

Where Are They Today?

MAYNARD ERICKSON

By JACK KOLB
MGCSA Life Member

Around the year 1910 a visionary man, Theodore Wirth, got his Park Board to consider the possibility of building a golf course on property that had recently been set aside as Glenwood Park. By 1916 nine holes had been opened and was named Glenwood Golf Course. Since parks were for people's enjoyment there were no green fees. Play became popular and a decision to add nine more holes was conceived with preparations to begin about one year after the first nine was opened. With Theodore Wirth acting as Superintendent of Parks and a Park Manager by the name of Walter Swanson, a gentleman by the name of Carl Axel Erickson was hired in 1917 to help with construction of the second phase of the course which was completed in 1918.

Until the second nine holes was opened there had been no fee charged for playing golf. The number of players and the popularity of the area brought many curious observers to watch this unusual game. This provoked the need for some form of social hall or gathering space for players and spectators and a decision was made to construct a clubhouse. Like all businesses the bottom line was beginning to show costs exceeding budget for operating the Park. Thus a 15 cent fee was charged for each round of golf on the newly opened 18 to defray these costs. Players numbered into several thousands of rounds, and the revenue generated went a long way toward paying the total cost of construction which amounted to less than \$10,000 for all 18 holes.

Carl Axel Erickson met up with a Miss Signa Swanson. A marriage union between the two produced four children, three girls and a boy. The male offspring born in 1924 was named Maynard. Carl and Signa lived in a home right in Glenwood Park. The home was recently removed but would be at 3715 Glenwood Avenue if it were to exist today.

It is not often when you call a potential subject for an interview he says, "Let's meet at a restaurant named after me!" Thus it was that we met at Maynard's Restau-



MGCSA CHARTER MEMBER CARL ERICKSON with his 1948 Theodore Wirth grounds crew: pictured left to right are, Maynard Erickson, Golf Course Superintendent Carl Erickson, Bud Larson, Clarence Samuelson, Todd Johnston and Ed Lien.

ant in Excelsior, owned by Maynard Erickson's daughter Linda and son-in-law Randy Rosengren. The luncheon meeting was a spirited affair with many side stories and reminiscing about past individuals. We stayed long after the waitresses had set up for the evening crowd.

Maynard grew up on Glenwood Golf Course and Park. One of his earliest recollections of starting a career with the Park Department was to accompany his dad Carl, who drove a truck, while Maynard and sister would pick up trash on the Park Boulevards. That same year, while he was about 10 years old, crew members taught him how to drive a tractor, while keeping the event secret from Maynard's father Carl.

It was impossible for Carl to put under-aged Maynard on the payroll along with all that civil service data that had to be furnished, so at age 13 Maynard went over to Golden Valley Country Club and caddied. Mike Sanko was the Superintendent of Golden Valley at that time (1937), Harry Cooper was the Pro and Art Stat was the Club Manager. Mike Sanko saw value in the young Erickson as an

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Maynard Erickson—

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employee, and the following year, at age 14, Maynard worked for Mike Sanko each summer through high school as part of the Golden Valley Grounds Crew. Maynard reminds us that he mowed greens while the mowers did not have gas engines. They were hand pushed at that time. 1938 also happened to be the year Glenwood Golf became Theodore Wirth Park and Golf Course. Following high school graduation in 1942, Maynard did about a one-year stint with the Milwaukee Road.

In July of 1943, the United States government convinced Maynard that he was needed to preserve freedom in this great country, and he was drafted into the Navy. Few of today's society realize what a complete career change this causes. Here is a man who is working on solid ground with vegetation all around — next he is on a piece of floating steel bobbing around in an endless body of water with the nearest solid ground as far away as six miles "straight down" and not a tree in sight. It was people like Maynard, who although he was not a rural person, had the knowledge of work ethic, equipment, motors, tractors, problem solving and level headedness under stress that persevered to defeat the enemy.

Maynard was assigned to PCC 598 a small Patrol craft engaged in communications during invasions of enemy held islands in the Pacific Ocean. PCC 598 and her sister patrol craft were used for invasions of enemy held islands. Maynard was in on seven of these confrontations from Pelilu to Okinawa. Their job was to station themselves one on either side of the American invading forces, only several hundred yards from the enemy shore, and keep all those engaged in the operation informed of enemy activity and hopefully progress of the success of the assault. Maynard's rank was a MM 2/c (Machinists Mate second class). His "battle-station" position was manning a 3-inch gun, "top-side," where a lot of metal of all shapes and sizes was constantly in the air. In the heat of an amphibious assault you see floating bodies, most of which — unfortunately — are your own troops. There is a great appreciation for those you are working with. One such person was a young man from Kansas, who shared dreams of the future with Maynard. Those dreams ended when the young man was struck in the chest (heart) by a bullet as he and Maynard were in conversation with each other.

Maynard returned to civilian life in February of 1946 and was living at home with his parents at what would be 3715 Glenwood Avenue in Theodore Wirth Park. He had seen quite a bit of the world and was contemplating whether his future should be made in Minnesota or other "ports" of the World. Ben Johnson, supervisor of the Minneapolis Park Employees, stopped by his home and

encouraged Maynard to take the civil service test and come into the City Park system.

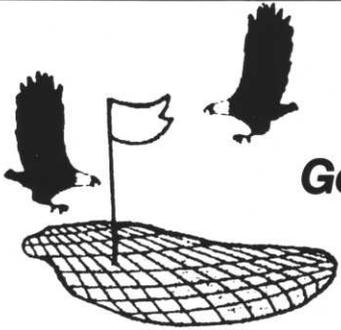
At the same time Maynard was filling out his civil service form, two other young men, Todd Johnston and Bud Larson, also were applying for work with the Park Board. Those of you who have been around for a while are aware that Todd Johnston (deceased) eventually became Golf Course Superintendent at Hiawatha and Bud Larson was Superintendent at Columbia Golf Course.

As it turned out, all three of these young men were sent to work at Theodore Wirth golf under the direction of Course Superintendent Carl Erickson, Maynard's father. When Carl Erickson retired in 1949 he moved from the home provided by the Park Board and moved to Cross Lake, Minn. Emil Anderson, Superintendent at Columbia Golf, replaced Maynard's dad and moved into the house in Wirth Park. In 1952 when Emil Anderson retired, he moved from the home and was replaced by the "grounds crew member named Golf Course Superintendent" Maynard Erickson. As was so typical of those days, Maynard related a story about asking his boss (Emil Anderson) a somewhat technical question about growing turf. Emil would answer, "If I tell you, den you be as smart as I am, den you get my job."

In 1953 Maynard Erickson moved into the house in which he was born and raised his family of two girls, Linda and Janice, also two boys Bradley and Wayne, within the confines of Theodore Wirth Park.

Maynard retired from the Park Board in 1976 after 30 years of service and moved to Cross Lake, north of Brainerd. He has remained active in golf course development and management in that area as a consultant. He currently is engaged in development of a course called "Cross Woods" — a new 18-hole layout in Cross Lake. Maynard's son Brad is in his 26th year with the Minneapolis Park Department, and a fourth generation Erickson, Scott, started work this past summer "part time" in the clubhouse. Scott Erickson is Wayne's son and if he perseveres until the year 2016 we will have a full century of Ericksons.

Maynard and his wife Fran celebrated 50 years of marriage this past March.



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