



March 2023

From the Driveway to the Highway: Ratay Chronicles the Great American Road Trip

Some members of the audience at **Richard Ratay's** March 15th presentation, "Don't Make Me Pull Over! An Informal History of the Family Road Trip" may have momentarily been concerned by the words appearing on the screen at the program's outset: "Goody! A slideshow of all his family vacations!"

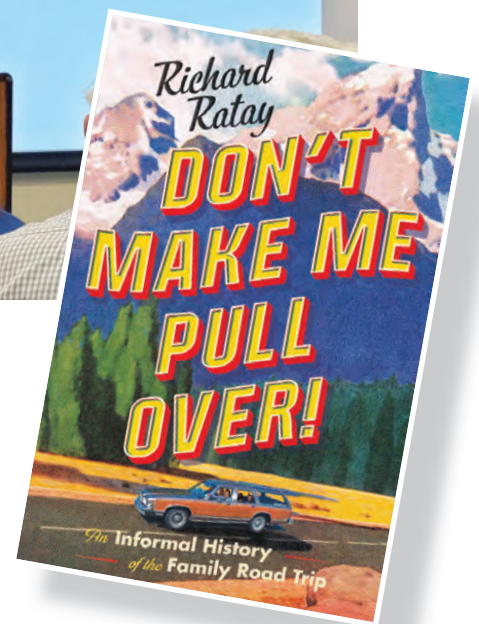
Nope, not even close. As Richard was quick to point out, his parents were terrible picture takers (as demonstrated by several examples), and the focus of his presentation was not on snapshots from family vacations but on the great American tradition of the family road trip – or as he described the program, "25% family stuff, 50% fun history, and 25% pop culture."

First, the history: World War II inspired America's wanderlust as millions of young men trained for military duty in areas of the country far removed from their homes and families. In the post-war years, many of those men, now with wives and young families of their own, wanted to see more of what the nation had to offer. Fueled by the post-war economic boom and the availability of safer, more affordable automobiles, the family road trip was estab-



lished, with far-flung destinations such as the national parks, Washington, D.C., Mount Rushmore, Cape Canaveral, and Disneyland, as well as other theme parks and pop cultural attractions like Six Flags and Sea World.

Contributing to the travel boom in the 1950s was the birth of the interstate highway system. Proposed by President Dwight Eisenhower, interstates were designed to ease congestion on smaller-scale roads and streets and, most importantly, to enhance national defense capabilities by providing quick routes for moving military units and evacuating cities in case of atomic attack. Begun in 1956, construction of the interstate highway system was projected to cost \$30 billion and be completed in 10 years. The actual cost ran to \$130 billion,



and building continued into the 1980s.

After providing historical background, Richard regaled the audience with tales of road trips taken with his parents and three older siblings. Common to all the trips was his father's oft-repeated desire to "make good time" toward the family's vacation destination – which meant up to 15 hours on the road each day, bathroom breaks only in the most dire circumstances, and McDonald's

(Continued on page 2)

In Memoriam

On February 18th, our Society lost Board member **Sandy Sannes** who passed away at age 76. Our sincere condolences go to her husband, **Randy**, and to her family.

Sandy served as our Hospitality Chair from 1999 to 2003, was a co-chair of 2016's "Cabernet at the Cabin" fundraising event, and has been our Recording Secretary since 2016. In addition, she served the Village of Hales Corners for 24 years: six years as a trustee and 18 years as a member of the Fire & Police Commission.

She also was active at Whitnall Park Lutheran Church, serving on the church council. She volunteered at Boerner Botanical gardens as a guide for schoolchildren, and at the former Bethesda Lutheran Resale Shop.



Her professional career included positions as District Manager for Manpower Inc., Manager at Hatch Staffing, Manager for IT Recruiting at Entre PC Solutions, and Manager of Recruiting for Lauber CFOs.

Sandy was active in many organizations during her lifetime including Human Resource Management, Interfaith, Hire

Center, and the Administrative Management Association. She was a board member and officer of Sales and Marketing Executives, charter member of Recruiter Network, member of the Governor's Older Workers Taskforce, and president and member of the Brookfield Chamber of Commerce.

Sandy loved to travel, especially to the Southwest, and had great interest in collecting Native American artwork. She also relished spending time at the condo in Egg Harbor, where she enjoyed views of the water, sunsets, and the works of many Door County artists. She volunteered at the Peninsula School of Art's annual Plein Air Festival.

When asked how she would like to be remembered, Sandy answered, "As a stepmother, leader and teacher, active community member, business-woman and friend." She will be missed.

DON'T MAKE ME PULL OVER!

(Continued from page 1)

meals consumed while hurtling down the highway.

Richard's father also had an aversion to stopping for gas until absolutely necessary, and it was at this point in his presentation that Richard (cued by a slide saying "Shut up and read something!") did just that – reading several pages from his book that recounted what he called the "Battle of E" – a series of heated (and oft-repeated) skirmishes between his mother and father about the need to pull into a gas station when the car's fuel gauge indicated "E" for empty. As Richard

described it, "To my father, the "E" stood for something more like "Eh?"—a sort of half-hearted heads-up that somewhere along the next hundred miles, if it was convenient, it might be good to look for an exit with a service station."

Despite occasional misadventures and family tensions, Richard clearly conveyed to the audience his fond memories of those family road trips, as he expressed in the closing lines of his book: "In the end, it never really mattered where we traveled in our car on those great family road trips. In simply making the drive together, we were already in the best place of all."

A Question Is Answered

Our Jan/Feb newsletter included an article about Carlson's Service Station, and we asked if anyone knew Carlson's first name. HCHS members **Mel** and **Elaine Schmidt** informed us that his name was **BILL**. Thank you! A life-long Village resident, Mel is our oldest member at age 97. As a boy, he cut the lawn at Carlson's station, which was next door to Mel's home on 108th Place. Some may remember that Mel was the proprietor for many years of Mel's Liquor Store in the Hales Corners Shopping Center.

TALES OF THE CORNERS - MARCH

From the files of the *Tri-Town News and Hub*

90 YEARS AGO (1933)

- State Bank Hales Corners opens on an unrestricted basis. President Elmer Godsell says withdrawals for business purposes will be permitted, but excessive withdrawals for hoarding are prohibited.
- About 40 miles of telephone poles in the Hales Corners area are knocked over in an ice storm. The Rapid Transit runs about 30 minutes late due to ice on the wires and slippery tracks.
- Surveyors are laying down lines to widen Highway 100 from Hales Corners north to Mukwonago Road (now National Avenue). When completed, it will be a 30-foot-wide highway. Currently, it is about 18 feet wide.
- A petition for changing the name of Hales Corners to Hale Park is presented to the Hales Corners Advancement Association. It will be circulated for signatures to show Greenfield and Milwaukee County officials that the action is favored by residents.
- Fairview Hall (The Bosch Tavern) is packed for the Farmer's Institute.
- Frank Acker and Delbert Small are building a log service station on S. 108th Place.
- Plans are made to hold an old-time dance and basket social in order to raise money for the Hales Corners School annual picnic.

80 YEARS AGO (1943)

- Deputy Sheriff Dabelin wants to stop the abandonment of cats and dogs after the monthly Hales Corners fairs, to protect victory gardens from strays.
- A branch of the Milwaukee Public Library is opened in Hales Corners by the American Legion Auxiliary at the Legion clubhouse. Volunteer librarians are on duty Tuesday afternoons, as well as Tuesday and Friday evenings.
- The Hales Corners Public Library is the information headquarters for victory gardens. Bags suitable for soil tests are available and all gardeners who register at the library will have police protection for their gardens throughout the season.
- Mrs. Henry Weiss is elected president of the new Hales Corners Unit of War Mothers. The group has 22 members.
- The Hawthorne and Whitnall Park Garden Clubs each make two scrapbooks for hospitalized servicemen at Camp McCoy.
- War stamps will be given for the three best slogan entries made by grade school children for the Hales Corners Civic Association.
- Gloria-Lyn Beauty Shop advertises the "Bang" hairstyle.

70 YEARS AGO (1953)

- Plans are made to plat about 55 lots in the new Hale Park subdivision.
- An ordinance restricting angle parking on Village streets has been approved by the Hales Corners Village Board.
- Helen Ollie and her daughter, Arlene, are the new proprietors of the H and H Variety Store.

60 YEARS AGO (1963)

- The front page of the *Tri-Town News* features a drawing of the preliminary development plan for the 37-acre proposed park site on Janesville Road and S. 116th Street.
- Ann Margaret Lewis is Whitnall High School's winner in the 1963 Betty Crocker search for the "American Homemaker for Tomorrow."

50 YEARS AGO (1973)

- The Root River Action Committee raises over \$5,000 to pay for a lawsuit against the Metropolitan Sewage Commission and a pipeline firm. The money is solicited from more than 100 people living in Greenfield and Hales Corners who have had problems with their wells following the construction of an interceptor sewer in the Hales Corners area.
- Median family incomes in Hales Corners are \$14,146 according to figures published by the Southeastern Wisconsin Regional Plan Commission.
- The commission also announces that most Hales Corners residents have lived at their present address for nine years or longer.

Research by Katy Galewski

Village Women Honored at Library During Women's History Month



March is Women's History Month in the United States. In celebration, **Stephanie Lewin-Lane**, Director of the Hales Corners Library, decided to create a library window display highlighting the many contributions of women in our Village. She approached our Society to inquire what images

and items we might have in our collection. We were able to provide posters about significant women in Village history, along with scrapbooks and signage from the Hales Corners Woman's Club. Stephanie and her staff then did a great job of assembling the display. Please stop by and view it.

Please Return Your HCHS Membership Renewal Form

Membership renewal letters were mailed in December. At the right is a list of our members so far. If you haven't yet done so, we hope you'll renew your membership and continue to support our efforts to preserve the history of the Village - and attend all of our FREE historical programs in 2023. Thank you!

WELCOME, NEW* AND RETURNING 2023 HCHS MEMBERS!

Constance Anderson
Kenneth J. Augustine
James Bain
Mary Bennett
Joan Berg
Robert Burnham
& Patricia Laughlin
Esther Demerdash
Ronald & Kathleen Dondlinger
Matthew Eternicka
Mike & JuDee Fischer
Robert & Mary Forecki
Katy Galewski
Fred Hammer
Jean Hancock
David & Margarete Harvey
Dave & Sharon Hause*
Michael Holmes
Frank & Judith Humpal
Mike Jedrzejewski
& Sybil Grandeck
Gregory S. Jenks
Celine Kashishian
James & Jacqueline Keuck
Bob & Dottie King
Frank & Rose Mary Matusinec
Gary Kohls & Karen Niessing
Gregory & Romaine Krystowiak
Walter Nickerson*
David & Kathleen O'Brien
Mike Praedel
Cornelio & Colleen Resendiz
Scott & Maureen Riemer
Richard & Carol Ann Rose
Randy Sannes
Chris & Caroline Schachtlie
Mel & Elaine Schmidt
Don & Suzanne Schwartz
Joe "Chuck" Sem
Nancy Sievert
Marjorie Stahl
Daniel & Kayellyn Strasburg
Al & Ruth Strekow
Mark Thiel
Ian Thomson*
Brian & Laura Touhey
Tom Ueberroth & Delene Hanson
Patricia Warchol
Robert & Jeanette Wardinski*
Janice Zeit
Kathleen Zellmer

*Membership roster current
as of March 2023.*

HALES CORNERS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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