identify and establish a method to maintain the materials and objects has been identified.

The Governors State University Archives' collections include materials documenting the history and intellectual output of the University, and collections documenting the development and cultural experiences of south suburban communities of Chicago, and serves as a model for other area historical groups. Its holdings include costumes, manuscripts, monographs, prints, photographs, video recordings, posters, and much more, maintained in a climate controlled environment.

Throughout the day, workshop participants took part in round table discussions covering such topics as preservation techniques, environment, collections and holdings, expenditures and funding, and governance.

Those attending were: Pat and Ed Siemsen, Mary Ann Marino, Connie Pavur, Phil Pursley, and Bruce Haffner.



History repeats itself, so you might wanna pay attention! ~ Quavo ~

Thank you for your generosity!

MEMORIAL DONATIONS

Marvin Block - by Matthew Bettenhausen
June Staackman - by Matthew Bettenhausen
June Staackman - by Matteson Hist.Society
Frank & Mary Jeffords - Susan Dorsey
Paul Jeffords - Susan Dorsey

MONETARY DONATIONS

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WHERE IN TINLEY PARK IS “HARPERS HILL”?

By Patricia Moran Siemsen

I am sure that many of the “ole’ timers” in Tinley Park know where Harper’s Hill is located – you will not find a sign for Harpers Hill, or an arrow pointing to the spot, but as you read the story below, you will learn where it was and its claim to fame.

On Saturday June 29th., we received a visit from Ellen Harper Tometich, and her son Drake Edward. Ellen is the great-grand daughter of Judge Francis A. Harper. Harper was an attorney, prominent Cook County Judge, and former Mayor of Tinley Park. He was elected to three 2 year terms as Mayor between 1911 and 1919, and in 1937 he was elected to serve a fourth term; he was the first leader in the village to accept a four year term.

As an attorney, Judge Harper rode the Rock Island train weekly to downtown Chicago, where he taught classes at the University of Chicago Law School. On May 31, 1945, at the age of 69, the Judge was leaving his home to take the train downtown, when he was struck by an oncoming train and killed instantly.



Harper’s home was palatial and befitting his stature. It was located at the top of a hill, northeast of the intersection of the Rock Island Railroad tracks (approximately 173rd Street) and 66th Avenue. It was the first modern house in town, being the first home in the village to have electricity, and indoor plumbing, beautiful paneling, and huge entry room.

He often used the parlor to not only entertain his guests, but to meet with local clients.

Over time, this area became known as Harper’s Hill. Was it because of the grand home which sat proudly atop the hill, or because of several accidents which took place at the train crossing? Several accidents resulted in the deaths of local teenagers.

We had a wonderful visit with Ellen and her son Drake, who is going to be attending University of Chicago Law School, following in his great-great grandfather’s footsteps. We talked about many of the historical happenings in our town and how so much has changed. They visited the Tinley Park Historical Society to present us with a tea set which belonged to the Judge. Judge Harper would sometimes meet with clients in his home, and the tea service was used when meeting with them. Previously, when the Harper house was sold, we received the bookcase that belonged to Judge Harper and quite a number of books.



Thanks to our volunteers for making this event happen. Without our volunteers, Phil Pursley, John Szaton, and Ron Otto, who did a lot of research for this meeting, and Ed Siemsen, President and Brad Bettenhausen, our Historian who added interesting facts to the conversation. We thank each of you for your contribution to making this event successful.

Recent Donations:

- Tom Schutzius** German Pulpit Bible, Sept 21, 1692. Used in Old Zion Church by Pastor Buddenhagen.
- Gale Shafer** Historical Society note card package; Bi-centennial stamp date May 9, 1976.
- Ron Olson** 3x5 photo of Ahrnot Family house, locate at 183rd and Sayre.
- Daniel Staackman** From June Staackman. 9 boxes memorabilia and photos from following families: Staackman, Koehler, Bauer, Breitbarth, Habenicht, Bormet, Schuldt and Siemsen.
- Marian Block** Many memorabilia items from collection of husband Marvin Block's teaching career at Bremen and Tinley Park High Schools, volunteering in village government, Trinity Lutheran Church, and Tinley Park Historical Society.
- Dick Morin** 1955 Blue Island Newspaper article "Grand Old Gentleman's Day" honoring former Tinley Park resident, Ernest Rice, Mayor and Fire Department.
- Jane Fulton** Items from the estate of her father Ken Fulton; employed by Motorola, attendance at Tinley Park Grade School, Thornton High School, WWII service, Tinley Park Village Trustee, Mayor, and many other organizations.
- Ellen Lamberty** From the estate of her mother, Ellen M. Lamberty. 1976 Bremen Bank calendar.
- Bonnie Mager** From memorabilia collection of Minnie and Harry Mager. Photo of Irma Buddenhagen, photo of Henrietta Vogt's marriage to Fred Funk, 1930 handwritten letter from Emma Vogt (teacher), 1930-1952 photos and programs of Tinley Park Schools.
- Robert Bettenhausen** Nov 7, 1073 *Tinley Park Times* Newspaper
- Janet Brower** memorabilia for her father John T. Arthur Jr., working at Rock Island Railroad 1942-1986, many photos, pins and buttons.
- Robert Patrick** Nov.11, 1936 *Chicago Daily News* newspaper.
- Donald Keuch** 1940s Zion Lutheran membership directory; 1944-45 Tinley Park Grade School 8th grade report card; 1946-47 Confirmation class group photo; 1953 photo of U.S.O. Military Show while stationed in Korea; 1955 Zion Lutheran bowling league banquet photo.
- Robert Usatuck** Metal sign from Tinley Park business – "Hoeh's Florist".
- Half Price Books** donation of approximately 200 children's books
- Earl Rockrohr** 1940 *Chicago Daily News* newspaper; 1945 *The Army Weekly – Yank* magazine copy; 1941-42 29 issues of *Weekly News Review of WWII*; 1944-45 memorabilia collected while in service in Italy.
- Bruce Haffner** April 1926 edition of the *National Geographic* magazine
- Ray Gustafson** 1979 photo of Trinity Lutheran Church ; 1980 TP Chamber of Commerce street map.
- Kelly Johnson** 2012 Photo calendar of various TP sites
- Brad Bettenhausen** 2003 edition of *Save Women's Lives, History of Washing Machines* by Lee Maxwell.
- Ron and Bill Bolek** Found during metal detecting during demolition at 6720 North Street, May 2019 – 1 ½ x 1 ¾ copper tag inscribed "Chris Funk 150 Tinley Park"
- Tinley Park High School** Tinley Park High School Band trophies and awards.
- Pat and Ed Siemsen** 1884 printing of the *History of Cook County*, illustrated by A.T. Andreas.

Board of Directors

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Historical Society Office (708) 429-4210

Landmark Chapel and Museum
 6727 W 174th Street
 Tinley Park, IL 60477

Tinley Park Historical Society Membership Registration *INVOICE*

Payment due between January 1st and March 31st of every calendar year.

Please make checks payable to Tinley Park Historical Society
 All contributions are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

- Senior Citizen/Student \$15 annually
- Individual/Family \$25 annually
- Commercial/Business \$50 annually
- Supporting \$100
- Life \$250
- Founder's Circle \$500*

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*includes one use of the Landmark facilities.

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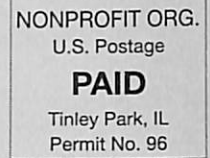
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Tinley Park Historical Society

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Keep Us Up-to-Date...

Please be sure to inform us of address changes - even if they are temporary or extended vacation destinations. Each newsletter that gets returned costs us money which can be used for other purposes. We want our members and friends to receive, read, and enjoy this newsletter, not have them returned to us!

The Tinley Park Historical Society Museum is located in the Old Zion Landmark Chapel built in 1884, and reproduction one-room Schoolhouse. The Landmark Chapel (oldest church building in Tinley Park), with its beautiful stained glass windows, is available for weddings and special events.

Our Musuem and Reference Library is open during the following hours:

Every Wednesday from 10:00 am until 2:00 pm
The first Sunday of the month from 1:00 pm until 3:00 pm
The second Thursday of the month from 6:00 pm until 8:00 pm
or by appointment
For further information please call our office at (708) 429-4210

