WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Neil W. Draz
By Jack Kolb

Some talented individuals go through this world unobtrusively leaving a wide wake of accomplishments.

Neil Draz is one of those individuals and many of you are saying “Who is He?” Neil came out of the St. Paul Park system and was the superintendent at Phalen Golf from 1971 until his retirement in 1987.

Neil Draz has always intrigued me by his appearance in areas of “high culture” such as the Ordway Theater, Walker Art Institute, Tyrone Guthrie Theater and Minnesota Orchestra Hall. Neil says the sightings were happenstance but he does try to diversify his entertainment.

Neil’s amalgam of talents began when he was in high school and found a job in the old Onyx Dental Laboratories at 4th and Minnesota Street in downtown St. Paul. He started out as an errand boy running crowns, partials and dentures of all types to local dentists. Before going into the Navy in 1945 he had worked his position up to being the technician who vulcanized the “Ivories” to the dental plate. Upon discharge from the Navy in 1947, Neil went to work for “Reid H. Ray” film industries.

Old timers remember the local studio as the source of training films — also for the many short advertisements that were run on the screen before the feature movie in theaters nationwide. Shortly thereafter television became prominent and began casting about for technicians in their industry.

KSTP channel 5 television needed a talented person to operate its new film processor. Neil Draz was one of the few persons around with that talent and got the job.

With protective guilds that had quickly moved into the industry Neil soon found that he had a lot of daylight time on his hands and wanted a little more fresh air. He took a test as a park aide and was soon on his way to a new career, all the while continuing to do film processing at KSTP studio.

Neil Draz was the supervisor and Golf Course Superintendent in charge of reconstruction of the Phalen Golf Course which took from 1974 until 1976 at which time it reopened.

Neil and his wife Carol will celebrate 47 years of marriage this summer.