

Norwood Park Historical Society Journal



Stuart Crego Crippen was a fixture at Norwood Park Historical Society events. Top left: With Stan Banash. Above: With Susan Kroll and Susan Bragg. Far left: At a group gathering. Left: With Judy Rustemeyer.

Photos taken at the "Burn the Mortgage" party, April 18, 2018

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About NPHS

Norwood Park Historical Society, 5624 N. Newark Ave., Chicago IL 60631, www.norwoodparkhistoricalsociety.org

Email us: journal@norwoodparkhistoricalsociety.org,

Call us: 773-631-4633

The NPHS is a not-for-profit organization that is home to the oldest house in Chicago. Visit us Saturdays, noon to 4 p.m., for more information.

The Norwood Park Historical Society Journal, Volume 40 Issue No. 2 is a publication of the Norwood Park Historical Society. Published four times each year, it is distributed to individual and business members and community friends. No part of this Journal may be copied or distributed without the expressed written permission of the Norwood Park Historical Society.

History in the Making

Stuart Crego Crippen

By Thomas Spenny

I first met Stuart C. Crippen when I came to Norwood Park in October 1948. I entered the Norwood Park Elementary school as a third grader and one of my classmates was Stuart, who alternately was called Stuie, or just Stu. He immediately impressed me as a friendly and inclusive kid and he assimilated me into his friendship circle, one which was really composed of everyone in the class.

Although my after-school activities mainly centered around activities on my own Circle Avenue block, I would often see Stu as I delivered the Chicago Daily News to his house on Newark Avenue every afternoon. His super-sized front yard was a great playground for the neighborhood children and many a ballgame was going on as I did my route. I usually joined in for a bit, though my clients were not too happy with late arriving papers.

Then one day I rode up the long driveway and saw Stu standing on the front porch. I threw my paper at him (playfully) and missed him, but not a window in the doorway. His dad was not too happy with us but the penalty was that we had to learn how to replace a pane of glass, so I guess that was a very good lesson. Also, at that time, the Crippen House was well-known for the class parties that were done there and the game room in the basement was especially fun.

Stuart was a friend to everyone. He was a great athlete but was never big-headed about it and although he was part of the “jock” circle, he was equally a friend to the nerdy children. He was the self-appointed mediator between the class bullies and their targets thereof. I distinctly remember an ethnic boy named Frank who was one of those targets because he looked different from the usual Norwood Parker. With his calm but forceful manner, Stu would confront Frank’s bullies and diffuse the situations without ever raising his fist.

I sort of lost track of Stuart at Taft High School; we were not in the same division and I don’t remember that we ever had any classes together either. He participated in the after-school sports, especially baseball. I continued doing my paper route and even picked up another job at one of the store fronts on Nina Avenue. I might have joined him on the Taft High School Baseball Team, but the coach cut me because

I always left the tryouts early due to my after-school jobs. Stu and I graduated from Taft in January 1958 in a small class of only 120 students.

Stuart’s grandparents, Stuart S. Crippen Sr. and his wife Charlotte Allen Crippen, came to Norwood Park in 1916 after purchasing the Thomas Seymour House and the remaining 17 acres of land of Seymour’s estate. At first it was a summer home, but in the early 1920s, they left Evanston and made it their only residence. During the 1930s, their children had married and the house was then divided into two residences, one for Stuart S. Crippen Jr. and one for his brother Paul. Stuart C. was the third child of Stuart Jr. and Agnes, and was born in 1940.

When I became involved in the NPHS in 1979, Stuart Jr. was still living in his house and did on occasion attend meetings of the Norwood Park Historical Society. Shortly thereafter, he and Agnes moved out to Denver to be near Stuart C. and his sister, Nancy.

The old house on Newark was falling into disrepair and in 1986 I contacted Stuart about the idea that he and Nancy might sell the house to the NPHS. At that time, they were the conservators of the estate of Agnes; Stuart S. Jr. had died by then. Stu and Nancy were very generous and supportive of the desire to save and restore their family home for use as a community center in Norwood Park. Thanks to their offer to hold the note on the purchase, we were able to finalize that purchase and begin fulfilling the Norwood Park Historical Society’s dream. Although Stu had lived in Denver since his marriage to Loretta Sramek in 1968, they came back to Chicago many a time to support the various activities of the Society. And once again, Stuart increased his circle of friends by adding the members of the Norwood Park Historical Society.

We will miss Stuart’s positive outlook on life, his compassion for his fellow man and his great sense of humor. I had planned to be at his memorial service held in Denver Feb. 8, 2020. A canceled flight due to a major snowstorm in the Denver area prevented that trip from happening. The service was held in the Celebration Community Church and the following day there was a graveside service in a small cemetery in the Rocky Mountain National Park.

The Rocky Mountain National Park was a place where the Crippen family went on many a weekend. They even own a condo in Estes Park very near where Stu is buried.

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Loretta, Stu's wife, kindly sent me a program from the church service. A brief bio is below.

Stuart C. Crippen Memorial Service

Stuart Crego Crippen was born March 23, 1940, to Stuart and Agnes Crippen. He had two older sisters, Beverly and Nancy, and was surrounded by cousins, aunts and uncles.

Around the time he was old enough to play, his father helped found the Norwood Park Little League and Stuart became a baseball player. He played championship games in Wrigley Field twice, in 1955 and 1956. He also played baseball at Carlton College and North Park College where he graduated.

Stuart was married to Loretta Sramek Aug. 24, 1968. They raised three children in Denver, Lillian (Nate) Craze, Tyler (Sara) Crippen and Neal Crippen, and have five grandchildren: Maria, Samuel and TJ Crippen, and Anna and Cooper Craze.

Stuart was a fixture in southeast Denver where he operated a lawn care service for 50 years.

In October, as a result of a brain biopsy (that diagnosed stage 4 melanoma) Stuart had a brain bleed that left him paralyzed on his right side and without speech. In December, he regained a little speech and movement. It was a gift to hear him speak again.

We thank you for joining us as we remember and celebrate the life of Stuart.

Donations in Honor of Stuart Crego Crippen

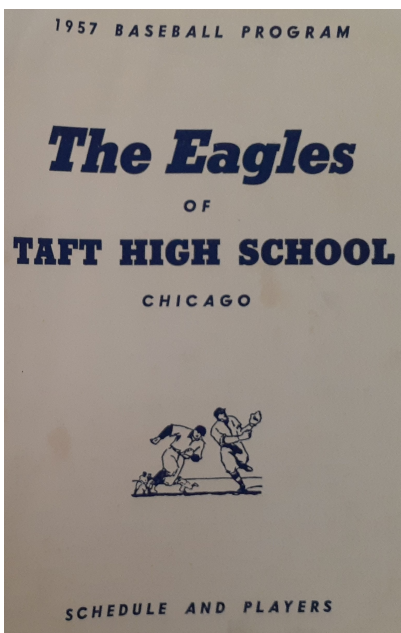
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Crippen Family Baseball Legacy in Norwood Park

by Bob Kelly

Baseball has had a long history within Norwood Park. Organized baseball leagues started in the late 1880's and are still popular today. The first teams were referred to as the "Nines" because it took nine players to field a team. Teams and leagues were sponsored by a number of different entities. These included local politicians, local businesses, local private clubs and the park district. Many businesses fielded their own employee teams to compete with other employee sponsored teams. The Park District-sponsored little league baseball program for children became popular around 1953. The Crippen Family played an active

part in running the Norwood Park Little League. Stuart Crippen Jr. was one of the first fathers to take part in coaching his son Stuart C. Crippen in the newly formed Little League at Norwood Park. His company L.B. Allen Co. sponsored the *Norwood Braves* traveling team. The large score board pictured above was built by the Crippens and was transported on the top of their station wagon and brought to various baseball fields when needed. It had lighting and could be viewed from afar. The scoreboard is currently on display at the Noble-Seymour-Crippen House in our new exhibit, "The History of Sports and Recreation in Norwood Park".



1957 — BASEBALL ROSTER — 1957				1957 — BASEBALL ROSTER — 1957			
Uniform Number	PLAYER	Pos.	Year	Uniform Number	PLAYER	Pos.	Year
22	ARNSPIGER, GORDON	OF-P	4A	17	MAIZE, RAY	P-IF	4A
3	BALK, MELVIN	2B	1B	7	MACK, STEVE	P	2B
13	BELL, DENNIS	OF-1B	3A	10	MARSH, LARRY	1B	2A
None	BLOHM, GARY	C	2B	48	MARTIN, FRANK	1B-P	1B
None	CARVETTA, GARY	P	1A	6	MEYER, JERRY	3B-OF	3A
23	CAVAN, DENNIS	OF-IF	2A	18	MILLER, STEVE	P	1A
21	CIFFONE, JERRY	P-OF	2A	None	MURPHY, BRUCE	SS	1A
4	CRIPPEN, STUART	IF	4B	None	NELLES, TOM	IF	1A
None	DARVILLE, KENNETH	2B-OF	1A	9	OSTERMAN, JIM	C	3B
2	DEVRIES, PATRICK	2B	3A	6	PAUL, ALLEN	P-OF	1B
7	DREISEWERD, TERRY	P-OF	1B	49	PETERSON, CARL A.	2B-SS	2A
28	DRUMMER, GREGORY	IF	2B	14	PETERSON, MIKE	P-OF	4A
36	EDMUNDS, TOM	OF	2A	24	PETERSON, RICHARD	C-OF	3B
11	EELLES, KENNETH	C	4A	3	PICKETT, DENNIS	P-OF	3A
19	GUNDERSON, BOB	P-OF	4B	44	RENNHACK, TERRY	OF-1B	2B
None	GUTTLER, RICHARD	C-OF	1A	9	REGOPOULOS, STEVE	P-OF	1B
None	GRUD, THOMAS	OF	1A	16	SENN, MICHAEL	IF	2B
5	HENNINGER, BOB	SS-3B	2A	3	SCHUMACHER, GREGGOF	IF	1B
27	HENNING, BILL	C	1A	None	SHORTINO, PETER	OF	1A
None	KALISH, SCOTT	IF	1B	20	SVETLIK, STEVE	1B-OF	2A
7	KOZEMZAK, RON	SS-2B	3A	12	TERRY, LYNN	1B-3B	4A
21	KRALIS, PETER	C-1B	4B	8	THOMPSON, STEVE	1B-OF	2A
21	LUCAS, LARRY	P	3B	15	WISE, TOM	IF	3B
1	LUND, GORDON	SS-3B	2A	None	ZINK, JOHN	OF-C	1A
None	MACFARLANE, ALLAN	SS	1B	None	BEYER, WILLIAM	C	2A
				3	EBERL, DONALD	IF	2A

DARVILLE, ROBERT — STUDENT COACH
DUETSCH, PAUL — MANAGER
JAMES SMILGOFF, Head Coach

Stuart C. Crippen was the 2nd Baseman for Taft High School when they won the Chicago Public League championship in 1957. Taft also won in 1958 but Stuart had graduated in January.

A Brief History of Norwood Park "Park"

by Bob Kelly

Norwood Park is bordered by Natoma Avenue, Hurlbut Street and Avondale Avenue. The Village of Norwood Park did not originally develop this area because it was considered too swampy. But in the fall of 1916, the land covering blocks 34, 35, 36 and 37, which covered twenty-three acres, and where the park



is located today, was sold by local businessman John Eberhart to real estate developer L. A. Kinsey & Son for a reported sum of \$15,000. In the summer of 1917, L. A. Kinsey & Son offered building sites in the new subdivision for \$240 to \$245 per lot. But sales did not go well, possibly due to the fact that the United States entered World War I on April 6, 1917.

The Norwood Park district (areas of the city were referred to as districts at the time and not neighborhoods), in the twenty-seventh ward of Chicago, did not have a formal park. In 1920, the community voted itself a park district by a majority of five to one and elected a park board of commissioners, Anthony Czarnecki, George Eckhoff, J. H. Marquette, Ralph Peckham and D. D. Tompkins. The organization was officially known as the Norwood Park District.

In 1921, the Norwood Park District purchased fourteen acres of L. A. Kinsey & Son's land and created Norwood Park. In 1922, they had drained the land and by 1925, funds were raised to build a swimming pool and a bath house which opened just in time for the Fourth of July festivities. In 1928, a fieldhouse with a 500-seat assembly hall was added. The Park District expanded further in 1931 when the Park Board purchased a small piece of land for a second park at the corner of Imlay Avenue and

Newcastle Avenue on the north end of the community to be called Norwood Playground. The park was later known as Imlay Park but is now called Pleasant Point Park.

Lack of funds during the Great Depression caused a decline in the upkeep of the parks. However, in 1934, the City of Chicago, which contained twenty-two separate park districts, decided that each park district be merged into one district that would be known as the Chicago Park District. The Norwood Park District would no longer exist and the two parks became part of the new Chicago Park District. By 1938 the federal government's Works Progress Administration (WPA) provided funds to revitalize the parks and the Norwood Park pool was renovated.

The large kidney-shaped pool, also known as a bathing beach, served the community for thirty-four years. But in 1959, it was decided that the pool needed to be replaced by a modern rectangular shaped 50-foot by 150-foot pool that could be used for swim meets and diving competitions, since the old pool was too shallow for diving and meets could not be conducted. A new room addition was also added to the fieldhouse that contained locker room facilities and permanent bleachers were installed adjacent to the pool that could seat up to 200 spectators. The new pool had filtered water from a

water treatment system included in the building program. The original locker rooms within the fieldhouse were then converted to a woodshop where woodworking classes were taught. This section of the fieldhouse is now utilized as a fitness center.

In 1997 the current pool saw a complete renovation with the elimination of the diving boards and the addition of a large fiberglass water slide. Around that time the area that lies within the outdoor running track, which was originally utilized as an ice-skating rink during the winter months, was landscaped to form two additional baseball diamonds. These, along with the park's original baseball diamond, provided three baseball-playing areas.

In 2009, the fieldhouse was expanded to include a 7,000-square-foot addition for use as a senior center. It is operated in partnership with the Chicago Park District, Chicago Department of Family and Support Services and Norwood Crossing, a local senior care facility. In 2012, a fenced dog park was added as a fun and safe place for dedicated pet lovers. In 2018, half of the original tennis courts were removed and a roller blade hockey rink, donated by the Chicago Blackhawks Hockey Club, was built for year-round use. The park also has a popular Special Olympics program for persons with special needs.

Since the purchase of the swampy land by the Norwood Park District almost 100 years ago, the

neighborhood has enjoyed a large variety of recreational activities at the park that has included swimming, baseball, basketball, hockey, football, volleyball, ice-skating, tennis, gymnastics, boxing, track and field, dancing, yoga, fitness classes, summer day camp, gym shows, wood working, pet play and other community related events. It's been a great place to "Come out and play!"

Front page photo taken in 1935 of the Norwood Park Fieldhouse, showing classic cars parked on Nickerson Avenue. Picture above taken in 1928



of the Norwood Park Pool. For more history and photos about Norwood Park and the swimming pool, visit our new exhibit at the Noble-Seymour-Crippen House "The History of Sports and Recreation in Norwood Park".

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Upcoming 2020 Events

Please note that all dates are subject to change.

Garden Clean-Up Work Day

Sat. July 18th 9am-11am

Norwood Park Birthday Party

Sat. July 25th 10am-4pm

Book Sale

Sat. July 25th 9am-4pm

Craft, Crochet & Knit Night

Last Friday each month at 6:30pm

Game Night

2nd Friday each month 6pm-11pm

Giant Yard Sale

Sat. Aug. 22nd @ 8am-3pm

Indoor Rummage Sale

Fri., October 16th-Sun., October 18th

Victoria's Holiday Craft Boutique and Holly Daze Cafe

Members Only Night Weds, November 11th

Thurs., November 12th - Sun., November 15th

Holiday House Tour

Saturday, December 12th

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