

John Erickson
By Melvin Berg
May 1981

It is my honor and a privilege for me to speak in memory of one of my closest friends, a man who I respected very much, at this memorial to Past Sverdrup Lodge 107 President, John Erickson. I want to thank his wife, Edna for asking me to give this message, as we honor both of them at this time by dedicating a tree in his honor.



I don't know if you realize that if John had not first suggested that the Lodge sponsor the new park, we would very likely not be here today. This park would have remained the "Jeannette Myhre Park" if John had not spoken up and followed through with his strong support.

This is how it happened. Before the development, this land area was known as the "Unnamed Park." Then after two or three years of work, an application for a grant of \$100,000 was submitted to the federal government by the Bismarck Park Board. Plans for the development included the present buildings, tree plantings, a tennis court, storm sewer drain and playground equipment to be installed in a children's play area. The stabbur was built later and also a sprinkler system was installed by Sverdrup Lodge 107.

I was involved in the planning of this park as organizer, with the assistance of the Jeannette Myhre P.T.A. and local residents. I mentioned to John Erickson, just before a Lodge business meeting that Curt Seibel, the Park Superintendent, had just called me. Seibel notified me that the Government grant of \$100,000 had been received for the development of the "Unnamed Park" according to submitted plans. In addition, the Park District gave \$3,000 and the Myhre School P.T.A. donated about \$700 for the park development. Curt stated that the Park Board would soon be advertising for bids for park development.

I then told John that I had given thought to a sponsor, such as one of the Service clubs. John said "how about the sons of Norway, Sverdrup 107 Lodge as a sponsor? This sounded great and the more we talked about it, the more excited we became.

The possibility of Lodge sponsorship was brought up at the business meeting; and after some discussion the Lodge agreed to become a sponsor. A liaison committee was appointed to work with the Park board, composed of: John Erickson, Rasmus Karlgaard, Audrey Solheim, Ella Nordby and myself, as chairman.

So, if John had not suggested that our Lodge become the sponsoring organization, we would not be here today to dedicate a tree in his honor.

John was born on December 16, 1905 in Willmar, Minnesota. He moved with his family to Bismarck in 1916, where he graduated from Bismarck High School. He attended Business College and also took H & R Block tax courses.

On July 2, 1941 he married Edna C. Martinson of Delamere, North Dakota. They were married in Augusta, Georgia, since he was in the Armed Services at that time.

During World War II he served in various areas including Gualala Canal from 1943 to 1946, when he was separated from the Service.

Edna and John have one son, Robert, born in 1949, who is an attorney with the Justice Department in Washington, D. C.

John combined a lifetime of service in the business world and in governmental services. He and Edna were the first persons to open a Dairy Queen store in Bismarck. He worked in the State Tax commissioner's office. He was elected State Treasurer in 1959 and served two terms in that capacity.

John was also an active member of several veterans and civic organizations. For many years he chaired the Boys State for the Bismarck American Legion Post.

On June 17, 1973, he was awarded a special plaque at the closing of the Boys State Convention in Fargo, which reads: "Presented to John R. Erickson in recognition of his dedicated service to North Dakota Boys State as director of State Government".

Following his years as State Treasurer he worked in the Attorney General's office until he retired in 1976. John joined our Sverdrup 107 Lodge in 1971. As President of the Lodge in 1978, he was awarded posthumously a plaque as "President of the Year" for his work at the District Convention held in Bismarck in 1980. He was also President of the Burleigh Water Users Association, which he helped organize.

John died on Easter Sunday, 1980, following a massive brain hemorrhage. He was a devoted husband and father. He loved people and would literally "give the shirt off his back, if necessary to help someone in need."

I still miss John. I appreciated his kindness and helpfulness and the many fine suggestions he made. He was generous and caring. I am very glad that the Lodge is dedicating a tree to honor John's memory. Many thanks to you Edna, for your fine, continual service to our Lodge. We are privileged to have you as a Lodge member. May God bless you all.