



David L. Torkildson

October 23, 2016

Torkildson, David L. Age 80, of Columbia Heights, passed away October 23, 2016 after suffering a stroke. Preceded in death by his parents Jim and Annette Torkildson and his beloved wife Anita. Survived by daughter Lynn Torkildson, sisters Lois Hendrickson, Anita Kaster (Tim), Carol Score (Len) and brother Paul Torkildson (Becky) and many nephews and nieces and friends. David Torkildson was the Director of Anoka County Parks and Recreation for over 31 years, from 1963 to 1994. Starting as Superintendent and later Director, Dave was the first full-time employee of the Anoka County Parks Department. Albert Kordiak, a long time county Commissioner had the vision of a county parks system. In 1963 Albert asked Dave Torkildson to help him make the vision a reality. Dave recalled, "there was no office, no equipment, no staff and I was to develop a parks system?" Dave's comprehensive understanding of parks activities developed because in the beginning he performed all the jobs from building picnic tables to lawn maintenance, etc.. He submitted his first budget of \$56,000 to the Anoka County Board. It included his \$5,000 annual salary which was a substantial drop in pay at the time but Dave believed in Albert Kordiak's vision and the journey began. During his tenure as Director the Anoka County Parks system grew to be the largest County-operated parks system in the State of Minnesota, second only to Hennepin County in size. More than 3.8 million people visit the Anoka County Parks each year. Dave's accomplishments include the purchase of over 8,000 plus acres of land which included, 7

regional parks and 10 county parks: Regional: Anoka County Riverfront, Bunker Hills, Coon Rapids Dam, Lake George, Martin-Island-Linwood Lakes, Rum River Central, Rice Creek Chain of Lakes and County: Albert Kordiak Park, Coon Lake, Golden Lake, Ham Lake, Manomin, Mississippi West, Rum River North, Rum River South, Islands of Peace, and Twin Lakes. Dave also developed and oversaw a host of other amenities and locations, including: Chomonix Golf Course, Bunker Hills Golf, Bunker Beach Water Park which has the state's largest wave pool, Bunker Hills Activity Center, Wargo Nature Center, the Veterans Memorial, the Coon Rapids Dam Trout Lake and Columbia Arena. There are also 4 swimming beaches, 2 large campgrounds, a horseback riding stable, an archery range, numerous boat launches and picnic pavilions and miles of hiking and biking trails. Dave aggressively sought Federal and State funding to purchase land. He literally brought millions of dollars into Anoka County. The largest grant he secured was \$3 million for the acquisition of the Riverfront Park in Fridley along the Mississippi River. Dave's economically conservative approach to his job saved Anoka County taxpayers millions of dollars. It would be financially impossible to accomplish today what Dave achieved over his years of service to Anoka County citizens. In addition to his Director responsibilities he also served 7 years as the Agricultural Inspector, 24 years on the Minnesota Extension Service Committee, 11 years as member of the Metroland Tourist Council (1 yr as President), and was a member of the National Association of County Park and Recreation Officials and was involved with 4H. Dave established and directed a 40 person Park Ranger Program for security and park programs and was even Deputized by the Sheriff in order to supervise prisoners working in the parks. Dave also proudly served 9 years in the Minnesota National Guard. During the 50th Anniversary of Anoka County Parks in 2013, Dave was writing down pieces of park history. He wrote, "To accomplish all my areas of responsibility I worked 60-70 hours a week and then some. After 31 years and 9 months I am very proud to have been a part of building the best County Park system in the Metro area and successfully bringing \$27 million in State and Federal grants

to Anoka County. Director of Anoka County Parks and Recreation was lots of work, but the best job in the world! I thank Al Kordiak and the County Board for the opportunity to provide a wonderful park system for the residents of Anoka County." Dave's daughter, Lynn, remembers his long hours and strong work ethic but also the fun and excitement of tagging along to work with dad and ice skating, horseback riding, swimming or walking the paths in the parks. A pretty cool office! And every once in a while a late night trip in pajamas in the car to check an incident out at the park Rangers, Police and Dad, dad of course seeming so strong, brave and important! And one time when Dave had an early morning meeting to deliver a check to purchase land and the night before friends and family gathering around the dining room table just to get a peek of what an actual paper check for a million dollars looked like! On a more personal note Dave and his wife Anita liked to travel. They visited most of the United States. Of course some trips were planned around a parks convention or getting ideas for a wave pool, but as long as they could drive their conversion van Anita didn't care what Dave had to stop and check out because she was busy filling the van with red wood pine cones, Florida Sea shells, Arkansas rocks and glass slag or beautiful glass cases and art from Tijuana. Together again they can see the world now, although for those who knew Dave, they will probably also spend some time just driving by the houses of their loved ones! So the next time you and your family or friends are enjoying some time at any of the Anoka County Parks locations, give a wink and a nod to Dave Torkildson his legacy will be the millions of great memories made each year in the Parks he helped build! Funeral Service Saturday November 5th at 11 am at Washburn McReavy Columbia Heights. Visitation Friday November 4th from 4-7 pm and 1 hour before service. Burial at St. John's Catholic Cemetery following service. Luncheon at the Fridley American Legion Post 303 at 7365 Old Central Ave. NE following the burial. Washburn-McReavy.com Columbia Hgts Chapel 763-789-4436 4101 Central Ave N.E.