

# Newsletter



## Knife River Heritage & Cultural Center

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By Paul von Goertz  
KRHCC Board Member

### **KRHCC RECEIVES CL&P “ROUND-UP” GRANT**

We were very happy to receive notice on April 2 that Lake County Co-op Light & Power approved the KRHCC's grant request of \$2,340 for “Round-Up” funds - and in full.



In addition to thanking CLP, we want to thank the many CLP members who have agreed to have their monthly electrical charges “rounded-up” to the next dollar amount, with that amount of change going into the round-up bucket, where it is then given back to non-profits within the CLP service area. If you have not already authorized CLP to round up your monthly statement, please do so! Is easy to do online.

We are most appreciative of CLP's continued support of the KRHCC. We were also awarded a grant last year. This year's grant will go towards completing the interior of the depot and a share in the replacement/restoration of the cement apron that surrounds the depot that is cracked and heaved, creating a safety hazard.

Thank you CLP board and CLP members!

### **KRHCC GRANT FOR DNR/CZM FUNDS GETS FAVORABLE REVIEW**

The KRHCC has submitted a STAR grant request to the DNR/Coastal Zone Management for \$10,000 to cover engineering and architectural costs to plan and prepare

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construction documents for the KRHCC boat and picnic shelters. These studies need to be completed before we can apply for an “Annual Grant” to fund up to half the cost of the shelters in 2021. We will approach another fund for the remaining half. A STAR grant is for projects not to exceed \$10,000 and require a 20% local match from the KRHCC – total \$12,000.

Your editor had planned to attend the DNR/CZM grant review council’s meeting, which is open to the public, back in March to hear the council’s comments on our project. Because of COVID-19 the meeting was held by teleconference on April 8, and so I was allowed to listen in. The DNR/CZM grant request is the KRHCC’s first request of a public agency and could give us an indication of how other sources of public funds might view our project.

Because the guidelines of the DNR/CZM favor projects that protect and preserve the coastal waters of Lake Superior, and allow controlled access, our grant focused on how the depot and the North Shore Scenic Railroad help people connect with the Lake though both physical access to the increasingly popular Agate Beach, and KR’s long history of responsible and sustainable commercial fishing.

Many thanks to the KRHCC’s CFO, Mona Linden, for her professional reporting of detailed financial information required by the DNR/CMZ. As one might expect, public agencies are very careful in vetting grant applications to assure public funds are being used within the guidelines of the grant and applicants are able to demonstrate financial stability documented through “best practices” accounting procedures.

Fifteen members serve on the DNR/CMZ Grant Review Council. They represent a diverse group of individuals, government agencies and non-profits that support protecting our Great Lake.

Following are some of the Council members’ comments:

1. “Lot of supporting documentation.”
2. “Lot of public support – but not much of narrative was “Lake-based.”
3. “A direct connection to the Lake is not necessary. (This project) gives people a destination (KR) and access point to the Lake.”
4. “Impressed with public access to Agate Beach. Train enables people without personal transportation to access beach.
5. “A worthy project. Enables a Lake experience. Good budget (which included required) contract services.”

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6. “ Good example of community-based project. How will educational signage be used? How does project address DNR/CMZ priorities?
  - a. Access to Lake
  - b. Lake risk factors (like erosion)
  - c. Appeal to diverse populations and address inclusivity
  - d. Is it a sustainable community development?“Project needs to address at least one of these priorities and make it really stick.”
7. “Puts together very well Lake and history – I like the education component about commercial fishing.”
8. “I support the request.”
9. “Was Lake access an after-thought? Supporting documents did not mention water access, but rather support of the Heritage Center (in general). Sounds good.”
10. “No problem. Good application. Good project. Good communication and connection with the Lake. Brings people to the area.”
11. “Like proposal. EPA works for establishing a sense of place and connection to the Lake. Brings people to the Lake and provides education on the KR community. Gets people involved and protects our natural resources.”
12. “Great application.”

There were seven requests for DNR STAR funds discussed at the teleconference, all from the NE MN district. The review council will make recommendations to Sarah Strommen, state DNR commissioner, for projects that rate high on their grading scale. If approved by Ms. Strommen, a few more approvals will be required by federal agencies before recipients of grants are notified in October.

## **“When do we go back to work on the depot?”**

I’ve been asked this several times in the last few weeks and am actually glad to hear it. Many of us have wrapped up our indoor and outdoor projects and with the warmer weather are getting anxious to get back to work on the depot.

For starters, Larry Ronning has ordered some beautiful 2 ½” T & G paneling for the interior and is ready to cover about 500 sq. ft. of wall and ceiling.

The short answer to when we will go back to work is when Governor Walz and his advisors relax COVID-19 restrictions for groups of ten or more.

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## **KRHCC RECOGNIZES ITS VOLUNTEERS DURING “NATIONAL VOLUNTEER APPRECIATION WEEK.” (Kind of...)**

April 19 – 25 was National Volunteer Appreciation Week in the U.S. and Canada and so we planned a pizza party for all volunteers and spouses/significant others at the depot during this week– but it did not happen because of COVID-19. We announce our intentions to host this party to demonstrate we were at least thinking of our volunteers and how much we value them! And thanks to KRHCC board member Bob Entzion for offering to pop for the pizza and assorted beverages. We won't forget your offer, Bob!

Can we have the appreciation party at a later date? Can't say - hard to make any plans with COVID-19 in charge of our lives.

## **ALBERT NISSWANDT'S GIFT TO KR AND OUR MANY VISITORS**

*“To plant a tree is to show faith in the future.” – Albert Nisswandt*



Al and Winnie at their home on  
Granite Point

All of us who love our Agate Beach are aware of the long line of pines that stand like lone sentries from the beach parking lot to the harbor entry. They are there only because of one man's love of our area and its trees, and the realization that the whole beach was at one time at risk to being eroded into a narrow strip and become unrecognizable as we know it today.

Al and Winnafae (“Winnie”) were summer residents from Duluth living on Granite Point from 1967 – 1972 before moving permanently to KR with their seven children. They were attracted to KR for the same reasons many of us choose to live here.

Al and Winnie, both of Swedish descent and very proud of it, grew up in the Metro. Al served as an 18-year-old in the Marine Corps during WWII and was wounded during an assault on a Japanese-held island in the South Pacific. He would later attend the University of Minnesota Medical School and become a neurosurgeon. Three of their children would follow their dad and become physicians, as would a daughter-in-law. Elsa Keeler, youngest daughter and pediatrician, provided info for this story.

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Al was extremely well read, and with Winnie, well-traveled. It seemed to your writer Al could talk knowledgably about almost any subject. Winnie was a homemaker and together they took all seven children from near birth to young adulthood on all their canoeing, camping and sailing adventures.

As reported in the March issue of this newsletter, the March Storm of 1975 was devastating to KR. From the Nisswandt home on Granite Point, Al could see the waves of Lake Superior breaching the Agate Beach and washing into the harbor. The Army Corps of Engineers took action the following year and sank a line of steel piling along the beach as well as rip-rap to stabilize it. Al figured a line of trees paralleling and running the length of the steel wall would add native greenery and mask the piling and riprap. It would further stabilize the land and provide a windbreak for boaters.

In 1980, Al bought tens of dozens of hearty small spruce pines from the Minnesota DNR and began planting them in a line about 8 – 10 feet apart and almost a block long. He chose spruce for their heartiness and as the best tree for creating a consistent dense barrier.

For days and weeks, after family dinner, Al would dip buckets of water from the harbor side and water the trees. These buckets numbered in the hundreds before the trees could rely on Mother Nature. He also marked each tree to protect from grass mowers. Judging by the integrity of the line of trees today, it appears few were lost. And if some were lost, the lost tree's offspring filled in the gap.



The Nisswandt's heading out for a sail in late 60's or early 70's. Note bare beach save for two pines. The entire length of the beach would be planted with dozens of spruce by Al Nisswandt.



The stand of spruce today planted by Al looking from harbor entry north along length of beach



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As of mid-April, your writer counted more than 50 trees still healthy and growing, albeit some have taken on a list from the northeast winds over the years.

Your writer greatly enjoyed Al's company. He had a wonderful outlook on life and lived it to the fullest. He was a prolific storyteller of his adventures, often degrading himself in the process, and sometimes as bazaar as the stories sounded, they were true! I remember witnessing many of them and others were collaborated by "reliable sources." Perhaps he can best be remembered by observing something that went terribly askew and commenting, "It'll all work out just fine!"

Al died in 2013 of heart issues. Mary and I feel so fortunate to have known him and Winnie and all the kids. Winnie still owns the family home on Granite Point, and Elsa and husband, Jeff, have built a home next to it.

*Thank you Al Nisswandt for your "...faith in the future" and the many ways your trees enhance and help sustain KR's beloved Agate Beach.*

## ***Did you know....?***

### **The KRRC started back in 1954**

In 1954, KR parents learned of funds being available for recreational activities through the Lake County Board of Education. The KR PTA applied for it. The PTA would act as the "Recreation Board" and for the 1954-55 school year KR received \$62.00 and for the 55-56 year \$76.50.

The county still provides funds to communities for recreational activities and for the Knife River Recreation Council (KRRC) today it helps offset fixed costs like insurance and utilities. This means that money raised in fundraisers can go directly to creating and maintaining all the recreational opportunities we offer - and all free to the public.

## **APRIL IS "SHOWTIME" FOR KNIFE RIVER'S STEELHEAD**

While many readers may be aware of the show steelhead trout put on for alert river watchers, some may not. About mid-April, the steelhead migrate back into the waters from where they originated to spawn, and the Knife River has long been a favorite of these beautiful and powerful rainbow-streaked fish.

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For years this writer and family have watched the steelhead leap the first falls on their quest for quieter spawning grounds inland. The DNR several year ago built a fish ladder into the south side of the falls to ease the path for the steelhead while also getting a head count - and by doing so monitor the overall steelhead population. While a ladder exists, some steelhead prefer the old fashion way of overcoming the falls by making a spectacular leap, which is a real thrill to witness.

Mary and I have found the best place to view the leaps is on the north side. This can be

accessed from the wayside rest off the freeway. On

April 15<sup>th</sup> from about 4:00 – 4:30 PM we watched 25 attempted leaps. We can't recall when we saw so many attempts over such a short time period. Occasionally, both rushing water and wind would blow fish onto nearby rocks. But they seemed to recover enough to soon attempt another leap, which was discouraging for seagulls sitting at the lip of the falls – hoping for dinner to land at their feet.

The photo of the steelhead leap was taken on an iPhone 11 and turned out surprising well. But ya gotta be quick!



Mary von Goertz watches the steelhead jump the first Falls from her vantage point on the north side of the river



A steelhead attempts the falls

## MORE ON THE BLIZZARD OF MARCH 23-25, 1975

Anne-Lù Hovis, who volunteers to put our newsletter together, was intrigued by how the March 23-25, 1975 storm impacted KR as described in the March issue of this newsletter.

She found this additional information about the storm on the NOAA webpage, and for which we thank her:

*Blizzard March 23-25, 1975*

*Heavy snow accumulated 7-15 inches with winds gusting to 60mph. Drifts up to 20 feet*

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*blocked most roads. Interstate 35 was closed from Forest Lake to Duluth. The high winds whipped electric lines together causing prolonged and major power failures. Schools and businesses were closed.*

*A foot of snow and winds unofficially recorded in excess of 100 mph paralyzed the city of Duluth. Waves up to 20 feet pounded the Lake Superior shore, flooding basements and blowing out store windows. Waves and ice buckled metal and glass safety walls at a lakefront motel, forcing evacuation of 10 rooms as knee-deep water flooded into hallways. Waves destroyed a 40-foot wall at Two Harbors, flooding municipal water pumping stations. Large chunks of beach along Lake Superior shore were washed away. Property damage reached up to \$5 million.*

## **And from Winnafae (Winnie) Nisswandt, living on Granite Point:**

*"It was a storm to end all storms...with waves crashing up to the house. We had waves to the top of our living room windows and waves that washed under the house. Every 4th wave is the big one...Al and Knute would begin to nail boards across the house, but had to stand back as the 4th one hit. I can still hear Beret 's call from the 2nd floor ..."HERE IT COMES!" - and it crashed!.*

And it was in November of that year that the Fitzgerald went down. Quite a year!

## **AND MORE ON KR SMELT FISHING STORY FROM MARCH NEWSLETTER**

The story on the smelt fishing in KR from the 1950s-80s prompted KR native Bob Entzion (and KRHCC board member) to recall these memories.

*"I remember those smelting days and selling them for 3 cents a pound when my brother and I were 11- 12 years old. People would buy 100 pound boxes of smelt and tell us to dump them in the trunk of their cars. Many drunks floating down the river singing." - Bob Entzion*

Your comments and suggestions for this monthly emailed newsletter are always welcome. Email to: [info@krhcc.org](mailto:info@krhcc.org) If you have family or friends who may enjoy receiving it, please forward to them, or send their email addresses to same email address and they will receive their own copy.