

The Barkhausen Family and Moraine Hills State Park circa 1970's

by Judy Wooderson 12/18/2015

FOMHSP's historian, Steve Domski has a new project for winter; documenting the next steps in the evolution of the land that we now know as Moraine Hills State Park. Accepting their gracious invitation, Steve met with David & his father Henry Barkhausen to get a first-person insight into the dynamic times of the early 1970's when Illinois was undergoing an "Open Lands" initiative. Below is David's email that got the snowball rolling.

"My family and I have enjoyed a number of visits to the park, beginning in the early 90's. We have hiked it many times, and I've also been around it many times on cross-country skis and, in the last two years have even participated in a couple of "roller ski" races on the asphalt trail on the east side of River Road."

"My reason for contacting you is that my father, Henry Barkhausen, still around and in good shape at age 100, was the Director of the Illinois Department of Conservation (now the IDNR) under Gov. Richard Ogilvie in the early 1970's when the property that is now the park was about to be developed as a gravel quarry, and the State came in and condemned it for park purposes. I would be very interested in, and willing to try to help document, the history of this pivotal development. My father has a decent recollection of the main events, and I imagine one could find the relevant legal records at the McHenry County courthouse if in fact a condemnation suit was brought (as opposed to condemnation being threatened followed by an agreed purchase and sale) as well as with the IDNR." David Barkhausen



The creation of MHSP for public enjoyment is sometimes taken for granted by those of us fortunate to live near-by. While many visitors travel from more than an hour's drive away, perhaps it is we "locals" who most realize how much the park has become a part of our lives. Like the frequent visitor to MHSP who had been experiencing multiple car problems and chose to drive her brand new car to MHSP as its very first destination!

Watch for an upcoming edition of Friends of Moraine Hills Newsletter that will contain Steve's comprehensive summary of the dynamic, at times controversial, and ultimately transformative years that made MHSP a reality and the people who made it happen.