

# Reunion Newsletter

## St. Louis Park Class of '63

August, 2023

Lynn Bolnick, Editor

*NOTE: This is the last of the pre-reunion newsletters. There is again a comparison between experiences of the class of 2023 and the class of 1963. It begins with an item based on an interview with a 2023 graduate of St. Louis Park High School, followed by some reflections back from a couple of people from the class of 1963. There's also quite a bit about our upcoming reunion. This is a longer newsletter than usual; I hope you enjoy it.*

### *Meet Isaac Israel of the Class of 2023*

*Isaac Israel is a 2023 graduate of St. Louis Park High School. He and his fellow classmates had a road to graduation certainly unlike anything you or I experienced. Unlike, indeed, anything most alumni experienced since the first St. Louis Park six-person graduating class in 1900.*

*It started in Isaac's freshmen year. Midway through that year, in-school classes were suspended as teaching went online as a response to the national (international) Corona Virus pandemic. Restrictions continued in his sophomore year. No in-person classes; no in-person activities; no in-person socialization with classmates. Students came back into the building in their junior year - with a full-time mask mandate. Senior year was the first*

*with a sense of normalcy. Back in school - unmasked; activities functioning again; personal interaction with teachers and with fellow students.*

*Indeed, for Isaac and many in the class of 2023, there was an awareness of the impact of the "outside world" on their still-young lives. Isaac identified the Corona Virus, the presidency - and post-presidency - of Donald Trump, and the growing incidence of school shootings as having the greatest impact on his generation of students.*

*Against that backdrop, he seems like any other recent high school grad - like us before him, like others. He packed as many positive experiences as possible into his senior year. He enjoyed his senior year. And he has great enthusiasm about what comes next, as he heads off later this month to begin his collegiate days. He is a survivor. Nonetheless, the uniqueness of his high school years is evident in his discussion, his awareness of its impact on his life and those of his classmates.*

*Academically, Isaac took advantage of opportunities afforded MN students for post-secondary options in higher education while still in high school. He took classes at the University of MN -- which he enjoyed a lot - for half a day. And he spent the other half of the day in classes at Park High. He chose that shared experience so he didn't have to give up the experiences of a student in his senior year. He could see friends, share school activities, socialize. . . .*

*In Isaac's case that meant establishing a new Youth in Government group at the high school (much like our Youth in Politics group), during which he organized a successful voter registration drive. Other of his high school activities included being captain of the*

*Math Team (a team in competition with other schools), participating in jazz and concert bands (he plays the trumpet), involvement with the Jewish Student Union, and membership in the National Honor Society (which these days has community and school service requirements in addition to academic standards).*

*As an aside, I asked Isaac about hang-outs away from school for students at Park. He mentioned "the Nest" (a student-run coffee shop) and Caribou Coffee. (Didn't seem to come up to the standards of Mr. Q's, Beeks or Porky's. . . .) I asked about music choices too. He said most students are into pop rock, naming Taylor Swift as a particular favorite.*

*Isaac said his band teacher, Steve Schmitz, is someone he'll long remember. He found him to be someone who gave great advice and genuinely cared about his students.*

*Isaac thinks well of St. Louis Park HS in general, but seems to have a realistic sense as well of areas for improvement. With the added diversity of student body, there appears to be a greater diversity of problems to deal with. The school, he says, does a good job of supporting high-achieving students. He says the administration seems to be aware of the need to help others to a greater degree. He thinks they've made progress in that regard, but there is still more to be accomplished. Other areas of improvement he would like to see for future students include having a counselor specifically charged with aiding students through the college prep and college application process (which we did have back in the '60s). He would also like to see greater focus on non-sports activities. While there are a lot of activities, most only draw a small level of involvement, he says; he'd like to see that beefed up.*

*I asked Isaac what were the most memorable moments of his high school years. He named four, in no particular order.*

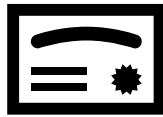
- Successful completion of the voter registration drive he spearheaded.*
- College acceptance - a tremendous "feel good" time.*
- Going back to school post-pandemic.*
- The graduation speech of classmate Amira Abdirahman - unlike anything he'd heard, not a typical graduation speech - many students, he said, were moved to tears.*

*I wanted a sense of what his graduation experience was like. Like ours, there was a senior breakfast to start the day. Then came rehearsal and, later, an outdoors commencement. As noted, for Isaac, one speech was particularly memorable.*

*There was a party after the ceremony, organized by parents as ours was back in '63 - but that's where the similarity ended. The party was held at Park Tavern and ran from 9:00 p.m. to midnight. (I told him about ours and he was duly impressed.)*

*I asked Isaac what he'll miss most about St. Louis Park HS. He said "security." Despite the craziness of adapting to computer-based learning and the in-school/out-of-school routine - he still had a sense of familiarity and security connected to his years in the SLP school system.*

*Isaac is off to Princeton in just a few days. He anticipates working in some area of politics. He seems ready.*



### *And a Look Back. . .*

*Do you remember your high school years? Senior year? Graduation? Probably some of it, anyway. It was a long time ago. It was clearly not all euphoric or without stress - but it was different from the experiences of those of the class of 2023. Some would say it was a "simpler time."*

*There was a bit of a build-up to the big day as I recall, including a morning assembly for seniors at which awards and scholarships were announced, after which we all headed out for "Senior Skip Day." Some of our class attended a Baccalureate service (nothing similar was held in 2023). Graduation day itself started with the Senior Breakfast, followed by rehearsal - as it did for this year's seniors. Later in the day, both classes attended outdoor ceremonies. Classmates Susan Fisher, Bette LeSere, Carol Kimball and Sheldon Shaeffer spoke at our commencement. All were members of the class' Top Ten - a system no longer used at Park. There's now a valedictorian.*

*Partying began shortly after the ceremony, moving us first to the Westwood Junior High building where there was food, dancing, games, etc. Then, in the wee hours, we were moved downtown to see the as-yet unreleased film, "P.T. 109." After the movie we had breakfast at the Leamington Hotel in downtown Minneapolis. Finally, we were all deposited, bleary-eared, back at the school. An appropriately named "all night party."*

## Memories

*I took the opportunity to ask a couple of people from the class of 1963 some questions similar to those discussed in my interview with Isaac Israel. I think you'll notice some differences here too - a sign of the changed times.*

*Like Isaac, Anna Anderson Lundquist and Jeff Liebo were both involved with a variety of high school activities. Anna was all-school Vice President of Blue Tri (neither Blue Tri nor Hi-Y exist at the high school now, though there are other service and social groups); Art Club, Job's Daughters and a sorority. Jeff was on the Student Council all three years of high school (and reports that he's "pretty much forgiven Al Ono for clobbering [him] in the race for SC President"); he was on the Canteen Committee and co-chaired Homecoming festivities senior year; he performed in "Ah Wilderness" as a junior and "Bye, Bye Birdie" as a senior. And, like Isaac, he played clarinet in the school band.*

*Back in the day, Anna recalls favorite hangouts as Beek's and Porky's (both gone now) and attending University of Minnesota activities. Jeff's favorite was Lincoln Del (also gone) - where you could get a bucket of pickles with your Coke. It was all rock-and-roll music and "American Bandstand" for Anna. Jeff enjoyed the Beach Boys, folk music and girl groups -- and he enjoys the same today.*

*When asked for best memories of SLP High School, both Anna and Jeff spoke of good overall experience. "I was very lucky to have great friends from the third grade and new ones from the later years," said Anna. "I also had great involved parents. It was a happy time." Jeff spoke of the academic foundation that served him well in future studies: "Excellent academics made*

*undergraduate college at the U of M seem not so difficult," he said. Both noted friendships as part of their most memorable moments in high school. Jeff said his were spent "repeatedly listening to 'The 2,000 Year Old Man' records with Jeff Freund and Bruce Golob." Anna, too, cites her best memories as times with good friends, many of whom are friends to this day.*

*Jeff and Anna were asked about the impact of world affairs, or anything outside the high school experience, on their years at Park. Both mentioned positive, uplifting things. Both mentioned President John Kennedy. Anna was most affected by the election of Kennedy, the first Catholic, to the presidency. "The election of Kennedy is when I became more aware of politics. I remember the impact of the fact that he was a Catholic. . . questioning my parents, 'what difference does it make what religion he is?' It didn't make any difference to me." Jeff noted the Sputnik launch and how it "caused President Kennedy to encourage students to consider science and technology careers."*

*Anna went from Park HS to Drake University in Des Moines in pursuit of a Fine Arts degree. Jeff went to Occidental for one quarter, then on to the University of Minnesota for both undergraduate and medical school, followed by a "great career as a pediatrician."*

### *And a Few Final Thoughts*

*Not to oversimplify, but it certainly seems a significant difference between the Camelot times of our Kennedy years and Covid, school shootings and the Trump presidency of Isaac's high school years. It is not uncommon for any of us - in whatever generation - to feel like survivors as we leave our high school years behind. The class of 2023 deserves to have that sense. The ability to face society's*

*challenges comes with life experience and maturity. They had to start meeting those challenges a bit earlier than many of us. We certainly wish them success and happiness ahead. As I keep thinking, they're entitled.*



### *. . . And We're Entitled to Good Times at Reunion 60*

*You're in for quite a wonderful evening to cap off our 60th reunion. As you know, we're dining and dancing - and probably will do a lot of "schmoozing" -- at the Braemar Golf Course Clubhouse on Saturday night. (Note: If you missed the August 15th deadline to RSVP for this event, there may still be a narrow window for you before September 1st when the reunion committee must give the caterer a firm head count and full payment. Don't delay -- contact Louise, Marilyn or Rollie now; their email addresses are at the end of this newsletter).*

*There will be light appetizers during the cocktail hour, which begins at 5 p.m. It is followed by an Italian Buffet which looks to be an impressive assortment of tasty dishes - including vegetarian and gluten-friendly items:*

- Antipasto Tray - including balsamic-marinated cipollini onions, pepperoncini, roasted peppers, and petite mozzarella*
- Fruit Salad - an assortment of fresh fruits, with pistachios, marinated in a honey/lemon glaze*
- Sautéed Chicken Breast - cooked with artichoke hearts and sun-dried tomatoes in a marsala wine sauce*
- Flank Steak - grilled with garlic, rosemary and black pepper*



- *Vegetable Cavatappi - an assortment of spring vegetables in a mushroom sauce*
- *Roasted Rosemary Potatoes - with asiago cheese*
- *Carmelized Carrots - cooked with pearl onions and zucchini*
- *Country Bread/Foccacia/Ciabatta*

*And if you have room after all that - there's an array of bars for dessert.*

*After dinner, you may want to dance or simply enjoy the music of The Jam Band, a high energy dance band made up of six veteran musicians from the Twin Cities. The Jam Band is known for performing classic dance favorites from the 50's, 60's and 70's.*

*For those who prefer a quieter space for chatting with fellow alums, there's a good deal of separation of tables from band space in a room significantly larger than what was available at our 55<sup>th</sup> reunion. AND, there's a totally separate outside deck, great for conversations. The band finishes at 9 p.m. and we have the room until 11 p.m. for final goodbyes.*

*The Reunion Committee hopes you walk away with thoughts that this was the best reunion of all.*



### *A Reunion Tradition: Nature Center Tour*

*While we're talking about how things have changed over the years, you might be interested in a little less known but very important St. Louis Park attraction. It was there when we were in school. It's there now, but you might not recognize it.*

*Interestingly, the change came in part because of the action of local high school students who petitioned the St. Louis Park City Council, in 2018, for more serious attention to the issue of climate change. The Council subsequently adopted a "Climate Action Plan" to bring greenhouse-gas emissions to net zero by 2040.*

*In accordance with requirements of the plan, no construction projects with city funding would be approved unless it was a zero-energy building. And in the summer of 2020, with a city investment of \$12.5 million, the first such building opened in St. Louis Park - a 13,500 square foot environmental learning center at the Westwood Hills Nature Center.*

*Among the "notable facts" on the Center's website:*

- The building is fossil-fuel free and all electric.*
- Data shows it is energy net positive: on an annual basis, it produces more energy than it consumes.*
- It has won numerous architectural and environmental awards.*

*It is truly a phenomenal structure. And it is part of a 160-acre nature park of marsh, woods, prairie land - and an array of wildlife. Year round you can find classes going on, interpretive exhibits, tours.*

*Fellow Park alum and Reunion Committee member Vic Lewis has led tours during a number of our reunion weekends and he's doing so again this year, with the aid of Greg Feinberg, Center Naturalist. The tour is a traditional "added feature" enjoyed by past participants.*

*Vic is a fan of the Nature Center, noting that he's been a steady visitor since he was 12 years old. He urges everyone to come for the tour. If a tour might be difficult for you, he suggests you not*

*miss the Center building. You can look around at your leisure (the exhibits are great) - and join the group when it comes back from the tour for some final comments from Center leadership. And, for those with mobility problems, Center staff is happy to take you in their vehicle to the waterfall and pond features.*

*The visit to the Westwood Hills Nature Center begins at 10 a.m. on Saturday, September 23. No need to pre-register. Just come and participate as works best for you. You won't regret it!*

### *Not Coming Saturday Night,*

### *Still Want to Visit With Old Friends. . .*

*For those of you who are not planning to attend Saturday night's dinner dance - but would like to see and enjoy time with former classmates - feel free to pop in at any of the other activities on Friday and Saturday. None require pre-registration or entry fees (except Saturday's golf outing). These are the planned other activities:*

- Meet and Greet - Friday, 1 - 4 p.m. at Park Tavern. Mingle with old friends. Share memories. Have a good laugh or even shed a tear. And if you want anything to eat or drink - it's a bar and restaurant, they're happy to accommodate. Order whatever you'd like on your own tab. Very informal.*
- Westwood Hills Nature Center Tour - Saturday, 10 - 11:30 a.m. (see the item immediately above)*
- If you want to golf, TEXT Phil Payne at 612-201-9119 soon. Phil will get back to you with date, time and location.*

- *Tour the high school (Saturday -- watch the website; details are expected to be available closer to the beginning of the school year.)*
- *AND, for those of you in town on Thursday, you might want to take in a varsity football game - St. Louis Park vs. Robbinsdale Cooper at Cooper, 7:00 p.m. (If you do, you might notice something changed from when we were at HS games. There are no cheerleaders at Park now, nor any Parkettes.)*

### *Thank You, Thank you*

*It's time for a lot of thanks. To begin with, the Reunion Committee. Below are the people who are responsible for pulling together this year's reunion.*

*Anna Anderson (Lundquist)  
Bruce Fisher  
Doug Savitt  
Jane Sandstad (Lien)  
John Cheleen  
Judy Kuennen (Jergens)  
Karen Rogers (Gleason)  
Len Jackson*

*Louise Borgman (Hokenson)  
Marilyn Vinokour  
Patty Jespersen (Mundale)  
Phil Payne  
Rollie Carlson  
Sandy Kohan (Ready)  
Vic Lewis*

*All the members have worked on more than one reunion. In fact, two have worked on every reunion we've had: Rollie Carlson and John Cheleen.*

*I would be remiss if I didn't mention Judy Kuennen (Jurgens), who enjoyed working with the committee and was looking forward to this year's reunion. Alas, Judy passed away unexpectedly in July after*

*a brief illness. She will be missed by many - certainly including her fellow committee members.*

*Special acknowledgement is deserved for the four members who provided the proverbial glue that held everything and everyone together for our 60th reunion. Louise Borgman (Hokenson) and Sandy Kohan (Ready) served as co-chairs. Marilyn Vinokour and Rollie Carlson again served as secretary and treasurer, respectively. The whole committee has been dedicated to providing everyone with a terrific reunion experience.*

*Thanks go to others who volunteered their time and efforts to help make our 60<sup>th</sup> reunion a success. Doug Neitzel is once again producing nametags for Saturday night's activities. And thanks go to the webmasters who began and kept SLP63.com going over the years - and have laid the foundation for continuing the website into the future. Dave McElyea got our site up and running before the 50th reunion. Dave handed the job over to Sue Adelsheim (Johnston) before the 55th reunion. When Sue stepped down this spring to move back to the US, Dave stepped up to the webmaster role once again. (Dave would like to share this important role with someone -- see Help Wanted below).*

*And I have had the pleasure of writing these newsletters, leading up to the 40<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup>, 55<sup>th</sup> and 60<sup>th</sup> reunions.*

*Kudos to all - with great appreciation!*



## AND THANKS TO ALL OF YOU

Thanks to you for helping to keep slp63.com current. Please do update your profile to tell us what's new with you and your family, what you've been doing, what you're thinking about these days. . . . It's very likely something has changed since your last update. And keep doing updates as things change, especially your contact information. (Note: the primary email address you list is how our website will contact you.) In fact, after you finish this newsletter, please go to slp63.com to make sure your profile and contact information are now current.

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## HELP WANTED

**WEBMASTER:** We will have our website for at least another decade. The committee is looking for another classmate to help maintain the site. Dave McElyea, our current webmaster, has the job as long as he wants it. But, to quote Dave, "We're not getting any younger." He really wants to share the technical side of this important job with another volunteer classmate. The committee is looking for someone with the curiosity to learn how the site works and with technical skills to post updated information (content provided) to the website. For more information contact Dave at [dcmcelyea@gmail.com](mailto:dcmcelyea@gmail.com).

**REUNION COMMITTEE MEMBERS:** Current committee members report that this may be the last structured reunion -- unless others volunteer to help make future events happen. New committee members are needed to share in the work and the fun. Even doing future pop-up events like birthday parties or happy hours will need new members. Are you interested? Do you have questions? Contact any of these committee members:

- Louise ([hoken002@tc.umn.edu](mailto:hoken002@tc.umn.edu))
- Sandy ([sandraready@mnsu.edu](mailto:sandraready@mnsu.edu))
- Marilyn ([msvinokour@gmail.com](mailto:msvinokour@gmail.com))
- Rollie ([maandpacarlson@gmail.com](mailto:maandpacarlson@gmail.com))

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*See You in September*