

Melvin Berg
May 21, 1995
Presented by Alfred Schultz

It is a pleasure to have been invited to be a part of this program honoring and recognizing two great pioneers, Melvin Berg and Valborg Fisher.



When Mel Berg moved to Bismarck, he had a dream and it was a dream that came true.

In 1942, Mel married Elaine. Since he was only earning \$21 per month as a buck private in the army, he was lucky that Elaine had a good job and she was able to afford to help support them.

Mel and Elaine have two children, a son who now lives in Wisconsin and a daughter who lives in Michigan. They have three grandchildren.

Mel is the kind of person who, while establishing an outstanding record in his work, always found time to give of himself to help others.

Mel has always been active in his church. He is a permanent deacon in the Catholic Church, has held many positions, has preached in a number of churches in western North Dakota in recent years, is in charge of interviewing all candidates for deacon in North Dakota. He participates in Mass every day and handles counseling at Marillac Manor. This kind and caring man is still helping others.

In 1975, Mel noticed that many young people were moving to the southeastern part of Bismarck. These people had children, but the children did not have access to a play area.

Mel had a dream. He dreamed of the time when those children could have the opportunity to grow up to be better people if they had a place to play. He found an unnamed and undeveloped park area on south 12th Street.

Mel went to the city park board to tell them of his dream and his concern. They liked his idea, but they didn't have any money to develop a park. The land was next to the Jeannette Myhre School, so Mel took his dream to the Bismarck School Board. They also liked his idea, but they didn't have any extra money either. Mel didn't quit because he had a dream. He applied for a HUD grant and other grants, but he was turned down. August Ritter, Jeannette Myhre school principal liked Mel's idea and he and Mel went to the PTA. They didn't have any money. Many people would have given up at this point, but not Mel.

In 1978, Mel got the Jeannette Myhre PTA to make application for two \$50,000 grants. Both grants were approved. The park board wanted a sponsor that could provide broad community support. At this point, nothing could stop Mel.

He was a member of Sverdrup lodge and he told the members of his dream and that the grants were available. The lodge agreed to become the sponsor. The name of the new park became "The Sons of Norway Park".

We, who have followed, have built a beautiful Stabbur, which has attracted widespread attention and praise, and to make other improvements at this park if it were not for the thoughtfulness, the dedication, and the perseverance of this outstanding pioneer.

It is altogether fitting and proper that we recognize and honor this great Norwegian-American who has done so much for this community and for all of the people whose lives he had touched.

Unfortunately Mel was not able to be at this tree dedication ceremony as he was scheduled for open heart surgery the following Wednesday.

Mel passed away December 1, 2007; his wife Elaine passed away in 2005.