



## Minneota Memories

George Sarazyn is being remembered for his many years playing Santa Claus locally. Sarazyn, who was from Taunton, passed away in 1993.

## Letter to the Editor

### To the Editor,

The Countryside Golf Club in Minneota has been graced with the presence of a truly incredible manager these last three years by the name of Tony Esping. Tony is stepping down from his manager position this year to spend more time with his family and his current job.

Tony busted his tail at the club these last three years, driven to make the club profitable again, and his hard work paid off. The club went from losing money three years ago to having the last two years show a profit again.

Memberships increased nearly 60 percent since 2019. His management and his infectious personality made everyone feel welcome, no matter what your walk of life. Tony had to work through some very difficult times the last three years, starting with the COVID restrictions in 2020, to the supply distributions and cost increase of 2021. But his persistence paid off as the club stay busy and robust with over 18 events that Tony promoted and organized, from golf tournaments (with help from Brandon Hennen and Jerry Teigland) to

reunions, private parties, retirement parties, sponsorship events and graduation parties. Many of these events were new to the club and brought a lot of new faces and exposure to the club which will pay dividends in the future for Countryside Golf Club. We also commend the grounds crew, Brandon Hennen and Rod Stensrud, and all the volunteers for their hard work in making the course look great.

Tony will assist our new manager, Ryan Juutilainen, learn the ropes before he leaves, again just another testament to Tony's

dedication to help Countryside Golf continue the success he has started.

Tony, should your life's journey steer you back in this direction, you should know there will always be a place for you at Countryside Golf Club.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, members of Countryside Golf Club and the Minneota community, we are extremely grateful and thankful for everything Tony has done. We wish Tony and his family all the best in their future endeavors.

## From the Mascot Files

### 100, 75, 50 and 25 Years Ago

#### 100 Years Ago (Dec. 16, 1921)

#### Minneota basketball team beats Canby

The Minneota village basketball team went to Canby on Wednesday and defeated the Canbyites by a score of 21-17. The game was fast and interesting and the local boys were shown every courtesy. A return game will be played at the Opera Hall here next Tuesday evening.

#### 75 Years Ago (Dec. 20, 1946)

#### Meeting set to discuss hospital here

A special meeting of the Minneota Businessmen's Association is to be held at the

City Hall on Friday evening for the purpose of discussing the building of a hospital in Minneota. The hospital committee is composed of Donald Bourgeois, Carl Christianson, Mrs. Mary Finnegan, P.H. Geiwitz, Joseph Josefson, H.J. Tillemans, and Dr. S.D. Wolstan. The group will discuss a proposed drive for funds for a building a hospital here.

#### 50 Years Ago (Dec. 16, 1971)

#### Hope to perform superintendent's song

The Hope Lutheran Church choir will introduce a new selection "For the Lord is My Shepherd", written by Ralph Larson, superintendent of the Minneota Public Schools, when it presents its Christmas concert at the

church next Sunday evening. Three choirs will sing at the concert, the Junior choir directed by Mrs. A.J. Christianson and accompanied by Sandra Josephson; Children's choir directed by Suzzette Rye and accompanied by Jean Ufkin; and Senior choir directed by Mrs. Lester Christianson and accompanied by Mrs. Carl Christianson and Robin Hammer.

#### 25 Years Ago (Dec. 18, 1996)

#### Santa coming to town on Sunday

Two special events are being staged this week in Minneota. On Friday, Dec. 20, the Community First National Bank will be hosting a Christmas Open House. There will be cider, coffee

and cookies served. The public is welcome between the hours of 9 a.m. and 4 p.m. There will also be prizes given away to those who register. On Sunday, Dec. 22, Santa Claus will make a visit to the Senior Center from 2-4 p.m. He will visit with children and hand out treats.

#### School closes due to snow, freezing rain

Local students missed school due to freezing rain and snow. It's officially winter on Dec. 21 and we have been experiencing its weather for a long time already. Temperatures dropped from 40 degrees last Thursday to single digits this week. Another one to three inches of snowfall is expected, with windy conditions causing the 10 inches already on the ground to create "white-out" conditions.

## Outside Looking In



By Scott Thoma

### Small world

When I was growing up in Tracy, I often heard a story about an accident with one of the midway rides during Box Car Days, the annual town event held over Labor Day weekend.

The story became exaggerated over the years to the point where several people were flung hundreds of feet in the air when one of the cars on the ride called "The Bullet" became unhitched from the assembly.

Even though the story was stretched, it was still a horrific accident.

The accident left one girl paralyzed and another injured. I tried to locate the two girls for several years, but hadn't thought about it recently until I met one of them by chance.

As I was taking some photos of the Society for the Preservation of Minneota Heritage-hosted Old-Fashioned Christmas event in the Opera Hall recently, a woman helping at the craft table told me her name was name Mary Jane (Janssen) Berends and announced proudly that "I'm a 1962 graduate of Minneota".

When I told her I grew up in nearby Tracy, Mary Jane began to tell me that she was injured in a ride during Box Car Days in Tracy in 1959.

Around 6:45 p.m. on September 7, 1959, Mary Jane, then 14, and Irene Finch, 15, of Canby seated themselves in one of the cars on "The Bullet" and fastened their safety harness.

This was the first time Mary Jane and Irene had ever met. Mary Jane was dating Irene's brother, Jerry, and Irene was also on a date, so they double-dated. The "Bullet" did not appeal to the boys, so they instead tried to win a teddy bear for their dates, while the girls went on the ride.

The "Bullet" is the approximate height of a Ferris wheel, but with only two cars shaped like bullets that goes around in a circle quickly and those seated inside are upside down at the top of the ride. The ride begins slowly and then builds up speed.

With safety not a high priority in those days, the leather safety strap holding the girls inside was worn and in need of replacement. As the ride sped up, the strap broke.

"I remember saying 'Reenie, I'm slipping,'" said Berends.

After the strap broke, the girls were hurtled out of the door of the car. It was later determined that the latch on the car was also broken.

The girls flew approximately 60 feet in the air.

Mary Jane crashed into a window of the lumber yard building nearby, which broke her fall, and she landed on the sidewalk below and was knocked unconscious.

According to an article in the Sept. 11, 1959 issue of the Mascot, Mary Jane was taken to the Tracy Hospital and spent several days there before being released the following weekend. She had a badly sprained wrist, cuts and bruises and a concussion. She had to have glass removed from her legs, but she somehow managed to avoid any broken bones.

Gubrud wasn't as fortunate. She landed head-first on the sidewalk and suffered spinal injuries, bruises and a skull fracture. She was transferred to the Miller Hospital in St. Paul where she was initially listed in critical condition. She suffered spinal cord nerve damage and became a partial paraplegic. She walked with the aid of forearm crutches for the rest of her life.

The accident brought forth one of the largest lawsuits in Minnesota history at the time.

The girls stayed in touch for a time. Mary Jane attended Irene's wedding, but as time went on, they lost contact with one another.

Mary Jane became an LPN and worked pediatrics for several years at Methodist Hospital in Minneapolis. She married Ernie Berends and they had three children. They lived in several locations, including this area, before settling in Holland, Michigan six years ago.

Irene (Gubrud) Finch passed away Nov. 3, 2020 from a pulmonary embolism following abdominal surgery in Huntington, Long Island, where she lived. Prior to her death, Irene earned a Bachelor of Music degree at St. Olaf and then a Master's degree in Vocal Performance at The Julliard School in New York City.

While at Julliard, she won the Concert Artists Guild first prize, an award that included a debut recital at Carnegie Recital Hall. During her career, Renee sang with every major American symphony orchestra as well as many European ensembles.



Mary (Janssen) Berends



Irene (Gubrud) Finch

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