

Russell Magnaghi interview with David Engstrom
April 4th 2009

START OF INTERVIEW

Russell Magnaghi (RM): Dave, how did you get to know Harley Larson?

David Engstrom (DE): Who?

RM: Harley Larson.

DE: Oh. When he first came to town he started the Downtowner (Hotel). We wanted to get all the new businessmen in town into the Kiwanis club so that would have been 1961 or something. That's how he got here. We become very close friends. In fact, when Eileen and I got married the very next year, (it) would have been 97, he invited us out to Phoenix, Arizona. He has a very nice home out there. I like the northern part of Arizona, but when we got down to the dessert part, I didn't like that. It was expensive too. To play golf you had to pay what, like 100 dollars just to play nine holes.

RM: Oh boy. So you got know him in Marquette. Now how did he get you involved in St. Mary's Hospital?

DE: Because we were very good friends. In fact he had two sons and one son was very active in football and so I wrote him a letter. I said "Harley, you better pick up some land down there. Your sons like (to) hunt ducks and go deer hunting." So then he put up a hunting camp down there along the Sturgeon River.

RM: Down by Nahma? Sturgeon River where?

DE: Yeah.

RM: Nahma?

DE: Down between Foster City and somewhere over there.

RM: Oh okay.

DE: So anyhow he put a...then a...there was an old football player from Northern Michigan. But, anyhow he, Bill, who was he, no, Harley Larson, Cliff and Sandy Wagner, Dick Agley, there was about four people that formed a supper club. The supper club met one week out of a month on a Saturday night. We met at different houses or something, and then we decided that, you know, there was something wrong with Marquette. All they ever want to do on a Thursday night is go to a hockey game. For the older people there was no place to go, fancy. So, we started a dance club. That's one thing that (for) the people who were in business in Marquette to do. Marquette doesn't realize what the hell is going on. In fact, like the Marquette City Commission took three years to find out how to make money down there. They got money going out the window over there. I get a little bit bad at the Marquette Township because I used to play golf down at Greywalls and that goes right down there, and Marquette Township comes right up there in the summer time, and I could hear bulldozers up there drilling trying to get water. Yeah. That's what the big fight is right now. They want to get

water from the city, but they don't want to have to pay for it. So, yeah I'm lucky there, I am on the aquifer that goes right up to the gravel pit, Lindberg's (A. Lindberg & Sons, Inc.) gravel pit...

RM: Out here you mean?

DE: Yeah, when you go (take) (CR) 480 there and you go down there. Lindberg's, there's a big gravel pit out there anyhow.

RM: So, you got to know Harley Larson and you were good friends with Larson and then he had you get on the board of St. Mary's hospital? How did you get on the board?

DE: Mr. Jenner was a, you know how they used to make charcoal briquettes out there?

RM: Oh, yeah.

DE: Jenner, he was a very good Catholic. One of his sons was going to be trained to be a priest.

RM: Oh.

DE: And he did. He ended up being a priest. He had us to take care of Mrs. Jenner's cat. He invited us out to their (camp), they had a nice fancy place on Bass Lake down there. Mary Jane and I used to go down there and have picnics and then they always had their cat and I would check him over.

RM: So he got you on the board then, and you were friends with Jenner, Mr. Jenner and he...

DE: No, Mr. Jenner put me on the board.

RM: Oh.

DE: Mr. Jenner did. He was so appreciative of what I did for their animals and their sons. Even though I'm a minister's son, I told him one time that my dad, he got saved by the Catholic Church in Sweden, and now he is an evangelistic minister. So I says, he gives the priest in Sweden... he thinks that guy saved his soul, so Mr. Jenner he liked to hear that. See the Catholics and the Presbyterians we all worship the same God. So he finally saw through, that's what it was.

RM: Now did you enjoy being on the board?

DE: Well, yeah, because I had a lot of friends there.

RM: Were there ever any problems you had to deal with as a member of the board?

DE: Well, if I ever got too involved, I told Harley that I'd adjourn the meeting because I didn't like that kind of stuff...

RM: Were there ever any big problems you had where you couldn't adjourn the meeting over, or problems that were solved the next time?

DE: Sure. Charlie (Dr. K. Charles) Wright.

RM: Was he on the board?

DE: No, but he is a good friend of mine, and Charlie Wright he up and put up 1414 West Fair Avenue (now the Upper Peninsula Medical Center, then called the Marquette Medical-Dental Center). Holy smokes, that shook them all up. Because they said, "That Dr. Wright wants to take all of our money and put up that 1414 West Fair Avenue. He has a big laboratory and a big x-ray over there. He doesn't need the hospital anymore." But that wasn't right. So I talked to Charlie and I said, "I realize that all these doctors that are on the board, they all went to bed at night and they all deserve a good night sleep so they can function at the hospital the next day. That was his main thing. It was to have emergency care, so people could go to that place in the middle of the night and get evaluated. That's what Charlie Wright wanted to do so people could come in for emergency care. Then they could decide whether they could do anything for them there or have them go to the hospital. So that's what Charlie Wright did. He could sure think.

RM: Yeah.

DE: That same had been through (true?) ever since, you know, since Charlie Wright put up 1414 West Fair Avenue. Then we had to do that emergency treatment settle(ment). That's what I went through. It ended up in civil court for 8 days.

RM: Oh yeah. So you were involved in developing the trauma center and the new emergency room? Or were you not involved in that?

DE: No.

RM: But, you were on the board when that happened?

DE: Yeah.

RM: Now you were on the board also of St. Luke's hospital? St. Mary's and St. Luke's?

DE: Also St. Agnes. St. Luke's, now, my friend Lincoln Frasier I think he was on the board, not me.

RM: At St. Luke's?

DE: Yeah.

RM: You were just on the board at St. Mary's?

DE: Yeah, St. Mary's, yeah, but Lincoln Frasier, he was involved with St. Luke's and the building across the street where a lot of the doctors had their offices, Frasier put that up, that is east (currently home of the Blood Bank). We have that super-duper emergency room down on one end and...

RM: Yeah, it is now the blood center. It is the blood center for the hospital.

DE: Yeah. That's another thing I did when I went to school at Michigan State. I had a job working at the blood center.

RM: Oh, okay. Do you remember when they had merged the hospitals, St. Mary's and St. Luke's and when that happened? You don't remember that?

DE: No. I'll tell you what though, my good friend Jack McCracken he had his horses out there. He says to me, "I think it is a shoulder," and I says, "Oh well, let me check," and I says, "well, I don't think so Jack, your lower leg has been injured and you have a torn cruciate ligament on your horse," so I said, "You have to take care of that." Now Jack McCracken he had harness horses, you know how you sit there and hold the harness on the horses. So, he says, "Well, if I can't run my horse I might as well go down to Detroit and see what is going on down there." So he went down there and his horses did okay and he said, "In the afternoon the thoroughbreds are running." So I said, "Oh, well I will come and watch that." And there are classmates of mine - Keeran, Dr. Rolla Keeran (Rolla James Keeran, from Lapeer, MI. Graduated from Michigan State University College of Veterinary Medicine in 1958 and later lived in Brighton, MI); he always liked horses. He was so upset when a horse went down (on) the fairway, and they couldn't get the horse to stand up, and year ago they would probably shoot him. But he says, "I developed a hydraulic operating table." He had seen these in hospitals for people where they could lay down. So he had these here, they were belly bands, that would go around the thing (the horse) here and go up there and then they, the place where they were watching. So Rola Keeran came out there and picked the horse up straight and put it on his operating table. So, that's all you know. Then he says, "Dr. Keeran, Dave Engstrom says that I've got a torn cruciate ligament on my front leg on the horse." And Dr. Keeran said, "Just a minute, Dave is a classmate of mine and I always liked the way he handled horses because he wasn't afraid of any of them. If you find a date in the next week or two, I have time off and I can have my stable man - he can get the hydraulic operating table up to the farm and I can fly my airplane into K.I. Sawyer (Airport). Boy, oh boy, man that was big for K.I. Sawyer. They thought, "we have some one really important coming here". So they all got really excited you know about "what kind of Dr. are you", and he said, "Horse Doctor." So they says, "We'll get the general's car and we'll bring it to that." So they did. They brought the general's car and they brought it, him, all the way down to Harvey.

RM: Oh my.

DE: Okay. So, Dr. Bolitho (T. Boyd Bolitho, MD) - Bolitho was a radiologist there and Dr. Bolitho had a farm out here where he ran horses and he was a good friend of Jack McCracken. So, we called up all the veterinarians in the Upper Peninsula and we said that Rolla Keeran was going to operate on Jack McCracken's horse on Saturday afternoon. So the Willow Farm (on U.S. Hwy 41 South in Harvey) has got a big entryway that goes around that side, and the horses are on that side, and there is a hay loft up above there. So Jack McCracken and I went out and got the horse all ready and we had it all clipped up and that and we brought him out there. Then Dr. Keeran had him take the horse out there and the first thing he did was knock Jack McCracken's horse down, he put him down with an anesthetic. Do the people upstairs wanted to see what the hydraulic operating table could do. That's why he did that. So he put it under there and he got that there and got Jack's horse right up in the air and he moved it over in the middle and raised it up to the height he wanted to work on him. So they, all them orthopedic doctors from the hospital, they all looked down and Dr. Keeran says, "I'm going to do this here" and he tried to show them everything he was trying to do. And they said, "That's the same thing we do on people." That's why they came.

Then, I have a lot of dirty stories too. My sister got a job at the VA center in Dearborn, Michigan. That's the veterans (Veterans Administration Hospital) center, and they treat white people and dark people. So we had both there. My job was to fill a 20cc (syringe) of anesthetic solution, put it in the penis, and squirt it in there and fill their bladder up, and I'd take a clothespin and clip it, or a rubber band and put it around there, so it wouldn't leak back out. The one thing that I noticed was that for some reason the dark people's penis was twice the size of the American penises. So one day I asked, "How come your penis is so much larger than the others. Can you explain that?" and he said, "Oh yeah. We get asked that all the time, in fact my girlfriend asked too." So this big colored guy, he said, "The people on that that side of the track those are the rich people and they have toys to play with on that

side of the track. Now on our side of the track we don't have any toys to play with so we play with our penis(es) and we found out that it is way more fun than playing with toys". And so he says, "My friend over there, his penis is two inches longer than mine. So that's all because he didn't have any toys to play with." So I put that in the back of my mind. I haven't told Dr. Mattson (Miles Mattson, MD) that. Dr. Mattson is my urologist and he did that same thing to me. He said, "Your prostate is okay, but I can see some blood in your bladder, so I want you to come in next week for a full scope." They were going to scope my bladder. Well, I said, "Whoa, I wonder if he does it the same way they did in Deerborn." So he put it on there and he says, "Well, when I pull my catheter out of your penis, then take that sheet and run to the exam dressing room." So boy, did I go as fast as I could go and I had urine (on) my shoes and everything else. So I got there and they gave me some clothes to put on. Now Eileen was there and she says well, "How did the surgery go?" I says, "Well, Eileen, the surgery went pretty well, but the doctor said there had been so much trauma to my penis he didn't want anything to happen there, so I should have absolutely no sex for two months." I told Eileen, I said, "Dr. Matson said no lovemaking for two months." Boy she jumped right up and said, "Why, I can do my work on my floors! Now I don't have anything to get ready for you." Boy that made me feel bad. Isn't that terrible? Now I can't put that stuff in a book.

RM: So are there any other things you want to say about when you served on these boards and when you were involved in the hospital or anything? Is there anything you want to add? Now you said that the information was in the minutes of the board?

DE: Well, outside of the cardiologist, the only one I've ever been to, I had Dr. Songer (Matthew Songer, MD, an orthopedist in Marquette) inject my left knee. I had some arthritis in my knee. He did an x-ray on Eileen and so outside of Dr. LeGalley (Thomas LeGalley, MD), the cardiologist, Songer, Mattson, we haven't been going to many more doctors. See, she worked for the telephone company for twenty five years. So they have an excellent health insurance (policy). Now with AT&T taking over the telephones, they pay everything. I was in there for eight days and I all the tests that they put you through. Twenty-five hundred dollars was one and three thousand some dollars was the other and AT&T paid everything and there was a balance at the end of one hundred and fifty dollars. So, that can add up a lot. When you get old and you can't make any money anymore you have to watch your thing. In fact, Wells Fargo, I think, she says, "How come when we pay our rent and stuff, they don't put anything on the principal, they just get what they need for interest?" So she says "Isn't there something you can do?" So they said, "Let us work on that." So they came over here and took the measurement here and there and measured this whole place. So he says, "Your building here is worth over one million dollars, but we aren't going to pay you so we'll take the interest off and everything else goes on your principal. So I says, "All you people here in the office, you Wells Fargo people, you are all invited to our house on Saturday at 4 o'clock for cocktails and whatever." So they were all there looking for a free drink. Now, I'm a master at making Southern Comfort Old Fashioned. The way I learned that is: one year I went to Michigan State. It was a college and it was considered an agricultural college. So I was living near there with Dr. Erikson. Now Dr. Erikson was a soil physicist (?scientist) and he says, "In the summer time we are having guests come up from Chicago so I need the bedroom upstairs". Now an APO, Alpha Phi Omega, that's a Boy Scout fraternity. They says, "Come on over and stay with us. We have a room you can have."

RM: So what's your recipe?

DE: Now the [Marsh River] Golf course, that's right close to where they make Oldsmobile's in Lansing. Those executives all wanted to have their afternoon cocktails. So there was this big tall colored guy there and he says, "Dave come on over here, if we get really busy with this wedding thing, I want to teach you the proper way to make an Old Southern Comfort." Okay,

I went over there. He said, "The first thing you want to do is to pour ice in the glass. Don't ever pour booze in a bare glass, always have ice first. Okay, so I got that step. So then he says, "Then you put your cherries and some bitters in there and work that around, now you are just about ready to put the Southern Comfort in there. So put in two ounces, that's one hundred proof. So you put that in there with the ices cubes and mix it up well. Then he takes some 7up and pours it in that far from the top. Then after that you take a slice of Florida navel oranges and squeeze it in the top right there. Boy that was the way to make a professional Southern Comfort. So I have remembered that ever since. So, now when the bank came over here I said, "I want to give you a Swedish toast." So I said, "Din Skol min skol alla vackert flicka skol." That mean you drink, I drink, all the beautiful girls drink. Okay? Have another drink. They liked it.

RM: Okay.

DE: The other thing that people don't realize is I covered a four county area. I covered Marquette, Alger, then I went all the way over that way, the north part of Delta County, then we went up to Covington. One time I went up to Covington and I had fifty heifers out there that had to be castrated and have their horns taken off. So I got those all done, and it took about an hour to get that done. Then I had to go up to the Sturgeon (River) from L'Anse there and I castrated two of those Arabian horses.

RM: Okay. I think we are done, you guys are back. Very good, it went well, I thank you.

DE: Well, my favorite girlfriend was Millie Roberts.

RM: Oh yeah?

DE: She worked in the book store, and what's his name, Matt Fresca, he was here a couple of weeks ago, and I showed him a picture of Millie and he says, "She for thirty year for me."

RM: Yeah?

DE: Oh yeah.

RM: Okay, alright. Good.

END OF INTERVIEW